

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No.: 3-KS-06-16

Issued at: Fairbanks, Friday, July 8, 2016

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Saturday, July 9, 2016

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Monday, August 15, 2016, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order prohibits sport fishing for king salmon in all waters of the Unalakleet and Shaktoolik river drainages and prohibits the use of bait while sport fishing in these rivers.

REGULATION:

Consistent with 5 AAC 04.395. Subdistricts 5 and 6 of the Norton Sound District and the Unalakleet River King Salmon Management Plan, the provisions of 5 AAC 70.011. Seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Northwestern Area (c)(9)(A) and (B) are superseded by this emergency order and the provisions of 5 AAC 70.030. Methods, means, and general provisions – Finfish (f) are added. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Saturday, July 9, 2016:

5 AAC 70.011. Seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Northwestern Area.

(c)(9)(A and B) In all waters of the Unalakleet and Shaktoolik river drainages, sport fishing for king salmon is prohibited.

5 AAC 70.030. Methods, means, and general provision – Finfish.

(f) In the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet rivers, the use of bait is prohibited.

Sam Cotten
Commissioner

By delegation to:



Brendan Scanlon
Northwest and North Slope Area Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

Escapement counts of king salmon at the North River tower on the Unalakleet River are below historic averages. As of July 6th only 192 king salmon had passed the counting tower. From 2006 – 2015 an average of 309 king salmon had passed the counting tower by this date. According to the *Subdistricts 5 and 6 of the Norton Sound District and the Unalakleet River King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 04.395), when the projected escapement is below the lower end of the escapement goal, all fishing will be closed. Although it is still early in the run, it appears that the escapement goal for king salmon will not be reached in 2016. This action is in alignment with the management plan.

The Department does not have a stock assessment project in the Shaktoolik River, but the king salmon run generally cycles in accordance with Unalakleet River stocks. The closure of sport fishing for king salmon in the Unalakleet and Shaktoolik rivers will provide protection for returning fish. The prohibition of bait while sport fishing is in accordance with provisions set forth in 5 AAC 75.003 (1)(A). This action should minimize catch-and-release mortality for king salmon incidentally caught while sport fishing for other species.

The Department will continue to evaluate inseason run strength and take appropriate management actions to ensure that escapement requirements are met. If inseason stock assessment information indicates that the king salmon escapement goal in the Unalakleet 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) 459-7207.