

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-09-13

Issued at: Palmer, Thursday, April 18, 2013

Effective Date: 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, 2013

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Saturday,
July 13, 2013, unless superseded by
subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order establishes a combined annual limit of two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length for fish harvested in the Susitna River drainage and the Little Susitna River. Any king salmon recorded before Wednesday, May 15, on the harvest portion of an Alaska sport fishing license or harvest record card does not count against the two king salmon annual limit after 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, 2013, but does count against the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area. (1)(A) are superseded by this emergency order, and the provisions of 5 AAC 60.122.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)(i) are added by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, 2013, through 11:59 p.m., Saturday, July 13, 2013:

5AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) king salmon

(A) 20 inches or greater in length may be taken only from January 1 – July 13; bag and possession limit for king salmon is one fish; there is an annual limit of two fish from the Susitna River drainage and Little Susitna River combined and a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; any king salmon recorded before Wednesday, May 15, does not count against the two king salmon annual limit after 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, but does count against the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length removed from the water shall be retained and becomes a part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

5AAC 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)(i) there is an annual limit of two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length from the Little Susitna River and Susitna River drainage combined and a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; any king salmon recorded before Wednesday, May 15, does not count against the two king salmon annual limit after 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, but does count against the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length removed from the water shall be retained and becomes a part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

Cora Campbell,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Sam Ivey,
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

The department monitors escapement on 24 streams within the Northern Cook Inlet Area, of which 17 have established escapement goals. Aerial index counts and a weir count on the Deshka River indicate king salmon returns have ranged from below average to poor since 2007. Fewer than half the escapement goals were achieved 2008 – 2012. Restrictive regulations passed by the Board of Fisheries in 2011 to reduce king salmon harvest in northern Cook Inlet and restrictive actions taken preseason by emergency order in 2012 to reduce harvest by 50% across the drainage were insufficient to achieve escapement goals in 13 of 17 systems due to a lower than expected return.

The outlook for Deshka River king salmon is for another below average run of about 26,800 fish. Given the below average outlook for the Deshka run, past performance of fisheries within the Susitna drainage, and uncertainty over how returns may recover, more conservative actions must be taken in the 2013 Susitna drainage fisheries than were taken in 2012.

Although the Deshka River king salmon escapement goal of 13,000 – 28,000 fish would be expected to be attained under conditions similar to 2012, it is anticipated that restrictions to other areas of the Susitna River in 2013 will transfer a significant amount of sport fishing effort to the Deshka River and the Little Susitna River. Additional harvest associated with increased angler participation will jeopardize the likelihood of the Deshka River and Little Susitna River achieving their escapement goals if not included in the annual limit reduction.

The Little Susitna River king salmon sustainable escapement goal is 900–1,800 fish. The escapement goal was not achieved in 2010 and 2011. The goal was achieved in 2012, but not without preseason action to restrict sport harvest and eventually closing the fishery midseason.

It is anticipated that the reduction in the annual limit combined with additional restrictions contained in other emergency orders will reduce harvest by as much as 80 percent across the Susitna drainage and 75 percent in the Little Susitna River, providing the greatest potential for achieving escapement goals during 2013 and provide fishing opportunity throughout the season. Below average runs over recent years, a below average outlook for 2013, and uncertainty over how quickly returns may recover justify starting the 2013 season with these restrictions. Data gathered from weirs, boat surveys, and aerial surveys will be used to gauge run strength during the season.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-08 -13 limits sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only when fishing in Units 1–6 of the Susitna River drainage; prohibits a person, after taking a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, from fishing for any species of finfish on the same day in any waters

open to sport fishing for king salmon in the Susitna River Drainage Area; prohibits the harvest of king salmon (any size) in Units 1 (except Deshka River), 2, 3, 5, and 6 of the Susitna River; within Unit 4 (Yentna drainage), except for the Talachulitna River, harvest is allowed each Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday and retention of king salmon (any size) is prohibited each Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The Talachulitna River is catch-and-release only seven days per week. This emergency order remains in effect from 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, 2013, through 11:59 p.m., Saturday, July 13, 2013.

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-10-13 limits sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only and prohibits the retention of king salmon (any size) each Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday when fishing in the Little Susitna River drainage. This emergency order remains in effect from 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, 2013, through 11:59 p.m., Saturday, July 13, 2013.

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.