

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 3-KS-05-13

Issued at: Glennallen, Tuesday, June 11, 2013

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 15, 2013

Expiration Date: August 11, 2013, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order reduces the annual limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length in the Upper Copper River drainage from four to one fish. This emergency order also prohibits retention of king salmon in the Gulkana River and that portion of the Copper River from the confluence of the Gulkana and Copper rivers to an ADF&G marker located approximately 500 yards downstream effective 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 15, 2013. The use of bait and treble hooks in the Gulkana River is also prohibited.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 52.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area. (a)(3)(A) and 5AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area. (9)(B), and 5 AAC 52.024. Harvest record required; annual limit.(c) are superseded by this emergency order. The provisions of 5AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area. (9)(G)(iii) are added. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 15, 2013:

5 AAC 52.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

(a)(3) king salmon: may be taken only from January 1 – July 19, as follows;

(A) 20 inches or greater in length; bag and possession limit of one fish; annual limit of one fish; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 52.024; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it.

5 AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

(9) in the Gulkana River drainage,

(B) only unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures may be used in that portion of the mainstem of the Gulkana River upstream from the Richardson Highway Bridge to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately at an unnamed creek flowing into the Gulkana River about seven and one-half miles upstream from the confluence with the West Fork of the Gulkana River;

(G) all waters downstream of the confluence of the Middle Fork to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 500 yards downstream of the confluence with the Copper River;

(iii) king salmon may not be retained or possessed and must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

5 AAC 52.024. Harvest record required; annual limit.

(c) In the waters described in (a) of this section, the annual limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is one per person.

Cora Campbell
Commissioner



by delegation to: _____

Mark A. Somerville
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

Based on the 2013 preseason forecast, king salmon runs into the Copper River are expected to be poor. Current low harvest trends in the Copper River District commercial fishery are consistent with the preseason forecast. Additionally, high water conditions in the Copper River and late breakup have delayed the salmon migration and prevented the use of inseason indicators of king salmon run strength such as catch in the Native Village of Eyak research fish wheels, and harvest in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net fishery and Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fishery.

The *Copper River King Salmon Fishery Management Plan* directs the Department to manage the Copper River fisheries to achieve a sustainable escapement goal in the upper Copper River of 24,000 or more king salmon. From 2002–2008, Copper River king salmon escapement averaged 33,316 fish, but has ranged from 16,771 to 27,994 fish since 2009. The preseason forecast, inseason commercial harvest performance, lack of upriver run strength indicators, and generally poor stock performance trend over the last 4 years indicate the need to take precautionary action in the king salmon sport fisheries of the upper Copper River drainage to ensure achievement of the sustainable escapement goal.

Gulkana River king salmon escapement has been below desired levels since 2008 and, in 2012, was the lowest observed since the counting tower was installed in 2002. Additionally, high water conditions on the Gulkana River will delay deployment of the counting tower and may impede counting thereafter. Therefore, additional precautionary action is warranted for the Gulkana River.

The Department will continue to evaluate inseason run strength and take appropriate management actions to ensure that escapement requirements are met and continue to provide fishing opportunity throughout the run. If inseason stock assessment information indicates that the king salmon escapement goal in the Copper River or desired escapement level in the Gulkana River will be met, restrictions will be relaxed.

DISTRIBUTION:

The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region III Office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701, (907) 459-7357 and the Glennallen Area Office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, PO Box 47, Glennallen, AK 99588, (907) 822-3309.