

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 3-KS-07-16

Issued at: Glennallen, Tuesday, June 21, 2016

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 25, 2016

Expiration Date: August 11, 2016, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes the Upper Copper River drainage upstream of the south bank of Haley Creek to sport fishing for king salmon. King salmon may not be taken or possessed and must be released immediately. In addition, the use of bait in these waters is also prohibited.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 52.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area. (a)(3)(A) and (B) and 5 AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area. (3)(A), (9)(B), (12)(C)(i), (E) and (G), (25)(A)(i) and (ii), and (E), and (32) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 25 through 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, August 10, 2016:

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

(a)(3) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

5 AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

(3) in the Copper River drainage, in that portion of the mainstem of the Copper River downstream from the confluence of the Copper River and Slana River,

(A) only unbaited, artificial lures may be used;

(9) in the Gulkana River drainage,

(B) only unbaited, artificial lures may be used in that portion of the mainstem of the Gulkana River upstream from the Richardson Highway Bridge to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately at an unnamed creek flowing into the Gulkana River about seven and one-half miles upstream from the confluence with the West Fork of the Gulkana River;

(12) in the Klutina River drainage, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used;

(C) in all flowing waters upstream of the ADF&G regulatory markers located at Mile 19.2 on the Klutina Lake Road,

(i) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(E) in all flowing waters downstream of the ADF&G regulatory markers located at Mile 19.2 on the Klutina Lake Road, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(G) in all flowing waters downstream of the ADF&G regulatory markers located at Mile 13 on the Klutina Lake Road, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(25) in the Tonsina River drainage,

(A) in all flowing waters downstream from the outlet of Tonsina Lake,

(i) only unbaited, artificial lures may be used;

(ii) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(E) in all flowing waters downstream of the downstream edge of the Alyeska Pipeline crossing bridge, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(32) in the Copper River drainage, downstream of the upstream bank of the Klutina River, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

Sam Cotten
Commissioner

by delegation to:



Mark A. Somerville
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

The king salmon run to the Copper River appears to be much weaker than the preseason forecast of 64,000 king salmon and the run timing appears earlier than average. The cumulative commercial harvest, as of June 19, is approximately 11,062 king salmon. This is below the expected level, and is the 6th lowest cumulative harvest through this date since 1980. For comparison, cumulative harvest through June 19, 2015 was 21,531 king salmon.

Catch rates in the Native Village of Eyak research fish wheels through June 20 have been low with a cumulative catch less than the average for this date. Additionally, recapture rates of king salmon have been exceptionally high and indicate a potential inriver return at least 30% below the Copper River drainage escapement goal of 24,000 king salmon.

A cumulative of 204 king salmon have been counted at the Gulkana River king salmon counting tower through June 20. These counts are 52% below the average for this date and with the king salmon run into the Copper River approximately 5 days early the Gulkana River tower counts should be significantly higher than currently observed. Given the uncertainty associated with all of the indicators of Copper River king salmon abundance, a precautionary and conservative 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. From 2009–2015 spawning escapement averaged 24,820 king salmon and fell below 24,000 in 2 of those 7 years. Inseason run strength indicators through June 20, and the generally poor stock performance trend over the last 7 years, justify closing sport fishing for king salmon in the upper Copper River drainage sport fisheries to ensure the maximum possible king salmon escapement.

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.