

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-RCL-7-12-13

Issued at: Homer, Monday, May 20, 2013

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m., Thursday, May 23, 2013

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Tuesday,
December 31, 2013, unless superseded by
subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order reduces the bag and possession limit for razor clams to the first 25 razor clams harvested from the eastside Cook Inlet beaches extending from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit. This emergency order is effective beginning 12:01 a.m., Thursday, May 23, 2013, through 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, December 31, 2013.

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. (a)(14)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 12:01 a.m., Thursday, May 23, 2013, through 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, December 31, 2013:

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

(a)(14) razor clams: may be taken from January 1 — December 31 as follows:

(A) from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit: the bag and possession limit is the first 25 clams harvested;

Cora Campbell,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Carol Kerkvliet
Fisheries Biologist II

JUSTIFICATION:

Assessment of razor clam abundance on the Ninilchik Beach has shown a substantial decline in abundance of exploitable clams (clams greater than 80 millimeters; 3.14 inches). Abundance of exploitable razor clams decreased from approximately 1,500,000 clams in 2011 to about 79,000 clams in 2013. The 2013 abundance is the lowest on record for the Ninilchik Beach based on periodic surveys of razor clams conducted since 1990. The cause of the decline is unknown but is thought to have resulted from poor spawning and/or settling success.

Razor clams on Ninilchik Beach reach sexual maturity at age-2 and older. Most clams age-3 and older are of exploitable size. Razor clams are broadcast spawners and primarily spawn in July and August.

Spawning success will likely improve with increased abundance of exploitable size razor clams. Since the abundance of sexually mature clams is at a record low at the Ninilchik Beach, it is justifiable to reduce the bag and possession limit to reduce the harvest of razor clams.

To date there is no indication of a substantial decline in razor clam abundance at other eastside Cook Inlet beaches. At the current harvest and digger effort, the eastside beaches outside Ninilchik Beach are considered sustainable. However, to minimize the shifting of effort and harvest between beaches, it is warranted to restrict the bag and possession limits for all eastside Cook Inlet beaches.

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.