

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No.: 3-BB-02-98

Issued at: Tolsona Lake

Effective Date: Date: 12:01 a.m.
February 18, 1998

Expiration Date: Until superseded by subsequent
emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency supersedes and corrects an error in Emergency Order No. 3-BB-01, which closes Tolsona Lake to burbot fishing. All burbot captured at Tolsona Lake must be released immediately. In addition, the bag and possession limit for burbot in Moose Lake is reduced from 5 per day, 5 in possession to 2 per day, 2 in possession.

REGULATION:

5 AAC 52.022(20) and (29) are amended to read:

5 AAC 52.022. WATERS; SEASONS; BAG, POSSESSION, AND SIZE LIMITS; AND SPECIAL PROVISIONS

(1) 5 AAC 52.022 WATER	SEASON AND BAG LIMIT						SPECIAL PROVISIONS
	King Salmon	Other Salmon	Rainbow/ Steelhead	Burbot	Grayling	Other Fish	
(20) MOOSE LAKE	2A	Closed	1K	1P ¹	1G	1L	¹ The use of set line gear is prohibited.
(29) TOLSONA LAKE ¹ • within 100 yards of the mouth of Bessie Creek. • the remainder of the lake.	5A	5B	5K	Closed	5G	5L	¹ Burbot may not be possessed or retained; all burbot caught must be released immediately.
	2A	1B	1K	Closed	1G	1L	

JUSTIFICATION:

Abundance estimates of burbot in Tolsona Lake determined from stock assessment conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game indicate a significant decline in the spawning population of burbot. Abundance estimates averaged 1,276 burbot (larger than 18 inches) from 1987-1994. Abundance estimates for 1995 and 1996 averaged 520 burbot (larger than 18 inches). The abundance estimate for 1997 was 230 burbot. The decline is not attributed to overharvest, but was likely caused by environmental factors including high water temperatures and low dissolved oxygen levels that caused mortality of post-spawning and young-of-year burbot. These conditions were present during 1990 - 1992, and a summerkill was reported in June 1991. Estimates from stock assessment indicate poor survival occurred in 1990-1992 and 1994-1995. During the past six years, burbot harvests have averaged 77 burbot per year. The currently depressed population of burbot in Tolsona Lake cannot sustain any harvest, if the population is to return to prior levels. A closure of the recreational burbot fishery on Tolsona Lake is therefore warranted to protect the spawning stock and allow for maximum recruitment to the spawning population.

Moose Lake lies approximately ¼ mile northwest of Tolsona Lake. It is approximately the same size and has similar morphological characteristics as Tolsona Lake. Stock assessment of Moose Lake last occurred in 1992, abundance estimates from 1989 - 1991 averaged 1,110 burbot (> 18 inches). The estimate of abundance based on CPUE for 1992 was 700 burbot (> 18 inches). No sport harvests of burbot have been reported from Moose Lake since 1988. The closure of burbot fishing on Tolsona Lake may cause an increase in burbot fishing on Moose Lake. Since the most recent stock assessment in Moose Lake indicated a decline in abundance and the physical characteristics of Moose Lake may make it prone to summerkill, a bag limit reduction is warranted until the current size of the burbot population can be determined.

Burbot in the Copper and Susitna river drainages do not sexually mature until age 6. This fact and environmental conditions in recent and future spring/summer seasons will determine how long the burbot fishery will remain closed.