

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-04-16

Issued at: Soldotna, Thursday, February 18, 2016

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Sunday, May 1, 2016

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Thursday, June 30, 2016, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order prohibits the retention of naturally-produced king salmon except Tuesdays and Saturdays, and limits sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure while sport fishing in the Kasilof River beginning 12:01 a.m. Sunday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Thursday, June 30, 2016. Naturally-produced king salmon may not be possessed or retained on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays; naturally-produced king salmon caught on those days each week may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately. A naturally-produced king salmon is a king salmon with an adipose fin intact.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area. (a)(8)(A)(ii) and (a)(8)(B)(ii) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective beginning at 12:01 a.m. Sunday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Thursday, June 30, 2016.

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

(a)(8) Kasilof River drainage, excluding Crooked Creek and Tustumena Lake and its tributaries:

(A)(ii) a naturally-produced king salmon may be retained on Tuesdays and Saturdays only; a naturally-produced 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; a person may not remove a naturally-produced king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

(B) the following special provisions apply in that portion downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge:

(ii) in flowing waters, from May 1 – June 30, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

Sam Cotten
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Robert N. Begich
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

As provided by 5 AAC 57.160. *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (c), the department shall manage the Kasilof River early-run king salmon sport and guided sport fisheries to achieve the sustainable escapement goal (SEG), to provide reasonable harvest opportunities over the entire run while ensuring adequate escapement of naturally-produced king salmon, and to minimize the effects of conservation actions for the Kenai River on the Kasilof River.

The department has determined that an emergency order (EO No. 2-KS-1-03-16, issued February 18, 2016) to close the early-run king salmon sport fishery in the Kenai River drainage, will likely result in an increase in the sport fishing effort and catch of naturally-produced king salmon in the Kasilof River. The department manages the Kasilof River king salmon sport fishery to achieve a sustainable escapement goal of 650 to 1,700 naturally-produced king salmon as monitored through a weir at a department facility located on Crooked Creek. From 2009 through 2012 low escapements occurred as the SEG for naturally-produced king salmon in Crooked Creek was not achieved in 2009 and 2012 despite inseason restrictions to the Kasilof River early-run king salmon sport fishery.

Production of hatchery-produced king salmon to enhance the Kasilof River early-run king salmon fishery originates from naturally-produced king salmon that are surplus to Crooked Creek escapement needs. In addition, hatchery-produced fish that reach the weir may be used to supplement king salmon stocking programs at other Southcentral Alaska locations, thereby providing increased harvest opportunity in the Kasilof River early-run king salmon sport fishery as well as other Southcentral Alaska king salmon sport fisheries.

In 2013 through 2015 preseason restrictions that prohibited the retention of naturally-produced fish, prohibited use of bait and reduced the hatchery-produced bag limit to one fish were necessary to ensure the SEG for naturally-produced king salmon and to provide broodstock for increased hatchery stocking was achieved. During 2015, preseason restrictions were eased and allowed one day of naturally-produced harvest in an effort to return the Kasilof River to existing regulations. Monitoring the king salmon runs at Crooked Creek under these restrictions from 2013-2015 indicates the production of both naturally-and hatchery-produced king salmon has improved and may be progressing to average levels.

This emergency order to restrict the early-run king salmon sport fishery in the Kasilof River during 2016 is in part, a continuation of an incremental approach to maintain harvest opportunity while assuring the SEG of naturally-produced king salmon and stocking goals can be achieved as king salmon production may be progressing from low to average levels. This will help to determine if standard regulations can be restored, sustain natural production and maintain harvest opportunity in the Kasilof River early-run king salmon sport fishery as well as other Southcentral Alaska king salmon sport fisheries supplemented by Crooked Creek hatchery stock.

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.