

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-41-20

Issued at: Soldotna Wednesday, July 22, 2020

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Friday, July 24, 2020

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 31, 2020, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order supersedes Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-34-20, issued Monday, July 13, 2020. This emergency order closes the Kenai River drainage to fishing for king salmon and prohibits the use of bait in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to ADF&G markers located at the outlet of Skilak Lake. This closure prohibits all sport fishing for king salmon, including catch-and-release fishing. King salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

REGULATION:

Consistent with the stipulations within 5 AAC 21.359. *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*. (d)(1), the provisions of 5 AAC 57.120. (2)(A) and (3)(A) and 5 AAC 57.121. (1)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. The following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Friday, July 24 through 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 31, 2020:

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

(2) king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, as follows:

(A) from July 24 – July 31, in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to ADF&G markers located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, is closed to sport fishing for king salmon; king salmon may not be possessed or retained and may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

(3) king salmon less than 20 inches in length as follows:

(A) in flowing waters and unstocked lakes and ponds and in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to ADF&G markers located at the outlet of Skilak Lake from July 24 – July 31, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be possessed or retained and may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.

(1) sport fishing gear restrictions:

(A) from July 24 – July 31, in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake; only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Colton G. Lipka
Fisheries Biologist III

JUSTIFICATION:

The purpose of 5 AAC 21.359 *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan* is to ensure adequate escapement of late-run king salmon into the Kenai River system and provide management guidelines to the department. The optimal escapement goal (OEG) for late-run Kenai River king salmon is 15,000 to 30,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer.

In 2020, king salmon runs throughout Cook Inlet have consistently and significantly underperformed preseason expectations resulting in restrictions and closures of inriver and marine sport fisheries. Through July 21, 2020, approximately 4,520 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer have passed the river mile 13.7 king salmon sonar, the midpoint of the late run is historically around July 26. Inseason projections estimate an escapement of approximately 12,700 large king salmon under the current management strategy. Without further restrictions to harvest and effort, the OEG for Kenai River late-run king salmon is not expected to be achieved. Therefore, consistent with the management plan, it is warranted to close sport fishing for late-run king salmon in the Kenai River. As further specified in the management plan, if the projected late run escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon 75 cm mid eye to tail fork the department shall close the sport fisheries in the Kenai River and the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon. In addition, it shall close the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the Kenai River and within one and one-half miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline south of the Kenai river; and close the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict and the Central District.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-34-20 issued on July 13, 2020, prohibited the retention of king salmon while sport fishing in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek. Only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used when sport fishing in these waters.

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.