

# SPORT FISHING

## *Emergency Order*

ALASKA DEPARTMENT  
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

**Emergency Order No.** 2-KS-1-22-20

**Issued at:** Soldotna, Monday, June 15, 2020

**Effective Date:** 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, July 1, 2020

**Expiration Date:** 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 31, 2020, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

### **EXPLANATION:**

This emergency order supersedes EO 2-KS-1-17-20 issued June 8, 2020, and prohibits the use of bait and the retention of king salmon that are 34 inches and longer in length 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. Sport fishing for king salmon of all sizes remains closed in the Kenai River from Slikok Creek to Skilak Lake through July 31, 2020.

### **REGULATION:**

The provisions of 5 AAC 57.120(a)(2)(A)(i), (a)(3)(A) and (C), and 5 AAC 57.121(1)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective beginning 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, July 1 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**

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

(A) may be taken only from July 1– July 31, in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of the Slikok Creek, with a bag and possession limit of one fish, as follows:

(i) from July 1– July 31, from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek, only king salmon that are less than 34 inches in length as measured from tip of snout to tip of tail may be retained; and from July 1 – July 31, from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of the Slikok Creek upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, is closed to fishing for king salmon; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish:

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

(A) from July 1 - July 31, in unstocked lakes and ponds and that portion of the Kenai River from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek, upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake, are closed to sport fishing for king salmon;

(C) from July 1 - July 31, may be taken in flowing waters and unstocked lakes and ponds and 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, bag and possession limit of 10 fish;

#### **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 January 1 - July 31, in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards, upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used.

Doug Vincent-Lang,  
Commissioner

By delegation to:

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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.

If realized, the 2020 total run preseason outlook of 22,707 large late-run Kenai River king salmon will be approximately 60% (8,900 fish) larger than the 2019 preliminary estimated total run of 12,780 large fish; be about half of the 1986–2019 average of approximately 43,000 large fish and be comparable to the recent 5-year 2015–2019 average total run of about 21,600 large fish. The 80% prediction interval for the 2020 run of large fish is 13,225 to 29,337 fish and estimated exploitation rate in a fishery restricted to no bait of between 10 to 20%.

The return of 6-year old king salmon (brood year 2014) in the Kenai River early run is weaker than anticipated. Using the sibling ratio in the early-run to estimate the strength of 6-year olds expected in the late-run indicates late-run performance of older fish may be weaker than forecast. Overall run strength could depend on how well the 5-year old king salmon (brood year 2015) performs. Since the early-run large fish are in low abundance, it is anticipated the late-run, based on early-run/late-run correlation, may be low as well.

Consistent with the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*, beginning the fishery by prohibiting bait and retention of king salmon 34 inches and greater in length is necessary to achieve the OEG. As specified in the management plan, if bait is prohibited in the sport fishery, the retention of king salmon is prohibited in the personal use fishery, and if the use of bait and the retention of king salmon 34 inches and greater in length is prohibited, then commercial fishing periods of the Upper Subdistrict, excluding the East Foreland Section, will be open for no more than 36 hours a week.

**PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:**

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-17-20 issued June 8, 2020, is superseded by this EO. EO 2-KS-1-17-20 closed sport fishing for king salmon of all sizes in the Kenai River from the mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake through June 30, 2020, and from Slikok Creek to Skilak Lake through July 31, 2020. Fishing for king salmon in the Kenai River from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake will remain closed through July 31, 2020, to continue protecting early-run king salmon as they move upriver.

**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.