

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT

OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1- 48-12

Issued at Soldotna: Wednesday, August 1, 2012

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m., Thursday, August 2, 2012

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Wednesday, August 15, 2012, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order prohibits the use of bait and limits sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure while sport fishing in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to the Sterling Highway bridge in Soldotna beginning at 12:01 a.m., Thursday, August 2, through 11:59 p.m., Wednesday, August 15, 2012.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area. (1)(B) is modified by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective beginning at 12:01 a.m., Thursday, August 2, 2012 through 11:59 p.m., Wednesday, August 15, 2012.

5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

(1) sport fishing gear restrictions:

(B) from July 1-August 15, in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to the Sterling Highway bridge in Soldotna, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

Cora Campbell,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Robert N. Begich
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

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

As of July 30, approximately 85 percent of the late-run of Kenai River king salmon is complete and all indices used to assess inriver abundance indicate a run that is very low. Inseason projections show all indices remain well below their respective minimum inseason management objectives and it is doubtful that the late-run king salmon escapement goal will be achieved. Through July 29 the DIDSON sonar cumulative estimate of king salmon passage into the Kenai River was 12,208 fish. Inseason projections using DIDSON sonar are

for a total run to the river of 14,700 late-run Kenai River king salmon. All of this information used in combination indicates the 2012 late-run is the lowest on record. 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.

Standard regulations for the Kenai River drainage downstream of Skilak Lake allow the use of bait and multiple hooks beginning August 1. Historically 10 percent to 16 percent of the king salmon late-run may enter the Kenai River during the first two weeks of August while inriver anglers are targeting coho salmon stocks. Guide logbook data, public reports, and staff observations confirm king salmon are occasionally caught incidental to coho salmon fishing. The most recent 2-year average from guide logbook data indicates approximately 200 king salmon are caught incidentally during August with nearly all of the catch occurring prior to August 15 and downstream of the Sterling Highway Bridge in Soldotna. Incidental catch of king salmon occurs in relatively few locations of the Kenai River because when fishing for coho salmon anglers use terminal gear configurations (line weight, hook and bait size) that could be similar to that used to fish for king salmon. Although the prohibition on the use of bait and multiple hooks during the first two weeks of August will greatly reduce the catch rates of coho salmon, it will more importantly also lessen the incidental catch of late-run king salmon that may be caught while fishing for coho salmon. Therefore, these measures are warranted to continue to conserve late-run Kenai River king salmon remaining in the run that are needed for escapement.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

None

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.