

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-RCL-7-02-18

Issued at: Homer, Friday, December 22, 2017

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Monday, January 1, 2018

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Monday,
December 31, 2018, unless superseded by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.

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annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet — Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area (a)(14)(A) are superseded by this emergency order.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. Monday, January 1 through 11:59 p.m. Monday, December 31, 2018:

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 III

JUSTIFICATION:

In 2017, razor clam abundance surveys were conducted on the Ninilchik South and Clam Gulch North beach sections to estimate the abundance of mature (≥ 80 mm) and juvenile (< 80 mm) sized razor clams. Abundance of mature sized razor clams remained at historical low levels on both beach sections due to high rates of natural mortality and insufficient recruitment of juvenile and mature sized razor clams. Although annual recruitment of juvenile and mature sized razor clams have been low, in 2016 and 2017 well above average recruitment of juvenile sized razor clams were detected on both Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beaches. The above average recruitment signals that the population may be beginning to rebound.

These beach sections will again be surveyed in 2018 so recruitment trends of juvenile sized razor clams to the beach and to mature sized razor clams can be assessed.

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, the majority of the Ninilchik beach area was closed for all clams and the razor clam bag and possession limit was decreased from 60 to the first 25 clams dug on the remaining eastside beaches. The east side Cook Inlet razor clam beaches have remained closed since March 1, 2015.

Cause of the decline in razor clam abundance remains unknown but may include a combination of heavy surf, habitat changes, environmental stressors and predation. The above average recruitment of juvenile sized razor clams observed in 2016 and 2017 indicates that razor clam abundance on these beaches can rebuild naturally.

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.