

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-7-5-26

Issued at: Homer, Monday, February 9, 2026

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, September 15, 2026, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order prohibits sport fishing for king salmon (including catch-and-release) in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point ($59^{\circ} 40.00' N.$ lat.) from May 1 through August 15. King salmon incidentally caught while fishing for other fish may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately. In Lower Cook Inlet salt waters, south of the latitude of Bluff point, the bag and possession limit has been reduced to one king salmon from April 1 through August 31, excluding the waters of the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon and Seldovia slough and lagoon. It also reduces the bag limit for king salmon from two to one in all of Cook Inlet salt waters from September 1 through September 15.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 58.022 (b)(1)(A), 5 AAC 58.057 (c), and 5 AAC 58.060 (b)(3) are superseded by this emergency order. The provisions of 5 AAC 58.055 (k) are added by this emergency order. Under this emergency order the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, April 1 through 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, September 15, 2026:

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

(b)(1) in the waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point ($59^{\circ} 40.00' N.$ lat.):

(A) king salmon:

(i) from April 1–April 30 and August 16–August 31; bag and possession limit of one fish; no size limit; an annual harvest limit of five king salmon 20 inches or greater in length; except as provided in (c) of this section; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water shall be retained and becomes a part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish; from May 1–August 15 sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon caught incidentally may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

5 AAC 58.055. Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan

(k) Notwithstanding (d) of this section, from May 1 through August 15, in the Cook Inlet salt waters north of the latitude of Bluff Point ($59^{\circ} 40.00' N.$ lat) sport fishing is allowed, sport fishing for king salmon is prohibited; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught incidentally may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

5 AAC 58.057. Lower Cook Inlet summer salt water king salmon sport fishery

(c) The bag and possession limit is one king salmon; no size limit, excluding the waters from the Homer city dock near the entrance of the Homer Boat Harbor, including the entire Homer Boat Harbor, northwest along the east side of the Homer Spit to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 200 yards northwest of the entrance to the fishery enhancement lagoon on the Homer Spit, including the enhancement lagoon, and to a distance 300 feet from the shore; and excluding the waters of Seldovia Bay starting at the entrance of the Seldovia Boat harbor including all waters east and south of the breakwater wall and upstream through the Seldovia slough and including the entire Seldovia Lagoon;

5 AAC 58.060. Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan

(b)(3) from September 1–September 15, the bag and possession limit is one king salmon; from September 16–March 31, the bag and possession limit is two king salmon;

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Mike Booz

Mike Booz
Lower Cook Inlet Sport Fish Area Manager

JUSTIFICATION:

Based on the Kenai, Anchor, and Deshka River forecasts, this year's king salmon runs are expected to be below the lower end of their escapement goals, which triggers the closure of Upper Cook Inlet salt waters north of the latitude of Bluff Point from May 1 to July 15 as outlined in the *Upper Cook Inlet Summer Salt Water King Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 58.055). Additionally, the inriver sport fisheries for these Cook Inlet stocks are starting with preseason emergency order closures. Under direction of the *Kenai River late-run king salmon stock of concern management plan* (5 AAC 21.382) and in conjunction with this emergency order, the Upper Cook Inlet summer saltwater fishery north of Bluff Point is closed to sport fishing for king salmon from May 1 – August 15. Despite preseason and inseason restrictions to both fresh and saltwater fisheries in the last five years, the sustainable escapement goals have not been achieved in four of the last five years for Deshka River and Kenai River early and late run stocks. The king salmon harvest in the Lower Cook Inlet summer fishery has remained high in recent years resulting from shifting effort from the Upper Cook Inlet summer king salmon fishery due to preseason and inseason emergency order restrictions and closures. Guided effort towards king salmon in Cook Inlet salt waters may also be increasing with further restrictions to Pacific halibut from the IPHC Halibut Catch Sharing Plan. From 2002–2013, the king salmon harvest in the Lower Cook Inlet summer fishery averaged approximately 4,400 fish annually. In the last three years the harvest has increased from the 2002–2013 average to an average of approximately 7,000 fish. Based on genetic mixed stock analyses of this fishery from 2014 through 2018, without restrictions, this fishery would likely harvest approximately 100–300 Cook Inlet king salmon in 2026. Given the overall decline of king salmon and increased king salmon harvest in saltwater sport fisheries throughout northern Gulf of Alaska, reducing the king salmon bag and possession limits for the first two weeks of September will support the Alaska Board of Fisheries' intent of slowing the growth during the winter fishery as outlined in the *Cook Inlet Winter Salt Water King Salmon Sport Fishery Management Plan*.

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.