

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-22-18

Issued at: Palmer, Wednesday, June 20, 2018

Effective Date: 6:00 a.m. Friday, June 22, 2018

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 13, 2018,
unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order supersedes Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-10-18 issued in Palmer on March 13, 2018. This emergency order closes the Susitna River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon and limits sport fishing gear for other species to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure when fishing in Units 1 - 6 of the Susitna River drainage in those waters normally open to king salmon fishing. Single hook is defined as a hook with only one point.

Fishing for other finfish species remains open. In the waters of Unit 2 normally open to king salmon fishing, fishing for trout and other species is allowed seven days per week from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. King salmon may not be targeted and those caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 61.110. (1)(A) and (B)(i), 5 AAC 61.112. (1), (4), (6)(A) and (B), 5 AAC 61.114. (1) and (3), 5 AAC 61.116. (2), 5 AAC 61.118. (1), (4), and (7)(A), 5 AAC 61.120. (1), and 5 AAC 61.122. (1) and (4)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 6:00 a.m. Friday, June 22 through 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 13, 2018:

5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area.

1) king salmon

(A) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

(B) less than 20 inches in length

(i) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

5 AAC 61.112. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 1 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(4) sport fishing for king salmon is closed;

(6) in the Deshka River drainage, including Trapper Lake,
(A) in flowing waters upstream of the Moose/Kroto Creeks, only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure may be used;

(B) from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located 300 feet downstream of the weir (river mile 7), and in all waters within a one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish; from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers near Chijuk Creek (river mile 17), and in all waters within a one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River, only one, unbaited, single hook, artificial lure may be used; the remainder of the drainage is closed to sport fishing for king salmon;

5 AAC 61.114. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) from January 1 - July 13, Unit 2 is open to sport fishing for all finfish species, except king salmon; sport fishing for king salmon is closed;

(3) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(15) from May 15 – July 13, sport fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.;

5 AAC 61.116. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 3 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(2) from May 15 – July 13, fishing for king salmon is closed; sport fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.;

5 AAC 61.118. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(2) from May 15 – July 13, sport fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.;

(4) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

(7) in the Lake Creek drainage,

(A) from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 100 yards upstream of its mouth to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately one-quarter mile upstream of Bulchitna Lake, only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure may be used;

5 AAC 61.120. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 5 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(2) from May 1 – July 13, sport fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.;

5AAC 61.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 6 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(4) in the East Fork of the Chulitna River drainage, including all waters within a one-quarter mile radius of its confluence of the East Fork and West Fork and including the Middle Fork of the Chulitna and the first quarter mile of Honolulu Creek,

(A) the waters are open to sport fishing for all finfish species, except for king salmon; sport fishing for king salmon is closed;

Sam Cotten,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Sam Ivey,
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

Emergency order No. 2-KS-2-10-18 issued prior to the season closed king salmon sport fisheries in Units 2, 3, 5, and 6 of the Susitna River (Parks Highway streams) and restricted the Deshka River and Unit 4 of the Susitna River (Yentna drainage) to nonretention in anticipation of run similar in size as 2017. The low forecast was driven by a predicted low return of 5-year old king salmon and uncertainty in the forecast of 4-year old fish. 5-year old fish typically constitute about half a given year's run. To date, sizes of fish observed in department fishwheels on the lower Susitna River, the Deshka River weir, and reports from anglers suggest low abundance of age five fish. Other areas of Cook Inlet and the state are experiencing low returns of older age classes leading to widespread closures of Cook Inlet king salmon sport fisheries. In addition, all indices of abundance indicate king salmon run strength in the Susitna drainage to be lower than anticipated at the outset of the season.

The sustainable escapement goal (SEG) for king salmon in the Deshka River is 13,000 to 28,000 fish, as measured at the weir located at river mile 7. Based upon average run timing, approximately 50 percent of the escapement should have passed the weir by June 19, 2018. At this time, only 3,983 fish have passed the weir and the total escapement is projected to be approximately 7,472 fish. ADF&G monitors escapement by post season aerial count of spawners on three streams within the Yentna River drainage that have SEGs: Peters Creek, Lake Creek, and Talachulitna River. All three SEGs were missed in 2017. Any additional mortality associated with continued catch-and-release fishing cannot be justified, and all fish within the Deshka River and Yentna drainage must be conserved to provide the greatest potential for achieving escapement goals in 2018.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-10-18, which closed fishing for king salmon in Units 2, 3, 5, and 6 of the Susitna River, prohibited the retention of king salmon in the Deshka River and Unit 4 of the Susitna River drainage and limited sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only, is superseded by this emergency order.

DISTRIBUTION:

The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region II Office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, (907) 267-2218.