

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-7-10-22

Issued at: Homer, Wednesday, January 26, 2022

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Sunday, May 1, 2022

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unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order reduces the annual limit of king salmon 20 inches or greater in length harvested between May 1 and July 31 in Cook Inlet salt waters north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.) from five to two fish and prohibits king salmon fishing (including catch-and-release) while sport fishing between May 1 and July 31 within one mile of shore in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.). King salmon incidentally caught while fishing for other fish may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

Any king salmon recorded for the above waters on an Alaska sport fishing license or harvest record card will also count towards the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 58.022. (b)(1)(A)(i) are superseded by this emergency order. The provisions of 5 AAC 58.055 (g) are added by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Sunday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, July 31, 2022:

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

(b)(1) in waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.):

(A) king salmon:

(i) from April 1 – August 31; bag and possession limit of one fish; no size limit; an annual harvest limit of five king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, of which only two of the five limit can be taken from May 1- July 31, except as provided in (c) of this section; a harvest card is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water shall be retained and becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

5 AAC 58.055. Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan.

(g) Notwithstanding (d) of this section, from May 1 through July 31, in the Cook Inlet salt waters within 1 mile of shore north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat.) sport fishing is allowed, sport fishing for king salmon is prohibited; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:



Mike Booz
Lower Cook Inlet Sport Fish Area Manager

JUSTIFICATION:

King salmon harvest in the Upper Cook Inlet summer saltwater fishery north of the latitude of Bluff Point is composed of a mixture of returning early-run and late-run Cook Inlet king salmon and feeder king salmon stocks from outside of Cook Inlet. Given the uncertainty of run strength in 2022 for all Cook Inlet king salmon stocks, including Kenai Peninsula and Northern Cook Inlet, it is justified to begin the season conservatively. Many of the inriver sport fisheries for the stocks that contribute to the harvest in the Upper Cook Inlet summer saltwater fishery are also starting with preseason emergency order restrictions. Despite the preseason and inseason restrictions in 2020 and 2021, the sustainable escapement goals for several Cook Inlet stocks, including the Kenai River late-run, were not met. Based on genetic analysis from 2014–2018, approximately 10% to 25% of the early run harvest north of Bluff Point originated from Cook Inlet streams. In waters north of Bluff Point, maturing king salmon (spawners) tend to be harvested near shore at a greater rate than they are more than 1 mile offshore. From 2014–2018, the king salmon harvest north of Bluff Point >1 mile from shore was primarily comprised of outside Cook Inlet stocks. Therefore, it is justified to prohibit sport fishing for king salmon in salt waters within one mile of shore while these locally spawning king salmon migrate through the area and into fresh water.

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.