

PERSONAL USE

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-RCL-7-05-21

Issued at: Homer, Thursday, December 24, 2020

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Friday, January 1, 2021

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Friday, December 31, 2021, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.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 77.518. (1) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Friday, January 1 through 11:59 p.m. Friday, December 31, 2021:

5 AAC 77.518 Personal use clam fishery. In the personal use taking of clams,

(1) there is no closed season, except beaches in east Cook Inlet from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit are closed to the taking of all clam species;

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Mike Booz
Fisheries Biologist III

JUSTIFICATION:

In 2020, 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 2020, adult razor clam abundances improved at both Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beaches but were still below their historical averages. Juvenile razor clam abundances were similar to their historical averages at Ninilchik beaches and well above-average at Clam Gulch. From 2019 to 2020 natural mortality of adult razor clams at Ninilchik beaches was approximately 70%, which resulted in a loss of over 2 million clams. Although juvenile clam abundances remain average to above average, recruitment of new juvenile clams to the Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beaches were below average in 2020.

The causes of the high natural mortality rate remains unknown, but may include a combination of heavy surf, habitat changes, environmental stressors, and predation. Razor clam populations are rebuilding on these beaches but given the high rates of natural mortality and inconsistent annual recruitment, there's uncertainty with how many clams will be on these beaches next spring. Razor clam studies will be conducted again in the spring of 2021 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 2020 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.