

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-30-10

Issued at: Palmer, Wednesday, June 30, 2010

Effective Date: 11:00 p.m., Friday, July 2, 2010

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Tuesday,
July 13, 2010, unless superseded by
subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes the Parks Highway streams (Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage) to sport fishing for all finfish species and the Little Susitna River in the Knik Arm Drainage Area to fishing for king salmon effective at 11:00 p.m., Friday, July 2, 2010, through 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, July 13, 2010. Waters in Unit 2 that are normally open to king salmon fishing that are now closed to sport fishing for all finfish species include: Willow, Little Willow, Greys, Kashwitna, Caswell, Sheep, Montana, Goose, Sunshine, Birch, Trapper, and Rabideux creeks, and all flowing waters of the Susitna River from the confluence with the Deshka River upstream to the confluence with the Talkeetna River.

The closure on the Little Susitna River prohibits sport fishing for king salmon, including catch-and-release fishing. King salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon accidentally caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainage Area. (9)(A) and 5 AAC 61.114. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. (1) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 11:00 p.m., Friday, July 2, 2010, through 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, July 13, 2010:

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainage Area.

(9) in the Little Susitna River drainage,

(A) Beginning 11:00 p.m., Friday, July 2, 2010, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, sport fishing is closed for king salmon; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

5 AAC 61.114. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) Beginning 11:00 p.m., Friday, July 2, 2010, areas normally open to king salmon fishing in Unit 2 are closed to sport fishing for all finfish species, including king salmon;

Denby S. Lloyd,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Sam Ivey,
Assistant Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

Nearly all of the king salmon harvest in Unit 2 of the Susitna Drainage takes place during three, 3-day weekends. Department staff has monitored these fisheries over this past weekend. Even though fishing last weekend was much better than it has been the last couple of years at the mouths of Montana and Willow creeks, recent boat and foot surveys revealed low numbers of kings in traditional holding areas for this time of year. A helicopter survey of Eastside Susitna streams further substantiated far fewer fish than optimal for achieving escapement goals on several Parks Highway streams. Willow, Sheep, and Goose creeks have not met their escapement goals in the past three years.

An exit survey conducted by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation to count sport anglers and king salmon harvests on the Little Susitna River indicates that harvest of king salmon is down from previous years. Guide and angler reports suggest the 2010 king salmon run to the Little Susitna River is weak. The June 29 helicopter survey confirmed borderline numbers of fish necessary to meet the escapement goal. Given the Little Susitna's close proximity to other Parks Highway streams, it is reasonable to assume that a closure of the Parks Highway streams would transfer a significant amount of sport fishing effort to the Little Susitna River. Any additional harvest associated with increased angler participation may further jeopardize the likelihood of the Little Susitna River achieving its king salmon escapement goal.

The department has no in-season assessment methods to enumerate runs strength or count escapements (e.g. weir or sonar projects) for any of these systems. Escapements are monitored post-season through an aerial survey conducted by the department using helicopters. If the king salmon runs are indeed weak, and the sport harvest is not restricted during the season, it is likely that escapement goals for these systems will not be achieved in 2010. It is anticipated in 2010, with these restrictions in place, that the sport harvest could be reduced by as much as 25% for the Parks Highway streams and 15% for the Little Susitna River.

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 close the Parks Highway streams and the Little Susitna River to king salmon fishing for the remainder of the season.

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.