

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-06-09

Issued at: Palmer, Monday, April 20, 2009

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m., Friday, May 15, 2009

Expiration Date: 11:00 p.m., Monday, July 13, 2009, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order prohibits the use of bait and limits the retention of king salmon to Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays in the Deshka River drainage beginning at 12:01 a.m., Friday, May 15, and extending through 11:00 p.m., Monday, July 13, 2009. All king salmon caught on Tuesday through Friday from May 15 through July 13, 2009, may not be retained or removed from the water and must be released immediately. The area in which these restrictions apply is from the mouth of the Deshka River upstream to an ADF&G marker located near Chijuk Creek (river mile 17), and all waters within a one-half mile radius of the Deshka River's confluence with the Susitna River. The remainder of the drainage remains closed to king salmon fishing by regulation.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 61.112. SPECIAL PROVISIONS AND LOCALISED ADDITIONS AND EXCEPTIONS TO THE SEASONS, BAG, POSSESSION AND SIZE LIMITS, AND METHODS AND MEANS FOR UNIT 1 OF THE SUSITNA RIVER DRAINAGE AREA. (6)(B) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 12:01 a.m., Friday, May 15, through 11:00 p.m., Monday, July 13, 2009:

5AAC 61.112. SPECIAL PROVISIONS AND LOCALIZED ADDITIONS AND EXCEPTIONS TO THE SEASONS, BAG, POSSESSION AND SIZE LIMITS, AND METHODS AND MEANS FOR UNIT 1 OF THE SUSITNA RIVER DRAINAGE AREA.

(6) in the Deshka River drainage, including Trapper Lake from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers near Chijuk Creek (river mile 17), and in all waters within a one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River,

(B) king salmon may be taken from January 1 through May 14; from May 15 through June 13 king salmon may only be taken on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays; from September 1 – July 13, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used; from July 14 – August 31, bait may be used; the remainder of the drainage is closed from January 1 – December 31 to sport fishing for king salmon;

Denby S. Lloyd,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Dave Rutz,
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

The biological escapement goal (BEG) for king salmon in the Deshka River of 13,000 to 28,000 fish was not achieved in 2008. The escapement of 7,533 king salmon in 2008 was the lowest count since the department installed a counting weir on this river in 1995 and the outlook is for another weak run in 2009. Although the 2009 outlook is a total run of about 21,000 king salmon (13,600 in the escapement), this number is likely an overestimate due to the method used in estimating the abundance of age-1.2 fish and an unknown sport harvest in 2008. The outlook is accomplished using a combination of statistical models. A sibling model is used to project two of three dominant age classes in each run (ages 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4). A sibling model cannot be used to estimate the age-1.2 component in the total run because the younger, age-1.1 siblings are not accurately counted for a variety of reasons. Instead, the entire run is projected with a spawner recruit model and combined with the historical average actual contributions of age-1.2 fish (24%) in the entire run. Therefore, projections of the age-1.2 component are not as accurate as they are for other age classes.

If the recent trend of lower than expected returns of age-1.2 fish continues in 2009, it will again jeopardize reaching the BEG. Also, if sport harvests were below average in 2008 then this would cause the 2009 projections to be smaller. Some sport harvest did occur in 2008, but given informal observations of decreased angler effort coupled with the sport fishery restrictions in 2008, a reduced harvest is likely the case.

The average total harvest from the Deshka River is an estimated 7,800 king salmon per year. The average sport harvest is 6,600, with greater than 50% occurring prior to June 15. If the run is indeed weak and the sport harvest is not restricted early in the season, it is likely that the escapement goal will not be achieved in 2009. Restrictive measures taken in 2008 may have resulted in about a 30% reduction in harvest, yet a restriction to prohibit bait on June 14 and subsequent closure of the sport fishery on June 20 was insufficient to attain the BEG. It is anticipated in 2009, with restrictions in place early in the season, that the sport harvest could be reduced by as much as 60%.

The department maintains a fish-counting weir at mile 7 of the Deshka River to count the king salmon escapement. Fish passage data from the weir will allow the department to closely monitor this fishery on a daily basis. Additional inseason management actions may occur around June 10-12 (25th percentile of the historical king salmon run) if warranted to ensure the BEG is met. If weir passage information indicates a stronger run than projected, restrictions may be relaxed.

As provided by 5 AAC 75.003. EMERGENCY ORDER AUTHORITY (1)(A), the department may, by emergency order, decrease sport fish bag and possession limits and annual limits and restrict methods and means of harvest when the total escapement is projected to be less than the escapement goal. Therefore, it is warranted to prohibit the use of bait and prohibit the retention of king salmon on Tuesdays through Fridays in waters open to king salmon fishing in the Deshka River.

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.