

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 3-KS-I-01-17

Issued at: Glennallen, Monday, March 6, 2017

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Monday, May 1, 2017

Expiration Date: August 11, 2017, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION: This emergency order closes all waters of the Upper Copper River drainage upstream of the south bank of Haley Creek to sport fishing for king salmon. King salmon may not be taken or possessed and must be released immediately. In addition, the use of bait in flowing waters is also prohibited.

REGULATION: The provisions of 5 AAC 52.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area. (a)(3)(A) and (B) and 5 AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area. (3)(A), (9)(B), (12)(C)(i), (E) and (G), (22)(A) (25)(A)(i) and (ii), and (E), and (32) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 12:01 a.m. Monday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Thursday, August 10, 2017:

5 AAC 52.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

(a)(3) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

5 AAC 52.023. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Upper Copper River and Upper Susitna River Area.

(3) in the Copper River drainage, in that portion of the mainstem of the Copper River downstream from the confluence of the Copper River and Slana River,

(A) only unbaited, artificial lures may be used;

(9) in the Gulkana River drainage,

(B) only unbaited, artificial lures may be used in that portion of the mainstem of the Gulkana River upstream from the Richardson Highway Bridge to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately at an unnamed creek flowing into the Gulkana River about seven and one-half miles upstream from the confluence with the West Fork of the Gulkana River;

(12) in the Klutina River drainage, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used;

(C) in all flowing waters upstream of the ADF&G regulatory markers located at Mile 19.2 on the Klutina Lake Road,

(i) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(E) in all flowing waters downstream of the ADF&G regulatory markers located at Mile 19.2 on the Klutina Lake Road, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(G) in all flowing waters downstream of the ADF&G regulatory markers located at Mile 13 on the Klutina Lake Road, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(22) in the Tazlina River drainage,

(A) in all flowing waters entering Tazlina Lake, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(25) in the Tonsina River drainage,

(A) in all flowing waters downstream from the outlet of Tonsina Lake,

(i) only unbaited, artificial lures may be used;

(ii) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(E) in all flowing waters downstream of the downstream edge of the Alyeska Pipeline crossing bridge, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

(32) in the Copper River drainage, downstream of the upstream bank of the Klutina River, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; all king salmon caught incidentally must be released immediately;

Sam Cotten
Commissioner

by delegation to:

Mark A. Somerville
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION: The 2017 forecast for Copper River king salmon is 29,000 fish. This is the lowest forecast for king salmon on the Copper River and is only 5,000 fish over the drainagewide minimum escapement goal for king salmon. The *Copper River King Salmon Fishery Management Plan* directs the department to manage the Copper River fisheries to achieve a sustainable escapement goal in the upper Copper River of 24,000 or more king salmon. Copper River king salmon returns have been below average since 2009 and spawning escapement over the last 5 years (2011-2015) has averaged 24,846 salmon and fell below the minimum escapement goal in 2010, 2014, and 2016. Escapement in 2016 was the lowest ever recorded, at less than 12,000 king salmon. Below average returns during previous years, past performance of fisheries within the Copper River, anticipated subsistence harvest, incidental take in the commercial fishery, and uncertainty over how returns may recover in the future justify closing the Copper River king salmon sport fisheries for the 2017 season.

The department will monitor the 2017 Copper River king salmon run as it develops. If indicators of abundance suggest the 2017 run is stronger than forecast, the department will reevaluate these preseason restrictions and, if justified, will relax the closures.

DISTRIBUTION: The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region III Office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701, (907) 459-7357 and the Glennallen Area Office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, PO Box 47, Glennallen, AK 99588, (907) 822-3309.