

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-7-3-26

Issued at: Homer, Monday, February 9, 2026

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Saturday, May 23, 2026

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 31, 2026,
unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order restricts the season open to fishing for king salmon in the Ninilchik River to Memorial Day weekend (May 23 – May 25, 2026) and the following four weekends in May and June (May 30 – June 1, June 6 – 8, June 20 – 22, and June 27 – 29) as well as the youth-only fishery on June 3. This emergency order also restricts the use of bait and reduces the daily bag limit to 1 hatchery king salmon. After harvesting a hatchery king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, anglers may not sport fish in the Ninilchik River for the remainder of the day.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 56.122 (a)(6)(A)(i), (a)(6)(C)(ii), (a)(6)(D)(i), (a)(6)(D)(ii), and (a)(6)(G) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Saturday, May 23 through 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 31, 2026:

5 AAC 56.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai Peninsula Area.

(a)(6) Ninilchik River drainage:

(A) only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used

(i) from July 16 – July 31 from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately two miles upstream;

(C) open to sport fishing from its mouth upstream ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately two miles upstream

(ii) from June 20 – 22 and June 27 – 29;

(D) open to sport fishing for king salmon from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately two miles upstream

(i) on Memorial Day weekend and the following two weekends and the Monday following each of those weekends; the bag and possession limit is one hatchery king salmon, 20 inches or greater in length and 10 hatchery king salmon under 20 inches; naturally-produced king salmon may not be retained; only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used; a person who takes and retains a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length from the Ninilchik River may not sport fish in the Ninilchik River for the rest of that day;


(ii) on June 20 – 22 and June 27 – 29; the bag and possession limit is one hatchery king salmon, 20 inches or greater in length and 10 hatchery king salmon under 20 inches; naturally-produced king salmon may not be retained; only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used; a person who takes and retains a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length from the Ninilchik River drainage may not sport fish in the Ninilchik River drainage for the rest of that day; and

(G) the Ninilchik River from the outlet of the Ninilchik small boat harbor to ADF&G regulatory markers approximately two miles upstream is open to sport fishing to a person under 16 years of age during the designated youth fishery which occurs on the second Wednesday after Memorial Day between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 9:59 p.m.; the king salmon bag and possession limit is one hatchery king salmon of any size and naturally-produced king salmon may not be

retained; only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used; annual limit and other restrictions specified in (D)(iii) apply; a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 75.006; a person who takes and retains one king salmon may not sport fish in the Ninilchik River for the remainder of the day;

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:



Mike Booz
Lower Cook Inlet Sport Fish Area Manager

JUSTIFICATION:

The Ninilchik River sustainable escapement goal (SEG) was not achieved in the three of the last five consecutive years. The Ninilchik River is stocked with hatchery king salmon to provide harvest opportunity for sport anglers and to provide broodstock to support the Kachemak Bay stocking program. The broodstock collection goal for stocking the Ninilchik River has been reduced in recent years.

As specified in the *Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River king salmon sport fishery management plan* (5 AAC 56.130), the commissioner may, by emergency order, further liberalize or restrict the Ninilchik River hatchery king salmon sport fishery to provide more harvest opportunity or achieve the SEG and broodstock collection goals. Based on the low escapements of naturally-produced king salmon in the recent five years, removing the use of bait, reducing the bag limit and shortening the season will reduce the catch and catch-and-release mortality of naturally-produced king salmon when fishing for hatchery king salmon.

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.