

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 3-KS-Y-03-17

Issued at: Fairbanks, Monday, April 17, 2017

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

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Sunday,
December 31, 2017, unless superseded by
subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes all waters of the Yukon River drainage (excluding the Tanana River drainage) to sport fishing for king salmon.

All king salmon caught incidentally in the Yukon River drainage (excluding the Tanana River drainage) while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

REGULATION:


The provisions of 5 AAC 73.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Yukon River Area. (b)(1) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, 12:01 a.m. Monday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, December 31, 2017:

5 AAC 73.010. Seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Yukon River Area.

(b)(1) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed. Any king salmon incidentally caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

Sam Cotten
Commissioner

by delegation to:


Heather Scannell
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

King salmon stocks throughout western Alaska are continuing to experience a period of low productivity and, since at least 2010, below average run strength. The 2017 preseason outlook indicates that the Yukon River king salmon run in 2017 will be below average, with no or very little harvestable surplus available. In 4 of the past 9 years the interim management escapement goal for king salmon passage into Canada was not attained, and during 2009, 2011, 2014, 2015, and 2016 the interim goal was attained only due to increasingly conservative management, including closures or severe restrictions to subsistence opportunity, complete closure of directed commercial fishing and no sale of king salmon caught during chum salmon commercial fishing periods, and sport fishery closures. To conserve king salmon bound for Canada and to account for uncertainty in the preseason outlook, the Alaska Board of Fisheries amended the Yukon River King Salmon Management Plan in January 2013. This amendment (5 AAC 05.360 (j)(1)) states that the department shall not open any subsistence fishing periods in Districts 1 and 2 during the first pulse of king salmon migration.

Under the 2017 preseason management strategy, the subsistence fishery for king salmon will close with the first arrival of king salmon in the coastal districts. This closure may be implemented chronologically in each district with the upriver migration of king salmon. No directed commercial fishery for king salmon or sale of king salmon caught incidentally in other commercial fisheries will be permitted. The use of selective fishing gear (dip nets, beach seines, and closely attended wheels) will be required during the commercial summer chum salmon fishery openings that occur when king salmon are present; king salmon caught incidentally during these periods must be released immediately to the water alive. The anticipated low abundance of king salmon into the Yukon River, the recent struggles to meet Canadian border passage goals and escapement targets in Alaska, and restrictions placed on the subsistence fishery, warrant a closure to sport fishing for king salmon in the Yukon River drainage.

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) 459-7207.