

# SPORT FISHING

## *Emergency Order*

ALASKA DEPARTMENT  
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

**Emergency Order No. 3-CS-W-17-23**

**Issued at:** Fairbanks, Monday, July 17, 2023

**Effective Date:** 12:01 a.m. Wednesday,  
July 19, 2023

**Expiration Date:** 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, August 15,  
2023, unless superseded by subsequent emergency  
order.

### EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes sport fishing for chum salmon in all waters of the Unalakleet and Shaktoolik River drainages. Chum salmon may not be targeted and those caught incidentally while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

### REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 70.011(c)(9)(C) are superseded and 5 AAC 70.011(c)(11) are added by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, July 19 through 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, August 15, 2023:

#### **5 AAC 70.011. Seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the Northwestern Area.**

(c) The following are the exceptions to the general bag, possession, and size limits, and fishing seasons specified in (a) and (b) of this section for the Northwestern Area:

(9) in the Unalakleet River drainage,

(C) the bag and possession limit for salmon, other than king salmon, is 10 fish, or which only four fish in combination may be coho or sockeye salmon; sport fishing for chum salmon is closed; chum salmon may not be retained or possessed; chum salmon caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a chum salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

(11) in the Shaktoolik River drainage, sport fishing for chum salmon is closed; chum salmon may not be retained or possessed; chum salmon caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a chum salmon from the water before releasing the fish.

Douglas Vincent-Lang  
Commissioner



By delegation to: \_\_\_\_\_

Brendan Scanlon  
Northwest and North Slope Area Biologist

**JUSTIFICATION:**

Chum salmon stocks throughout western Alaska continue to experience poor returns, and escapement counts at the North River (a tributary of the Unalakleet River) counting tower and the Unalakleet River weir are well below recent averages. As of July 9, the last day of complete counts, 9 chum salmon have passed the North River tower. The most recent 5-year average count for this date is 2,654 chum salmon.

Additionally, as of July 9, 1,266 chum salmon have passed through the Unalakleet River weir. The most recent 5-year average count for this date is 21,826 chum salmon. On the Shaktoolik River, counts of chum salmon are well behind recent averages as well. Since July 9, high water has disabled operations at the Shaktoolik River tower, the North River tower, and the Unalakleet River weir, and high water is expected to continue for several days. Due to the well below average counts at both locations and the continued inability to measure escapement due to high water, the closure of the chum salmon sport fishery in the Unalakleet and Shaktoolik River drainages is warranted.

**PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:** Emergency Order 3-KS-W-05-23 issued March 29, 2023, closed the fresh waters from Bald Head to Point Romanof in Northwest Alaska to sport fishing for king salmon. In addition, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used in these drainages when fishing for other species. This emergency order remains in effect through 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, August 15, 2023.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region III Office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701, (907) 459-7207.