

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-09-18

Issued at: Palmer, Monday, March 13, 2018

Effective Date: 6:00 a.m. Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 13, 2018, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order restricts sport fishing gear and harvest in the Little Susitna River drainage. It limits gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only. A single-hook is defined as a hook with only one point. In addition, this emergency order prohibits the retention of king salmon (any size) each Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday beginning Tuesday, May 1, 2018. Fishing for king salmon is allowed, but king salmon may not be retained or possessed Tuesday – Thursday; king salmon caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately. King salmon may be retained on each Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday in the Little Susitna River. In addition, this emergency order establishes an annual limit of two king salmon greater than 20 inches in length in the Little Susitna River drainage. The annual limit is five king salmon greater than 20 inches in Cook Inlet, of which only two may be from the Little Susitna River.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. (9)(A) and (B) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 6:00 a.m. Tuesday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 13, 2018:

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

(9) in the Little Susitna River drainage,

(A) from January 1 – July 13, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, sport fishing is open for king salmon with a bag and possession limit of one king salmon 20 inches or greater in length; there is an annual limit of two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length and a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; from May 1 – July 13, king salmon may only be retained on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday; on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

(B) from October 1 – April 30, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used; from May 1 – July 13, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used; from July 14 – August 5, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used;

Sam Cotten
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Samatha Oslund
Assistant Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

Little Susitna River king salmon, like other king salmon stocks throughout Cook Inlet, are experiencing a period of low productivity and, since 2007, below average run strength. The Little Susitna River king salmon Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) is 900 – 1,800 fish as measured by aerial survey. The goal was achieved in 2012 – 2016, but not without preseason actions taken to reduce harvest. A gradual uptick in run size through this time period led to a less restrictive fishery in 2017 in which fishing was allowed seven days per week with only a reduction to the annual limit. The 2017 run was assessed against a new weir based SEG range of 2,100 – 4,300 fish (primary goal for management purposes). The 2017 run was lower than anticipated and the weir based SEG was achieved after the sport fishery was closed late in the season. The overall harvest reduction in 2017, including closure, is estimated to be about 50% based off low run years. Based on harvest and escapement data over the past five years and in anticipation of effort diverted from closure of the Susitna River drainage, a return to a conservative harvest strategy limiting days of fishing is warranted, which should reduce harvest up to 70%. The weir will be used to assess run strength during the season. In addition to these management actions to the sport fishery, the Northern District commercial king salmon fishery will also be closed.

DISTRIBUTION:

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