

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-RCL-7-09-14

Issued at: Homer, Tuesday, March 11, 2014

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, March 12, 2014

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Wednesday,
December 31, 2014, unless superseded by
subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes Ninilchik Beach areas to the taking of clams from the north bank of Deep Creek north to a marker located approximately 3.2 miles north of the Ninilchik River at 60° 05.66' N. lat., and it reduces the bag and possession limit for razor clams to the first 25 razor clams harvested for the remaining eastside Cook Inlet beaches extending from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit. This emergency order is effective beginning 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, March 12, 2014, through 11:59 p.m., Wednesday, December 31, 2014.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet — Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area. (a)(14)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, March 12, 2014, through 11:59 p.m., Wednesday, December 31, 2014:

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet — Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

(a)(14) razor clams: may be taken from March 12–December 31 as follows:

(A) Ninilchik Beach areas, from the north bank of Deep Creek north to a marker located approximately 3.2 miles north of the Ninilchik River at 60° 05.66' N. lat., are closed to the taking of all clam species. All remaining beach areas from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit remain open; the bag and possession limit is the first 25 clams harvested.

Cora Campbell,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Carol Kerkvliet
Fisheries Biologist II

JUSTIFICATION:

From May 28, 2013 through December 31, 2013, the razor clam bag and possession limit was decreased from 60 to the first 25 clams dug for all eastside Cook Inlet beaches. The Ninilchik beach assessment of

razor clam abundance in April 2013 showed a substantial decline in abundance of exploitable clams (clams greater than 80 millimeters; 3.14 inches). Abundance of exploitable razor clams decreased from approximately 1,500,000 clams in 2011 to about 79,000 clams in 2013. The 2013 abundance was the lowest on record for the Ninilchik Beach based on periodic surveys of razor clams conducted since 1990. Comparisons of the annual age composition of razor clams on the Ninilchik Beaches since the 1990 reveal a trend of low recruitment since 2012 and a reduction in the number of age classes since 2006.

Digger interview data and anecdotal reports indicate reduction in razor clam abundance may be occurring all along the eastside Cook Inlet beaches, though most pronounced on Ninilchik beaches. Aerial surveys flown to estimate digger effort among all eastside Cook Inlet beaches has not detected a shift in effort from Ninilchik to the other beaches.

The cause of the decline in razor clam abundance on eastside beaches is unknown but is thought to have resulted from poor spawning and/or settling success. Since the abundance of exploitable clams in 2013 was at a record low, and effort did not shift from the Ninilchik beach, this beach will be closed to the harvest of clams. To mitigate shifts in effort and harvest to other eastside Cook Inlet beaches it is justified to reduce the bag and possession limit to 25 razor clams.

Abundance of exploitable razor clams will be reassessed on the Ninilchik Beach in April and May 2014.

DISTRIBUTION:

The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region 2 Office of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, (907) 267-2218.