

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-7-11-19

Issued at: Homer, Monday, February 25, 2019

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Monday, April 1, 2019

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Monday,
July 15, 2019, unless superseded by
subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes the first and fifth opening weekends and Mondays and the five Wednesday openings in May and June for the Anchor River drainage; restricts gear to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure; and establishes a combined annual limit of two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length for the waters of the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, and all marine waters south of the latitude of the mouth of the Ninilchik River (60° 03.99' N. lat.) to the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.) combined.

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 (a)(2)(A), (a)(2)(C), (a)(2)(C)(i), (a)(2)(E) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Monday, April 1 through 11:59 p.m. Monday, July 15, 2019:

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)(2) Anchor River drainage, except the Bridge Creek Reservoir:

(A) from May 25-July 15 and September 1-October 31, in flowing waters, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(C) from its mouth upstream to the junction of the North and South Forks sport fishing is open

(i) on Memorial Day weekend, and the Monday following that weekend, and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends; and

(E) sport fishing is open for king salmon from its mouth upstream to the junction of the North and South Forks only on Memorial Day weekend, and the Monday following that weekend, and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends; for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, the bag and possession limit is one fish; as part of the Cook Inlet region annual limit specified in (b) of this section, a person may not retain more than two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length each year from the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, and all marine waters south of the latitude of the mouth of the Ninilchik River (60° 03.99' N. lat.) to the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.) combined; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; a person who takes and retains a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length from either Ninilchik River, Deep Creek or Anchor River may not sport fish in any of these

drainages for the rest of that day; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes a part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Carol Kerkvliet
Fisheries Biologist III

JUSTIFICATION:

The sustainable escapement goal (SEG) for Anchor River king salmon is 3,800-7,600 king salmon. In 2018, the SEG was not achieved despite closing the fishery early in the season and closing nearshore marine waters to king salmon fishing. The 2018 run marked the second weakest run observed since full escapement monitoring began in 2003, and it marked the latest run observed with over half of the run being accounted for in July. The late run timing suggests a large portion of the run staged in the nearshore marine waters before entering the Anchor River.

Since 2003, run strength has ranged from very weak to very strong. During years of weak runs (2009-2014 and 2018), the SEG was achieved in 2012 and 2013, but not in 2014, using a combination of pre-season and in-season in-river and nearby marine fishery restrictions. From 2009-2011 and 2018, the SEG was not achieved when only in-season restrictions were used.

In response to the weak 2018 run and consistent with 2019 forecasts for poor king salmon performance throughout Cook Inlet, it is justified to begin the 2019 season conservatively. It is also justified to align the Anchor River openings with Deep Creek and Ninilchik River to avoid transferred effort between streams. It is anticipated that the suite of in-river and marine restrictions will provide the greatest potential for achieving escapement needs while providing some fishing opportunity. Additionally, this action reduces the waters open to fishing to afford additional protection to king salmon in a section of river where they are vulnerable to anglers. Open waters are from the mouth of the Anchor River upstream to the downstream side of the Old Sterling Highway Bridge located approximately 550 feet below the junction of the North and South Forks.

Increased harvest opportunity may be allowed by subsequent emergency order if in-season assessment indicates the runs are stronger than anticipated and is sufficiently strong enough to achieve escapement goals.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-7-12-19 restricts gear to only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure and establishes a combined annual limit of two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length for the waters of the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, and all marine waters south of the latitude of the mouth of the Ninilchik River (60° 03.99' N. lat.) to the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.) to two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length combined.

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-7-13-19 limits the king salmon bag and possession limit in the Ninilchik River to only hatchery king salmon. During the Memorial Day weekend and following two weekends and the Monday following each weekend, bag and possession limit is one hatchery king salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, and 10 hatchery king salmon under 20 inches. During the Youth-Only Fishery on Wednesday June 5, the bag and possession limit is one hatchery king salmon of any size. Additionally it establishes a combined annual limit of two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length for the waters of the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, and all marine waters south of the latitude of the mouth of the Ninilchik River (60° 03.99' N. lat.) to the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.) to two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length combined.

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-7-14-19 establishes a combined annual limit of two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length for fish harvested in the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Ninilchik River, and all marine waters south of the latitude of the mouth of the Ninilchik River (60° 03.99' N. lat.) to the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.).

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.