

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-RC-7-23-23

Issued at: Homer, Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Saturday, July 1, 2023

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, July 4, 2023, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order reduces the bag limit for razor clams from 30 to 15 and shortens the season from May 1 through September 30 to July 1 through July 4 in the Ninilchik Area.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 58.040(b)(2) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Saturday, July 1 through 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, July 4, 2023:

5 AAC 58.040. East Cook Inlet Razor Clam Sport Fishery Management Plan.

(b)(2) in the Ninilchik Area, razor clams may be taken from July 1 through July 4 and the bag and possession limits are the first 15 clams taken or possessed;

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:


Mike Booz
Lower Cook Inlet Sport Fish Area Manager

JUSTIFICATION:

In April and May 2023, razor clam abundance was assessed at the Clam Gulch north beach and Ninilchik south beach. The Clam Gulch adult abundance was 520,881 clams, which was 46% below the abundance threshold to open the limited fishery in the Clam Gulch Area. That area will remain closed. In the Ninilchik Area, the adult abundance was 322,217 clams, which was 35% above the abundance threshold to open the limited fishery in the Ninilchik Area. Although the 2023 Ninilchik south beach adult abundance is one of the best observed since 2013, the juvenile abundance is the lowest since that time. That, coupled with unknown anticipated effort in the Ninilchik Area in 2023, warrants reducing the season and bag and possession limits to ensure that the harvest does not exceed 10% of the adult abundance as specified in the management plan. Trends in natural mortality and juvenile recruitment to the beaches since the fishery closed indicate that razor clams in east Cook Inlet are successfully spawning and settling as juveniles on the beaches but continue to have very poor survival as juveniles and adults. Maintaining a low harvest rate will allow the opportunity for the clams to rebuild while providing a small harvest opportunity on clams that have previously spawned.

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.