

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-07-14

Issued at: Palmer, Thursday, February 27, 2014

Effective Date: 6:00 a.m., Thursday, May 1, 2014

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Sunday, July 13, 2014, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.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 and the Little Susitna River drainages, beginning 6:00 a.m., Thursday, May 1, 2014.

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 (1)(A) are superseded by this emergency order, and the provisions of 5 AAC 60.122.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., Thursday, May 1, 2014, through 11:59 p.m., Sunday, July 13, 2014:

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; 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; 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:

Susitna River, Little Susitna River, and other king salmon stocks throughout Cook Inlet are experiencing a period of low productivity and, since 2007, below average run strength. The department monitors escapement on 24 streams within the Northern Cook Inlet Area, of which 17 have established escapement goals. King salmon counts have ranged from below average to poor since 2007. Fewer than half the escapement goals were achieved 2008 – 2012. Restrictive actions taken preseason by emergency order in 2012 to reduce harvest by 50% across the drainage were insufficient to achieve the majority of goals while providing for a full season, and sport fisheries across the Susitna drainage were closed inseason. More conservative actions were taken in 2013 to reduce overall harvest by up to 70% based off years of low returns. The outcome for 2013 was achievement of 11 of 16 escapement goals and a full fishing season.

Harvest restrictions in areas of the Susitna River in 2014 will likely result in a significant amount of sport fishing effort in the Deshka and Little Susitna rivers. Additional harvest associated with increased angler participation will jeopardize the attainment of the Deshka River and Little Susitna River escapement goals if not included in the annual limit reduction.

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 70 percent across the Susitna drainage and 75 percent in the Little Susitna River, providing the greatest potential for achieving escapement goals during 2014 and provide fishing opportunity throughout the season. Below average runs during previous years, past performance of fisheries within the Susitna and Little Susitna drainages under previous years' management strategies, and uncertainty over how returns may recover in the future justify starting the 2014 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-2-06-14 limits sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only when fishing in 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 flowing 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 and in the Talachulitna River (within Unit 4); 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. This emergency order remains in effect from 6:00 a.m., Thursday, May 1, 2014, through 11:59 p.m., Sunday, July 13, 2014.

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-08-14 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., Thursday, May 1, 2014, through 11:59 p.m., Sunday, July 13, 2014.

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.