

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-11-26

Issued at: Palmer, Monday, February 9, 2026

Effective Date: 6:00 a.m. Friday, May 1, 2026

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Monday, July 13, 2026, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes the Little Susitna River to sport fishing for king salmon and limits sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure with a gap of one-half inch or less, when fishing for other species. The closure prohibits sport fishing for king salmon, including catch-and-release fishing. King salmon may not be taken or possessed; king salmon incidentally caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately. The area affected by this emergency order includes all waters of the Little Susitna River from its confluence with Cook Inlet upstream to the Parks Highway Bridge.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 60.122(a)(9)(A)(B) and (D) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 6:00 a.m. Friday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Monday, July 13, 2026:

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

(9) in the Little Susitna River drainage,

(A) from May 1 – July 13, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be taken or possessed; king salmon caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

(B) from May 1 – July 13, in flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure with a gap between point and shank of one-half inch or less may be used;

(D) from May 1 – July 13, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; sport fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

Doug Vincent-Lang
Commissioner

By delegation to:


Samantha Oslund
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

Little Susitna River king salmon, like other king salmon stocks throughout Cook Inlet, are experiencing a period of low productivity and, since 2007, below average run strength. The Little Susitna River king salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) is 2,100 – 4,300 fish as measured by weir counts. Low runs were experienced in 2022 – 2025. The goal was achieved in 2022 only after the sport fishery was closed midseason. The SEG was not achieved in 2023 despite a midseason closure and missed in 2024 – 2025 despite the fishery being closed for the entire season. A poor king salmon run is expected to the Susitna River drainage in 2026 due to a shortage of 4 and 5-year old fish. A similarly poor run is likely to occur on the Little Susitna River. Given the 2026 run may be smaller than in 2025, a year in which the SEG was not achieved, and in anticipation of effort diverted from closure of the Susitna River drainage, it is prudent the Little Susitna River sport fishery be closed to fishing for king salmon.

DISTRIBUTION:

The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region II Office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, (907) 267-2218.