

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

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

Issued at: Soldotna, Monday, June 6, 2022

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, June 8, 2022

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Sunday, July 31, 2022, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order supersedes Emergency Order 2-KS-1-21-22, issued May 30, 2022, and Emergency Order 2-KS-1-09-22, issued January 26, 2022. Sport fishing for king salmon of all sizes in the Kenai River is closed from the mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake from 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, June 8 through 11:59 p.m. Thursday, June 30, 2022. Fishing for king salmon will remain closed from 12:01 a.m. Friday, July 1 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, July 31, 2022, in waters of the Kenai River drainage from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek, upstream to 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 accidentally caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

Additionally, 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 from 12:01 a.m. Friday July 1, through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, July 31, 2022, is restricted to the use of only one unbaited, single-hook artificial lure, and anglers may not retain king salmon of any size. King salmon may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 57.120. (a)(2)(A)(i) and (a)(3)(A) and 5 AAC 57.121. (1)(B) are superseded by this emergency order. The provisions of 5 AAC 57.120. (a)(3)(C) are added by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, June 8 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, July 31, 2022.

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 January 1 – July 31, in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, as follows:

(i) from June 8 – June 30, from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, is closed to sport fishing for king salmon, and from July 1 – July 31, from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, king salmon may not be retained or possessed, king salmon may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately; 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 June 8 – June 30, in unstocked lakes and ponds and in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker at the outlet of Skilak Lake, are closed to sport fishing for king salmon; 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 not be retained or possessed, may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately; 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:

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:

- (B) 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 Slikok Creek, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used:

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner



By delegation to:

Colton G. Lipka
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

Consistent with 5 AAC 57.160. *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-Run King Salmon Management Plan*, From January 1 – June 30, from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of the Slikok Creek, if the inseason inriver run projection is below the lower end of the optimal escapement goal, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the sport fishery to the taking of king salmon. In addition, from January 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, if the inseason inriver run projection is below the lower end of the optimal escapement goal, the commissioner shall close, by emergency order, the sport fishery to the taking of king salmon.

The optimal escapement goal (OEG) for early-run Kenai River king salmon is 3,900 – 6,600 large king salmon (75 cm mid eye to tail fork length and longer). Current projection indicates that the 2022 total run will be significantly less than the forecast of ~4,300 large early-run Kenai River king salmon. Through June 6, 2022, an estimated 265 large king salmon have been enumerated past the RM 13.7 king salmon sonar falling well below the preseason forecast. The inseason escapement projection ranges from

approximately 929 based on average run timing to 2,129 based on a run timing of 5 days late. Therefore, it is warranted to close fishing on the Kenai River for early-run tributary spawning king salmon as directed in the management plan.

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.

The 2022 forecast for the stock of large (> 75 cm mid eye-to-tail-fork-length [METF] or approximately > 34 inches in total length) late-run king salmon in the Kenai River is 16,004 fish. Based upon the difference between the forecast and actual total run from 2017-2021 there is an 80% chance the total run will be 4,084 to 27,924 fish. This prediction interval is wide and indicates a 20% chance the total run could be outside the prediction interval. The forecast is below the 1986-2021 average run of approximately 41,600 fish and less than the recent 5-year 2017-2021 average total run of approximately 17,600 large fish. If realized, this run will rank the 6th lowest (32nd out of 37 years); though larger than the 2021 preliminary estimated total run of 12,665 large fish. These estimates provide for only minimal mortality to be able to achieve the OEG.

Consistent with the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*, prohibiting bait and retention of king salmon 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 is prohibited, then commercial fishing periods of the Upper Subdistrict, will be open for no more than 24 hours a week.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-21-22, issued Monday, May 30, 2022, which prohibited the retention of king salmon while sport fishing in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake is superseded by this emergency order. Additionally, this emergency order closed sport fishing for king salmon from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake. Additionally, Emergency Order 2-KS-1-09-22, issued Wednesday, January 26, 2022, which restricts sport fishing in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake to the use of only one unbaited, single-hook artificial lure, and anglers may not retain king salmon of any size while sport fishing through July 31, 2022.

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.