

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-12-26

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unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.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 Susitna River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon. In addition, sport fishing gear is limited to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure with a gap between the point and the shank of the hook that is half-inch or less when fishing in all flowing waters of the Susitna River drainage (Units 1-6). Single hook is defined as a hook with only one point.

In waters normally open to king salmon fishing, fishing for trout and other species continues to be allowed seven days per week from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. King salmon may not be targeted and those caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 61.110(a)(1), 5 AAC 61.112(1), (2), (4), (6)(A) and (B), 5 AAC 61.114(1)(3) and (15), 5 AAC 61.116(1) and (2), 5 AAC 61.118(1), (2), (4), (6)(A), and (7)(A) and (C), 5 AAC 61.120(1) and (2), and 5 AAC 61.122(1) and (4)(A) are superseded and 5 AAC 61.112(6)(F) are added by this emergency order.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 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(a)(1) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

5 AAC 61.112. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 1 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used, with a gap between the point and shank of the hook that is half-inch or less;

(2) 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;

(4) sport fishing for king salmon is closed;

(6) in the Deshka River drainage, including Trapper Lake,

(A) in flowing waters, including waters within a one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used, with a gap between the point and shank of the hook that is half-inch or less;

(B) from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers near Chijuk Creek (river mile 17), and in all waters within a one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; 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;

(F) the remainder of the Deshka River drainage is closed to sport fishing for king salmon; 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;

5 AAC 61.114. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) from January 1 – July 13, Unit 2 is open to sport fishing for all finfish species, except king salmon; sport fishing for king salmon is closed; 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;

(3) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used, with a gap between the point and shank of the hook that is half-inch or less;

(15) 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

5 AAC 61.116. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 3 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used, with a gap between the point and shank of the hook that is half-inch or less;

(2) 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;

5 AAC 61.118. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used, with a gap between the point and shank of the hook that is half - inch or less;

(2) 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;

(4) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

(6) in the Fish Lake Creek drainage,

(A) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; 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;

(7) in the Lake Creek drainage,

(A) from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 100 yards upstream of its mouth to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately one-quarter mile upstream of Bulchitna Lake, only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure may be used, with a gap between the point and shank of the hook that is ½-inch or less;

(C) sport fishing for king salmon is closed; 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;

5 AAC 61.120. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 5 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

- (1) in all flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used, with a gap between the point and shank of the hook that is half - inch or less;
- (2) 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;

5AAC 61.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 6 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

- (1) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used, with a gap between the point and shank of the hook that is half - inch or less;
- (4) in the East Fork of the Chulitna River drainage, including all waters within a one-quarter mile radius of its confluence of the East Fork and West Fork and including the Middle Fork of the Chulitna and the first quarter mile of Honolulu Creek,
 - (A) the waters are open to sport fishing for all finfish species, except for king salmon; sport fishing for king salmon is closed; 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;

By delegation to:

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

Samantha Oslund,
Area Management Biologist**JUSTIFICATION:**

The Susitna River and other king salmon stocks throughout Cook Inlet are experiencing a period of low productivity. Below average escapements have resulted in preseason and inseason restrictions and closures on the Deshka, Eastside, Talkeetna, and Yentna River king salmon stocks and other isolated streams since 2012.

The preseason forecast for Deshka River king salmon is for a total run of 3,414 king salmon, below the lower bound of the biological escapement goal (BEG) of 9,000 – 18,000. The Deshka River king salmon escapement goal was not achieved in 2022 – 2025 due to poor returns across all major age classes, particularly 4-yr and 5-yr old fish. The 2025 weir count of 1,791 was the lowest on record despite the sport fishery remaining closed throughout the season. Therefore, closure of the king salmon sport fishery is warranted.

Modeled escapement of the Yentna River king salmon stock is based on postseason aerial index counts of spawners on three major and five minor streams of the Yentna River drainage (Unit 4 of the Susitna River). The optimal escapement goal (OEG) of 16,000 – 22,000 was achieved in 2021, narrowly achieved in 2022 and not achieved in 2023 – 2025. Recent escapement history combined with a downward trend in escapement over the past three years warrants closing the king salmon sport fishery from the outset of the season.

Modeled escapement of the Talkeetna River king salmon stock is based on postseason aerial index counts of spawners on two major streams of the Talkeetna River drainage (Unit 5 of the Susitna River). The SEG of 9,000 – 17,500 was narrowly achieved in 2021 and not achieved in 2022 – 2025 representing a downward trend. Diminished and unpredictable returns over recent years warrants closing the king salmon sport fishery from the outset of the season.

Modeled escapement of the Eastside king salmon stock is based on postseason aerial index counts of spawners on eight streams within Unit 2 of the Susitna River. The SEG of 13,000 – 25,000 was not achieved in 2022 – 2025. The sport fishery was closed for the entire 2025 season. The Eastside king salmon stock is currently a stock of management concern. Diminished and unpredictable returns over recent years warrants closing the king salmon sport fishery from the outset of the season.

The East Fork Chulitna River SEG of 1,200 – 2,900 king salmon was not achieved in 2025 with a post season aerial count of 289 fish. Diminished and unpredictable returns over recent years warrants closure of the king salmon sport fishery in the Chulitna (Unit 6) and upper Susitna (Unit 3) areas in 2026.

Below average runs during previous years, past performance of fisheries within the Susitna River drainage under previous years' management strategies, and poor preseason forecasts across Cook Inlet king salmon stocks warrant a precautionary approach to begin the 2026 season.. Data gathered from weirs, fishwheels, boat surveys, and aerial surveys will be used to gauge run strength and inform inseason management during the season.

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.