

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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UPPER COOK INLET COMMERCIAL FISHING ANNOUNCEMENT No. 4 **EMERGENCY ORDER NUMBER 2S-04-19**

Upper Cook Inlet Commercial Fishing Announcement No. 4 modifies 5AAC 21.320(a)(2) *Weekly Fishing Periods* with set gillnets in the Kenai and Kasilof sections of the Upper Subdistrict, effective at 12:01 a.m. on July 1, 2019. In the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District, excluding the East Foreland Section (statistical area 244-42), salmon may be taken only during fishing periods established by emergency order, from July 1–31, 2019, unless modified by subsequent Emergency Order (EO). All other set gillnet fisheries in the Central District, including the East Foreland Section, the Chinitna Bay, Western, Kustatan, and Kalgin Island Subdistricts and the entire Northern District are unaffected by this announcement, which means these areas are open for regular fishing periods from 7:00 a.m. Monday until 7:00 p.m. Monday and from 7:00 a.m. Thursday until 7:00 p.m. Thursday. This commercial fishing announcement also restricts set gillnet gear in the Kenai and Kasilof sections only, as described below.

On Tuesday, June 18, 2019, the Division of Sport Fish issued EO No. 2-KS-1-23-19 prohibiting the use of bait in the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery beginning July 1, 2019. That announcement states, “The 2019 late-run of large Kenai River king salmon primarily originates from the two lowest brood year escapements on record which occurred consecutively during 2013 and 2014. Considering forecast variability (forecast has an 80% prediction interval of 14,972 to 27,267 large fish) and estimated exploitation rate in a restricted fishery of between 15 to 20%, beginning the fishery by prohibiting bait is necessary in order to achieve the sustainable escapement goal.”

According to 5 AAC 21.359(e)(3)(A) *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*, in order to achieve the SEG and provide reasonable harvest opportunity for the king salmon sport fishery, if the use of bait is prohibited in the sport fishery, commercial fishing periods in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery, excluding the East Foreland Section, are open for no more than 48 hours per week, with a 36-hour continuous closure per week beginning between 7:00 p.m. Thursday and 7:00 a.m. Friday. With regularly scheduled fishing periods on Mondays and

Thursdays no longer in effect in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery, except for the East Foreland Section, any and all fishing time provided to this set gillnet fishery may occur only via EO beginning July 1, 2019.

This announcement also implements gear restrictions in the Upper Subdistrict set gillnet fishery, except for the East Foreland Section, from July 1–31, 2019, unless superseded by subsequent EO. The specific gear restrictions are identified in 5 AAC 21.359(e)(3)(A)(i), where it states that if bait is prohibited in the Kenai River king salmon sport fishery in order to achieve the SEG, then the number of set gillnets operated in the Kenai and Kasilof section set gillnet fishery may also be restricted to no more than four set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length, 105 fathoms in aggregate length, and 29 meshes in depth, or no more than two set gillnets that are each not more than 35 fathoms in length and 45 meshes in depth. Set gillnets that are not more than 29 meshes in depth must be identified at one end of the gillnet with an attached blue buoy that is not less than nine and one-half inches in diameter. Set gillnet mesh size regulations do not change under these restrictions. These set gillnet gear restrictions will be in effect in the Kenai and Kasilof Sections of the Upper Subdistrict beginning July 1, 2019.