

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-05-16

Issued at: Palmer, Thursday, February 18, 2016

Effective Date: 6:00 a.m. Sunday, May 1, 2016

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, July 13, 2016, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order imposes gear, harvest, and other restrictions to sport fishing in the Eastside Susitna River tributaries for the conservation of king salmon. This limits sport fishing gear in the Eastside Susitna River tributaries to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only.

This emergency order also prohibits the harvest of king salmon (any size) in Units 2, 3, 5, and 6 of the Susitna River. King salmon may not be retained or possessed, and king salmon caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately. In the waters of Unit 2 open to king salmon fishing, fishing for trout and other species is not affected and is allowed as written in current regulation.

This emergency order is effective from 6:00 a.m. Sunday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, July 13, 2016.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 61.114. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of Susitna River Drainage Area. (1), (3), and (15), 5 AAC 61.116. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 3 of Susitna River Drainage Area. (2), 5 AAC 61.120. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 5 of Susitna River Drainage Area. (1) and (2), and 5 AAC 61.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 6 of Susitna River Drainage Area. (1) and (4)(A), are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 6:00 a.m. Sunday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, July 13, 2016:

5 AAC 61.114. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060, the following are localized additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means to the general provisions specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

(1) from January 1 through the third Monday in June, and on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday for two consecutive weeks starting on the Saturday following the third Monday in June, Unit 2 is open to sport fishing for all finfish species, including king salmon; beginning May 1, king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

(3) from September 1– July 13, in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(15) from May 1 – July 13, in waters open to sport fishing for king salmon, sport fishing for any finfish species is closed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.;

5 AAC 61.116. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 3 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060 , the following are localized additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means to the general provisions specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 3 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

(2) from May 1 – July 13, king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed; sport fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.;

5 AAC 61.120. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 5 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060 , the following are localized additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means to the general provisions specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 5 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

(1) from September 1–July 13, in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(2) from May 1–July 13, king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed; sport fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.;

5 AAC 61.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 6 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060 , the following are localized additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means to the general provisions specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 6 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

(1) from September 1 – July 13, in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(4) in the East Fork of the Chulitna River drainage, including all waters within a one-quarter mile radius of its confluence of the East Fork and West Fork and including the Middle Fork of the Chulitna and the first quarter mile of Honolulu Creek

(A) from January 1 – July 13, the waters are open to sport fishing for all finfish species, including king salmon; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

Sam Cotten
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Sam Ivey

Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

Susitna River king salmon 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 eight streams on the Eastside Susitna River with established escapement goals. King salmon counts have ranged from poor to below average since 2007. Fewer than half the escapement goals were achieved 2008 – 2012. The preseason strategy implemented in 2013 – 2015 reduced harvest by 100 percent among Eastside Susitna streams and resulted in the majority of goals being made.

Given past performance of fisheries within the Eastside Susitna tributaries, continued conservative actions must be taken in 2016. Preseason restrictions set out under this emergency order are similar as those implemented in 2013 – 2015. Areas within the Susitna River drainage that have demonstrated a chronic inability to achieve escapement goals when harvest is allowed during low run years warrant nonretention of king salmon. These areas correspond to Units 2, 3, 5, and 6 of the Susitna River.

This reduction is expected to provide the greatest potential for achieving escapement goals during 2016 yet continue to provide fishing opportunity throughout the season. Below average runs during previous years, past performance of fisheries within the Susitna River drainage under previous years' management strategies, and uncertainty over how returns may recover in the future justify starting the 2016 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-2-06-16 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. This emergency order remains in effect from 6:00 a.m. Sunday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, July 13, 2016.

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-07-16 imposes gear and harvest restrictions to sport fishing in Westside Susitna River tributaries. This emergency order remains in effect from 6:00 a.m. Sunday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, July 13, 2016.

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.