

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-RCL-7-01-16

Issued at: Homer, Thursday, December 24, 2015

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Friday, January 1, 2016

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December 31, 2016, unless superseded by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

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes eastside Cook Inlet beach areas from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit to the taking of all clam species. This emergency order is effective beginning 12:01 a.m., Friday, January 1 through 11:59 p.m., Saturday, December 31, 2016.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet — Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area. (a)(14)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 12:01 a.m., Friday, January 1 through 11:59 p.m., Saturday, December 31, 2016:

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet — Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

(a)(14) razor clams: may be taken from January 1 – December 31 except for the following:

(A) the taking of all clam species is closed in eastside Cook Inlet beaches from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit.

Sam Cotten,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Carol Kerkvliet
Fisheries Biologist II

JUSTIFICATION:

In 2015, razor clam abundance surveys were conducted on five beach sections that had historically been monitored. The surveys were used to estimate the abundance of mature (≥ 80 mm) and juvenile (< 80 mm) sized razor clams. Estimated abundances of mature sized razor clams were at historic low levels on all five beach sections. At the Ninilchik South beach section, natural mortality from 2014-2015 of all razor clams was estimated at 54%. Estimated abundances of juvenile size razor clams on the Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beach sections remained at historic low levels and below average recruitment was

observed. At the Oil Pad Access beach section, a large number of age zero razor clams were observed, which resulted in a the highest estimated abundance of juvenile size razor clams for that beach.

The cause of the decline in razor clam abundance on east side beaches is unknown but is thought to have resulted from poor spawning and/or settling success and high natural mortality of mature size razor clams. Additional annual abundance surveys will be conducted in the spring and fall of 2016 to assess razor clam abundance trends.

In 2013, the razor clam bag and possession limit was decreased by emergency order from 60 to the first 25 clams dug for all eastside Cook Inlet beaches. In 2014, a section of the Ninilchik beach was closed to the harvest of clams and the razor clam bag and possession limit was decreased from 60 to the first 25 clams dug on the remaining eastside beaches. In 2015, east side Cook Inlet razor clam beaches were closed on March 1. Any razor clam harvest in 2016 may delay recovery of east side Cook Inlet razor clam populations.

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.