

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-RCL-7-04-17

Issued at: Homer, Thursday, December 29, 2016

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Sunday, January 1, 2017

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Sunday,
December 31, 2017, unless superseded by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annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet — Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area (a)(14)(A) are superseded by this emergency order.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. Sunday, January 1 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, December 31, 2017:

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 2016, 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 a historic low level on both Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beach sections; however, above average recruitment of juvenile size razor clams were detected on both beach sections. At the Ninilchik South beach section, a new cohort of nearly 0.85 million age-1 razor clams was detected. At the Clam Gulch North beach section, approximately 2.5 million juvenile razor clams were detected. The above average recruitment signals that the population maybe beginning

to rebound. These beach sections will again be surveyed in 2017 so recruitment trends of juvenile razor clam and natural mortality trends of juvenile size and mature size 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.

The cause of the decline in razor clam abundance on east side Cook Inlet beaches remains unknown but is thought to have resulted from a combination of poor spawning and/or settling success and high natural mortality of mature size razor clams. Any razor clam harvest in 2017 will likely 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.