

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-03-16

Issued at: Soldotna, Thursday, February 18, 2016

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Sunday, May 1, 2016

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Sunday, July 31, 2016, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes the Kenai River to sport fishing for early-run king salmon. The Kenai River will be closed to sport fishing for king salmon from the mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake beginning at 12:01 a.m. Sunday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Thursday, June 30, 2016. Sport fishing for king salmon will remain closed from 12:01 a.m. Friday, July 1 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, July 31, 2016 in waters of the Kenai River drainage from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek, upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake. This closure prohibits all sport fishing for king salmon, including catch-and-release fishing. King salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon accidentally caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area. (2)(A)(i) and (3)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective beginning at 12:01 a.m. Sunday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, July 31, 2016.

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

(2) king salmon 20 inches or greater in length as follows:

(A)(i) from May 1 – June 30, in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake is closed to sport fishing for king salmon; from July 1 – July 31, that portion of the Kenai River from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek, upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake is closed to sport fishing for king salmon;

(3) king salmon less than 20 inches in length as follows;

(A) from May 1 – June 30, in unstocked lakes and ponds and in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake, are closed to sport fishing for king salmon; from July 1 – July 31, in unstocked lakes and ponds and that portion of the Kenai River from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek, upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake, are closed to sport fishing for king salmon;

Sam Cotten
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Robert N. Begich
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

The purpose of 5 AAC 57.160. *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (a), is to ensure adequate escapement of early-run king salmon into the Kenai River. The optimal escapement goal (OEG) for early-run Kenai River king salmon is 5,300 to 9,000 king salmon.

Kenai River king salmon and other king salmon stocks throughout Cook Inlet are experiencing a period of low productivity and, since 2009, below average run strength. The 2016 preseason forecast for early-run Kenai River king salmon is for a total run of approximately 5,206 fish. If realized, the 2016 run would rank as one the lowest runs measured (29th out of 31 years). Forecasts for Kenai River early-run king salmon, although affected by variability in run strength, have been useful for identifying good, average, and low runs. The 2013 forecast of 5,329 early-run king salmon was higher than the 2,308 king salmon estimated past the RM 13.7 king salmon sonar that year. In 2014, the forecast called for 2,230 early-run king salmon and was lower than the estimated passage of 4,014 king salmon. The 2015 forecast of 5,265 early-run king salmon was slightly lower than the 6,190 king salmon estimated past the RM 13.7 sonar site. Although the OEG was met in 2015, the run was not sufficient to provide harvest opportunity. Since the 2016 total run forecast is similar to the 2015 run forecast when the fishery remained closed, and the forecast is less than the lower end of the optimal escapement goal, closing the fishery preseason is warranted until data from inseason assessment projects indicate that fishing opportunity can be afforded without jeopardizing achievement of the optimal escapement goal.

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.