

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-18-24

Issued at: Soldotna, Tuesday, April 23, 2024

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, May 1, 2024

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Sunday, June 30, 2024, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order supersedes emergency order 2-KS-1-14-24 issued Thursday, March 14, 2024, and removes the liberalization of season dates for when the use of bait is allowed on the Kasilof River downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge. On the Kasilof River downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge, tackle restrictions will remain under general regulation allowing one unbaited, single hook artificial lure or fly through May 15. From May 16 through June 30, only one single hook, artificial lure or fly may be used, and bait is allowed. This emergency order prohibits the retention of naturally-produced king salmon from May 1 through June 30. Naturally-produced king salmon have an adipose fin and may not be removed from the water and must be release immediately.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 56.122(a)(8)(A)(i), (ii), and (B)(ii) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, June 30, 2024.

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) king salmon may be taken from January 1 – June 30, upstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge, and from January 1 – July 31, downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge; bag and possession limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length of one fish; annual limit of five king salmon 20 inches or greater in length; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; from May 1 – June 30,

(i) the bag and possession limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is two hatchery fish; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water must be retained and become 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;

(ii) naturally-produced king salmon of any size may not be retained; 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 16 – June 30, only one single hook or single-hook, artificial lure, with bait may be used;

Doug Vincent-Lang
Commissioner

By delegation to:



Phill M. Stacey
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

As provided by 5 AAC 57.160. *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (c), ADF&G 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.

ADF&G manages the Kasilof River king salmon sport fishery to achieve a SEG of 700–1,400 naturally-produced king salmon as monitored through a weir at as ADF&G facility located on Crooked Creek. From 2018–2023, restrictions were necessary to ensure the SEG for naturally-produced king salmon and the broodstock goal for increased hatchery king salmon stocking were achieved. In 2021 and 2023, the SEG and broodstock goals for naturally-produced king salmon were not met with less restrictive measures in place than historically utilized.

Production of hatchery-produced king salmon to enhance the Kasilof River early-run king salmon sport 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.

This emergency order to restrict the early-run king salmon sport fishery in the Kasilof River during 2024 is 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 throughout Cook Inlet has been low. This will inform management if standard regulations can be restored, sustain natural production at Crooked Creek, 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 king salmon stock.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED: Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-14-24, which prohibited the retention of naturally-produced king salmon, the use of multiple hooks, and allowed the use of bait while sport fishing in the Kasilof River downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, June 30, 2024, is superseded by this emergency order.

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.