

# SPORT FISHING

## *Emergency Order*

ALASKA DEPARTMENT  
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-05-19

Issued at: Palmer, Monday, January 7, 2019

Effective Date: 6:00 a.m. Wednesday, May 1, 2019

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Saturday,  
July 13, 2019, unless superseded by  
subsequent emergency order.

### **EXPLANATION:**

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), (3) and (15), 5 AAC 61.116. (2), 5 AAC 61.118. (1), (2), (4), and (7)(A), 5 AAC 61.120. (1) and (2), and 5 AAC 61.122. (1) and (4)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 6:00 a.m. Wednesday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Saturday, July 13, 2019:

#### **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;

Doug Vincent-Lang,  
Acting Commissioner

By delegation to:

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Sam Ivey,  
Area Management Biologist

**JUSTIFICATION:**

The Susitna River, Little Susitna River, and other king salmon stocks throughout Cook Inlet are experiencing a period of low productivity and, since 2007, below average run strength. The department monitors escapement on 24 streams within the Northern Cook Inlet Area, of which 17 have established escapement goals. King salmon counts have ranged from below average to poor since 2007.

The preseason forecast for the Deshka River king salmon run is 8,500 age 1.2-1.4 fish, which is below the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 13,000-28,000 fish. For the second consecutive year, a sibling model suggests a potential weak run of 5-year old fish. 5-year old fish typically constitute about half a given year's run. The sibling model was accurate in predicting a low return of 5-year old fish in 2018. There is also uncertainty in the forecast of 4-year old fish in 2019. The Deshka River failed to achieve its sustainable escapement goal (SEG) the past two years, despite preseason and inseason actions to restrict and eventually close the sport fishery in each year. The potential for a run size less than experienced in 2017 and 2018, warrants closure from the outset of the season.

The department monitors escapement on three streams of the Yentna River drainage (Unit 4 of the Susitna River) with established escapement goals. All escapement goals in 2017 were missed even after fisheries were closed late in the season. All SEGs were missed in 2018, despite these fisheries being restricted preseason to nonretention and eventually closed mid-season. Given that low abundance of 4-year old fish in 2017 and low abundance of 4-year old and 5-year old fish in 2018 was widespread throughout the Susitna River drainage, as evidenced by age data collected at fish wheels and reports from guides and anglers, it is assumed the low Deshka River forecast will be reflective of other areas of the Susitna River drainage during 2019. Areas within the Susitna River drainage have demonstrated an inability to achieve escapement goals when restricted to nonretention during low run years and warrant closure.

The department monitors escapement on eight streams on the Eastside Susitna River (Units 2, 3, 5, and 6) with established escapement goals. Most goals in this area were missed in 2017 despite these fisheries being restricted to nonretention from the outset of the season and eventually closed midseason. All goals were missed in 2018 even though sport fisheries in this area were closed the entire season.

Below average runs during previous years, past performance of fisheries within the Susitna River drainage under previous years' management strategies, and uncertainty over how returns may recover in the future justify starting the 2019 season with these restrictions. In addition to these management actions to the sport fishery, the Northern District commercial king salmon fishery will also be closed. Data gathered from weirs, fishwheels, and aerial surveys will be used to gauge run strength during the season.

**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.