

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-7-44-12

Issued at: Anchorage, 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Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, July 31, 2012, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.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-7-41-12, issued Friday, July 13, 2012. This emergency order prohibits sport fishing for king salmon in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point beginning 12:01 a.m., Thursday, July 19, 2012, through 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, July 31, 2012. 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 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area. (b)(1)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 12:01 a.m., Thursday, July 19, 2012, through 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, July 31, 2012:

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

(b)(1) in the waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.):

(A) sport fishing for king salmon is prohibited, king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

Cora Campbell,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Thomas D. Vania
Regional Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

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 and in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon. 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-1-41-12, which prohibited the retention of king salmon while sport fishing within one mile of shore in the salt waters of Cook Inlet south of the latitude of the mouth of the Ninilchik River to the latitude of Bluff Point is superseded.

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.