

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-RCL-7-03-20

Issued at: Homer, January 2, 2020

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Friday, January 3, 2020

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December 31, 2020, unless superseded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

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes eastside Cook Inlet beach areas from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit to the taking of all clam species.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 58.022. (a)(14)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Friday, January 3 through 11:59 p.m. Thursday, December 31, 2020:

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet - Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

(a)(14) razor clams: may be taken from January 1–December 31 as follows:

(A) from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit is closed to the taking of all clam species.

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Mike Booz
Fisheries Biologist III

JUSTIFICATION:

In 2019, razor clam studies were conducted on the Ninilchik South, Ninilchik North, and Clam Gulch North beach sections to estimate abundance of adult (≥ 80 mm) and juvenile (< 80 mm) sized razor clams, recruitment of both size classes, annual growth, and natural mortality. In 2019, adult abundances did not improve and remained below average at all beaches. The density of juvenile sized razor clams increased on Clam Gulch beaches from continued recruitment, but juvenile clam density decreased by approximately 48% at Ninilchik South. In 2017 and 2018, the growth of juvenile clams was below average on Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beaches, which resulted in fewer than expected juvenile sized razor clams recruiting to the adult size in 2019. From 2018 to 2019, natural mortality of adult sized razor clams was over 75% at both Ninilchik and Clam Gulch.

This is the eighth consecutive year in which the eastside Cook Inlet beach razor clam sport fishery has been restricted or closed by emergency order because any razor clam harvest will likely delay recovery of the population. Causes of the decline in razor clam abundance remains unknown, but may include a combination of heavy surf, habitat changes, environmental stressors, and predation. Eastside Cook Inlet razor clam populations are rebuilding, but it is uncertain if the trend will continue into 2020. Razor clam studies will be conducted again in the spring of 2020 on Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beaches and will be

used to assess potential harvest opportunity after adult abundances are available in late May. Based on the 2019 studies, there may be sufficient abundances of adult size clams at the Ninilchik beaches to support a limited harvest opportunity if survival rates are moderate.

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.