

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-SS-2-48-24

Issued at: Palmer, Monday, August 12, 2024

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Thursday, August 15, 2024

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Monday, September 30, 2024, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order supersedes Emergency Order 1-SS-2-46-24, issued Friday, August 2, 2024, which prohibited the use of bait and restricted the coho salmon bag limit to one fish in the Little Susitna River and Knik River drainage, including Jim Creek and the Eklutna Tailrace. This emergency order closes the Little Susitna River and Knik River drainage, including Jim Creek, Fish, Cottonwood, and Wasilla Creeks to sport fishing for coho salmon and continues to prohibit the use of bait. Only unbaited, artificial lures may be used. The closure prohibits sport fishing for coho salmon, including catch-and-release fishing. Coho salmon may not be retained or possessed; coho salmon incidentally caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 60.122 (a)(4)(A), (a)(5)(A), (a)(8)(F) and (9)(B) and (a)(11)(D) are superseded and (a)(4)(F) are added, by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Thursday, August 15 through 11:59 p.m. Monday, September 30, 2024:

5 AAC 60.122. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

(a)(4) in the Cottonwood Creek drainage,

(A) from August 15 – September 30, from its mouth upstream to an ADF&G marker located one mile upstream from the Palmer Hayflat State Game Refuge access road, sport fishing is allowed only Saturdays and Sundays from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., except that sport fishing for king and coho salmon is closed, coho salmon of any length may not be retained or possessed; coho salmon caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

(F) only unbaited, artificial lures may be used;

(a)(5) in the Fish Creek drainage,

(A) the waters from ADF&G regulatory markers located at its mouth upstream to an ADF&G regulatory marker located one-quarter mile upstream from the Knik-Goose Bay Road, are open to sport fishing August 17 through December 31 on Saturdays and Sundays from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., except that sport fishing for king and coho salmon is closed; only unbaited, artificial lures may be used:

(a)(8) in the Knik River drainage, including Jim Creek, and the Eklutna Tailrace, as follows:

(F) except as specified in (B) of this paragraph, in the Jim Creek drainage, downstream to the Knik River and continuing downstream on the Knik River to the boundary of the closed waters described in (A) of this paragraph, from January 1 – December 31, sport fishing is open for all finfish species except king and coho salmon, except that

(iii) except for the Eklutna tailrace and the waters within one-half mile radius and downstream a distance of two miles from its confluence with the Knik River, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used;

(iv) except for the Eklutna tailrace and the waters within one-half mile radius and downstream a distance of two miles from its confluence with the Knik River, salmon, other than king and coho salmon, 16 inches or greater in length; bag and possession limit is three fish; sport fishing for coho salmon is closed, coho salmon of any length may not be retained or possessed; coho salmon may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

(9) in the Little Susitna River drainage,

(B) from August 15 – September 30, in the flowing waters from its mouth upstream to the Parks Highway, only unbaited, artificial lures may be used; bag and possession limit for salmon, other than king and coho salmon, greater than 16 inches in length is three fish; bag and possession limit for salmon, other than king and coho salmon, less than 16 inches in length is ten fish; sport fishing for coho salmon is closed, coho salmon of any length may not be retained or possessed; coho salmon caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

(11) the Wasilla Creek drainage, including Rabbit Slough,

(D) from August 15 – April 14, downstream of the Alaska Railroad Bridge is open to sport fishing for salmon, except king and coho salmon, only on Saturdays and Sundays from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.; bag and possession limit of three fish, a person who takes a bag limit of salmon from Wasilla Creek may not sport fish for any species of fish that same day in waters open to sport fishing for salmon; only unbaited, artificial lures may be used, coho salmon of any length may not be retained or possessed; coho salmon caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately;

Doug Vincent-Lang
Commissioner

By delegation to:



Samantha Oslund
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

The Little Susitna River coho salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) is 9,200 – 17,700 fish. A target management objective of approximately 10,200 fish is needed to assure achievement of the SEG as the objective incorporates an anticipated harvest of nearly 1,000 fish upstream of the weir. Further evaluation of run size based on daily weir counts and observations by staff indicate more stringent action is needed to conserve coho salmon returning to the Little Susitna River. As of August 12, 2024, only 878 coho salmon had passed upstream of the weir and the escapement is projected to be 2,154 fish. Reports of fishing success have been low over the majority of fishing days this season. In addition, there are no indications that the coho salmon run in the Knik River drainage, Cottonwood, Fish, and Wasilla Creeks are performing better than the other Northern Cook Inlet stocks. Therefore, it is warranted to conserve the remaining coho salmon returning to the Little Susitna River to ensure achievement of the SEG and the Knik River drainage, Cottonwood, Fish, and Wasilla Creeks to conserve returning coho salmon to those systems.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order No. 2-SS-2-46-24, which reduced the daily bag and possession limit for coho salmon to one fish and prohibited bait in the Little Susitna River and Knik River drainage, including Jim Creek and Eklutna Tailrace, beginning August 6, 2024 is superseded by this emergency order.

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.