

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-42-12

Issued at Soldotna: Tuesday, July 17, 2012

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m., Thursday, July 19, 2012

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, July 31, 2012, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order supersedes Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-37-12, issued Sunday, July 8, 2012. This emergency order closes the Kenai River drainage to fishing for king salmon from its mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake and in the Moose River from its confluence with the Kenai River upstream to the northernmost edge of the Sterling Highway bridge beginning 12:01 a.m., Thursday, July 19, through 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, July 31. This closure prohibits all sport fishing for king salmon, including catch-and-release fishing. King salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area. (2)(A)(i) and 5 AAC 57.120 (3)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective beginning at 12:01 a.m., Thursday, July 19, 2012 through 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, July 31, 2012.

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

(2) king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, as follows:

(A)(i) from July 15 – July 31 in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake, and in the Moose River from its confluence with the Kenai River upstream to the northernmost edge of the Sterling Highway bridge, is closed to sport fishing for king salmon; king salmon may not be possessed or retained and may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

(3) king salmon less than 20 inches in length as follows:

(A) in unstocked lakes and ponds and in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake and in the Moose River from its confluence with the Kenai River upstream to the northernmost edge of the Sterling Highway bridge, sport fishing for king salmon is closed from July 15 – July 31; king salmon may not be possessed or retained and may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

Cora Campbell,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Robert N. Begich
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

A primary purpose of 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan is to ensure adequate escapement of late-run king salmon into the Kenai River.

King salmon runs to Cook Inlet, including early-run Kenai River king salmon, and throughout Alaska, are experiencing a period of low productivity and low run strength. The department's information, including data from inriver assessment programs, indicates that the Kenai River late-run is also experiencing low strength. As of July 16, approximately 40 percent of the late-run is complete and all indices used to assess inriver abundance indicate a run that is well below average. It does not appear that the late-run will attain the escapement goal because inseason projections show all indices will remain well below their respective minimum inseason management objective by the end of the run in early August. Through July 15 the DIDSON sonar cumulative estimate of late-run king salmon passage into the Kenai River was 4,033. Inseason projections using DIDSON sonar are for a total run to the river of 10,300 to 15,800 late-run Kenai River king salmon. The department is still in the process of transitioning to DIDSON equipment, therefore current sonar passage data is an index compared to the last two years of DIDSON data, not a measure of abundance relative to the existing escapement goal. All of this information used in combination indicates the 2012 run is smaller than the 2011 run and may be the lowest on record.

As directed by 5 AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan, if the projected inriver return of Kenai River late-run king salmon is less than 17,800 king salmon, the department shall close the sport fisheries in the Kenai River. Based on projections of the inseason management objectives set at run strength levels that ensure adequate escapement, the projected inriver run is less than the escapement goal and closure of the sport fishery is required.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-37-12, which prohibited retention of king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, but less than 55 inches in length in the Kenai River Drainage sport fishery is superseded.

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-18-12, which prohibited the use of bait while sport fishing in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake and in the Moose River from its confluence with the Kenai River upstream to the northernmost edge of the Sterling Highway Bridge, remains in effect.

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.