

# SPORT FISHING

## *Emergency Order*

ALASKA DEPARTMENT  
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

**Emergency Order No.** 2-KS-1-08-24

**Issued at:** Soldotna, Thursday, March 14, 2024

**Effective Date:** 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, May 1, 2024

**Expiration Date:** 11:59 p.m. Sunday, June 30, 2024, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

### **EXPLANATION:**

This emergency order closes the Kenai River to sport fishing for king salmon and prohibits the use of bait and multiple hooks in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to ADF&G markers located at the outlet of Skilak Lake from 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, June 30, 2024. This closure prohibits all sport fishing for king salmon, including catch-and-release fishing. King salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

### **REGULATION:**

The provisions of 5 AAC 57.120 (a)(2)(A)(i) and (a)(3)(A), and 5 AAC 57.121 (1)(D), are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, May 1 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, June 30, 2024.

#### **5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.**

(a)(2) king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, as follows:

(A) may be taken only from January 1 – July 31, in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, with a bag and possession limit of one fish, as follows:

(i) from May 1 – June 30, the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, is closed to sport fishing for king salmon; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

(a)(3) king salmon less than 20 inches in length, as follows:

(A) from May 1 – June 30, flowing waters and unstocked lakes and ponds and in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to ADF&G markers located at the outlet of Skilak Lake, are closed to sport fishing for king salmon; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

#### **5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area.**

(1) sport fishing gear restrictions:

(D) from May 1 – June 30, in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the outlet of Skilak Lake, only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

Doug Vincent-Lang,  
Commissioner



By delegation to:

---

Phill Stacey  
Area Management Biologist

**JUSTIFICATION:**

Consistent with 5 AAC 57.160. *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-Run King Salmon Management Plan*, From January 1 – June 30, from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of the Slikok Creek, if the preseason forecast projects the inriver run to be below the lower end of the optimal escapement goal (OEG), the commissioner shall, by emergency order close the sport fishery to the taking of king salmon.

The sustainable escapement goal (SEG) for early-run king salmon is 2,800 – 5,600 large king salmon (75 cm mid eye to tail fork length and longer) and the optimal escapement goal for early-run Kenai River king salmon is 3,900 – 6,600 large king salmon (75 cm mid eye to tail fork length and longer).

Kenai River king salmon and other king salmon stocks throughout Cook Inlet are experiencing a period of low productivity and below average run strength. The 2024 forecast for the stock of large ( $\geq 75$  cm mideye-to-tail-fork-length [METF] or approximately  $\geq 34$  inches in total length) early-run king salmon in the Kenai River is 2,630 fish. This total run forecast is less than the OEG range of 3,900 – 6,600 fish. The forecast is well below the 1986–2022 average run of approximately 8,700 fish and is lower than the recent 5-year average run of approximately 3,200 fish. If realized, this forecast would be the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest run in the past five years but rank as the 8th lowest run in the past 38 years. With no fishing mortality, the escapement from this forecasted run would be less than the optimum escapement goal. Closing the early-run king salmon sport fishery preseason is warranted until data from inseason assessment projects indicate that fishing opportunity can be afforded without jeopardizing the achievement of the OEG.

**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.