

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No.: 2-SS-5-22-99

Issued at: Dillingham, Friday August 20, 1999

Effective: 12:01 AM Monday August 23, 1999

Expires: 11:59 PM Friday, December 31, 1999

Unless superseded by subsequent Emergency Order

EXPLANATION:

Effective 12:01 a.m., Monday August 23, 1999, this Emergency Order reduces the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon from five (5) to one (1) per day in all waters of the Bristol Bay drainage from Cape Newenham east to Cape Menshikof, **excluding** the Nushagak /Mulchatna River drainages, and the Kvichak River drainage upstream from the outlet of Yellow Creek.

AND

Effective 12:01 a.m., Monday August 23, 1999, this Emergency Order prohibits the retention of coho salmon in all waters of the Kvichak River drainage upstream of Yellow Creek approximately six miles north of the community of Levelock. Coho salmon may not be possessed or retained. All coho salmon must be released immediately. Catch and release fishing for coho salmon is allowed.

Emergency Order 2-SS-5-18-99 closing the coho salmon sport fishery in the Nushagak /Mulchatna River drainages remains in effect. **However**, this Emergency Order further restricts the Wood River drainage to a daily bag and possession limit of one (1) coho salmon per day.

REGULATIONS:

The provisions of 5 AAC 67.022 (a) (1 through 3,5,6, and 8 through 10) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective: In waters of the Bristol Bay drainage from Cape Newenham east to Cape Menshikof, **excluding** the Nushagak /Mulchatna River drainages and the Kvichak River drainage upstream from the outlet of Yellow Creek, effective 12:01 a.m., Monday August 23, 1999, anglers are restricted to a daily bag and possession limit of one coho salmon per day.

In addition, the provisions of 5 AAC 67.022 (a) (4) are superseded by this emergency order. Effective 12:01 a.m., Monday August 23, 1999, this Emergency Order prohibits the retention of coho salmon in all waters of the Kvichak River drainage upstream of Yellow Creek. Coho salmon may not be possessed or retained. All coho salmon must be released immediately.

This Emergency Order supersedes Emergency Order 2-SS-5-18-99 by restricting the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon in the Wood River drainage from two (2) per day to one (1) per day, effective 12:01 a.m., Monday August 23, 1999. The provisions of Emergency Order 2-SS-5-18-99 closing the sport fishery for coho salmon the Nushagak/Mulchatna drainage remains in effect.

Frank Rue
Commissioner

By delegation to: _____
Dan O. Dunaway
Area Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

All available data suggest low abundance of coho salmon in the watersheds of Bristol Bay. Normally the largest coho producer of the area, the Nushagak River return has been so poor that all fisheries on those stocks are closed.

Commercial catches in the Togiak District are far below the average for this date. The commercial fishery has been on a restricted schedule beginning the week of August 16 in an effort to conserve coho salmon. If the run continues to be low, commercial openings after Wednesday, August 25 are unlikely. Commercial harvests in the Naknek/Kvichak district were so poor all effort has stopped. Other districts have been very low due to low coho abundance, little effort, and limited markets.

The department creel survey on the Naknek River sport fishery has observed catch rates of .12 coho salmon or less per hour since August 1. This rate is well below the .3 to .4 per hour in during the seasons of 1988, 1989, 1991, and 1995. The department creel survey on the Togiak River has observed extremely low catch rates since early August. A peak catch rate of .39/coho per hour occurred on August 19 which is comparable to years of poor returns and well below the rate observed when the 50,000 fish escapement goal was achieved.

Sport anglers have reported below average to extremely poor fishing for coho salmon in all river systems of Bristol Bay. The Kvichak River drainage normally supports a small run of coho salmon but appears to have an especially poor return of coho salmon this season.

At this time, most coho salmon runs are past the 50 percent point and it is highly unlikely the runs will improve in the coming weeks. Therefore: restrictions in the sport fishery, are expected to provide increased protection for the weak returns of coho salmon throughout the Bristol Bay drainages.

Analysis of sport harvests on the area rivers indicates that a one coho per day limit could reduce the total sport harvest by as much as 40 to 58 percent. The few coho salmon returning to the Kvichak River require the protection afforded by prohibiting harvest of this species. These restrictions provide for a level of escapement which will assure perpetuation of the stocks.

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