

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-06-16

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Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, July 13, 2016, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.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 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. Sunday, May 1, 2016.

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 (1)(A) are superseded by this emergency order, and 5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. (9)(A)(i) is added 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:

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 for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages 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;

Sam Cotten
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 poor to below average since 2007. Fewer than half the escapement goals were achieved 2008 – 2012. The preseason strategy implemented 2013 – 2015 reduced harvest by 70 percent in the Susitna River tributaries.

Harvest restrictions in areas of the Susitna River drainage in 2016 will likely result in a significant amount of sport fishing effort in the Dëshka and Little Susitna rivers. Additional harvest associated with increased angler participation could jeopardize the attainment of the Dëshka 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 60 percent across the Susitna River drainage and 50 percent in the Little Susitna River, providing the greatest potential for achieving escapement goals during 2016 and provide fishing opportunity throughout the season. Below average runs during previous years, past performance of fisheries within the Susitna River and Little Susitna River drainages 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-05-16 imposes gear and harvest restrictions to sport fishing in Eastside 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.

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.