

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-7-12-23

Issued at: Homer, Thursday, March 02, 2023

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Saturday, May 27, 2023

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, October 31, 2023, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order changes the king salmon bag and possession limits in the Ninilchik River to hatchery king salmon only. During the Memorial Day weekend (May 27 – 29, 2023), and the following two weekends and the Monday following each weekend (June 3 – 5 and June 10 – 12) and from June 16 – October 31, the bag and possession limit is two hatchery king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, and 10 hatchery king salmon under 20 inches. During the Youth-Only Fishery on Wednesday, June 7 the bag and possession limit is two hatchery king salmon of any size. From May 27 – June 12, after harvesting two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, anglers must stop fishing in the Ninilchik River, Deep Creek, and the Anchor River for the rest of that day. From June 16 – October 31, after harvesting two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, anglers must stop fishing in the Ninilchik River for the rest of that day. This emergency order also restricts gear to single-hook but allows the use of bait from May 27 – July 15.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 56.122. (a)(6)(D)(i), (a)(6)(D)(ii), and (a)(6)(G) are superseded by this emergency order. The provisions of 5 AAC 56.122 (a)(6)(A)(iii) are added by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Saturday, May 27 through 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, October 31, 2023:

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

(a)(6) Ninilchik River drainage:

(A) only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used

(iii) except from May 27 – May 29, June 3 – June 5, June 7, June 10 – June 12, and June 16 – July 15, from its mouth upstream approximately two miles to ADF&G regulatory markers, one baited single-hook or single-hook, artificial lure, with bait may be used;

(D) open to sport fishing for king salmon from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately two miles upstream

(i) on Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends; bag and possession limit of two hatchery king salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, 10 hatchery king salmon under 20 inches; naturally-produced king salmon may not be retained; a person who takes and retains two hatchery king salmon 20 inches or greater in length from the Ninilchik River may not sport fish in the Ninilchik River, Deep Creek, or Anchor River for the rest of that day;

(ii) From June 16 – October 31; bag and possession limit of two hatchery king salmon, 20 inches or greater in length, 10 hatchery king salmon under 20 inches; naturally-produced king salmon may not be retained; a person who takes and retains

two hatchery king salmon 20 inches or greater in length from the Ninilchik River may not sport fish in the Ninilchik River for the rest of that day; and (G) the Ninilchik River from the outlet of the Ninilchik small boat harbor to ADF&G regulatory markers just upstream from the Sterling Highway Bridge is open to sport fishing to a person under 16 years of age during the designated youth fishery which occurs on the second Wednesday after Memorial Day between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 9:59 p.m.; king salmon bag and possession limit is two hatchery king salmon of any size; a person who takes and retains two hatchery king salmon may not sport fish in the Ninilchik River for the rest of the day.

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Mike Booz

Mike Booz
Lower Cook Inlet Sport Fish Area Manager

JUSTIFICATION:

The Ninilchik River sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 750–1,300 naturally-produced king salmon was not achieved in 2022 for the first year since 2009. The Ninilchik River is also stocked with hatchery king salmon to provide additional harvest opportunity for sport anglers, buffer the harvest of naturally-produced king salmon during years of below average runs, and provide broodstock to support the Kachemak Bay stocking program. Only naturally-produced king salmon can be used for broodstock for stocking the Ninilchik River. The broodstock collection goal for stocking the Ninilchik River was met or reduced in most recent years.

Since 2013, hatchery fish in excess of those needed for broodstock have been culled during egg takes to minimize the hatchery contribution to the escapement and minimize genetic effects of hatchery king salmon on the stock. Harvest of hatchery king salmon in the sport fishery decreases the number of hatchery fish that return to the weir in excess of those needed for broodstock and helps reduce the hatchery contribution to the escapement. In the last three years, there has been an excess of over 1,000 hatchery fish after the fishery and broodstock collection. Increasing the bag limit will provide additional harvest opportunity while reducing the hatchery fish in the escapement.

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.