

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-08-16

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Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, July 13, 2016, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.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 restricts sport fishing gear and harvest in the Little Susitna River drainage. It limits gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only. A single-hook is defined as a hook with only one point. In addition, this emergency order prohibits the retention of king salmon (any size) each Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday beginning Sunday, May 1, 2016. Fishing for king salmon is allowed, but king salmon may not be retained or possessed Tuesday – Thursday; king salmon caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately. King salmon may be retained on each Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday in the Little Susitna River. 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 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. (9)(A) and (B) are superseded by this emergency order.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 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) from January 1 – July 13, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, sport fishing is open for king salmon with a bag and possession limit of one king salmon 20 inches or greater in length; from May 1 – July 13, king salmon may only be retained on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

(B) from October 1 – April 30, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used; from May 1 – July 13, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used; from July 14 – August 5, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used;

Sam Cotten
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Sam Ivey
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

Little Susitna River king salmon, like other king salmon stocks throughout Cook Inlet, are experiencing a period of low productivity and, since 2007, below average run strength. The Little Susitna River king salmon sustainable escapement goal is 900 – 1,800 fish. The escapement goal was not achieved in 2010 and 2011. The goal was achieved in 2012 – 2015, but not without preseason actions taken to reduce harvest up to 75 percent. In 2013 – 2015 harvest was restricted to three days per week. Levels of escapement achieved over the past three years warrant adding an additional day of harvest to the sport fishery, which should increase harvest by 300 – 400 fish. Below average runs over previous years, past performance of the king salmon fishery under previous years' management strategies, and uncertainty over how returns may recover in the future justify starting the 2016 season with these restrictions. It is anticipated that these restrictions, combined with an annual limit reduction implemented under a separate emergency order, will reduce harvest by as much as 50 percent. This can be expected to provide the greatest potential for achieving the escapement goal during 2016, yet continue to provide fishing opportunity throughout the season. A weir will be used to assess 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.

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.