

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 3-KS-06-14

Issued at: Glennallen, Wednesday, June 11, 2014

Effective 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 14, 2014
Date:

Expiration Date: August 11, 2014, unless
superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order reduces the annual limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length in the Upper Copper River drainage from four to one fish effective 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 14, 2014. Any king salmon harvested from the upper Copper River drainage prior to June 14 will count toward the one fish annual limit.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 52.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area. (a)(3)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 14, 2014:

5 AAC 52.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

(a)(3) king salmon: may be taken only from January 1 – July 19, as follows;

(A) 20 inches or greater in length; bag and possession limit of one fish; annual limit of one fish; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it.

Cora Campbell
Commissioner

by delegation to:

Mark A. Somerville
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

The king salmon run to the Copper River appears to be weaker than the preseason forecast of 62,000 king salmon and the run timing appears earlier than average. The cumulative commercial harvest, as of June 7, is approximately 7,971 king salmon, is below the expected level, and is the 4th lowest cumulative harvest through this date since 1980.

Catch rates in the Native Village of Eyak research fish wheels through June 7 are the lowest since 2003, with the exception of 2013 when the king salmon run timing was significantly late. Low water conditions on the Copper River generally reduce the harvest rates of king salmon in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net and the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fisheries. However, catch rates of king salmon in these fisheries are below expected levels even when accounting for the low water conditions.

A cumulative of 24 king salmon have been counted at the Gulkana River king salmon counting tower through June 8. These counts do not yet provide insight into the strength of the king salmon run at this time. Given the uncertainty associated with all of the indicators of Cooper River king salmon abundance, a precautionary management approach in the upper Copper River fisheries is warranted.

The *Copper River King Salmon Fishery Management Plan* directs the Department to manage the Copper River fisheries to achieve a sustainable escapement goal in the upper Copper River of 24,000 or more king salmon. From 2002–2008, Copper River king salmon escapement averaged 33,316 fish, but has ranged from 16,771 to about 29,000 fish since 2009. Inseason run strength indicators through June 8, and the generally poor stock performance trend over the last 5 years, indicate the need to take restrictive action and therefore justify a reduction in the sport fish annual limit for king salmon to ensure achievement of the sustainable escapement goal.

The Department will continue to evaluate inseason run strength and take appropriate management actions to ensure that escapement requirements are met and continue to provide fishing opportunity throughout the run. If inseason stock assessment information indicates that the king salmon escapement goal in the Copper River will be met, restrictions will be relaxed.

DISTRIBUTION:

The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region III Office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701, (907) 459-7357 and the Glennallen Area Office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, PO Box 47, Glennallen, AK 99588, (907) 822-3309.