

# SPORT FISHING

## *Emergency Order*

ALASKA DEPARTMENT  
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

**Emergency Order No.** 2-KS-7-15-23

**Issued at:** Homer, Thursday, March 02, 2023

**Effective Date:** 12:01 a.m. Monday, May 15, 2023

**Expiration Date:** 11:59 p.m. Monday, July 31, 2023, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.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° 40.00' N. lat.). King salmon incidentally caught while fishing for other fish may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

### **REGULATION:**

The provisions of 5 AAC 58.022. (b)(1)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. The provisions of 5 AAC 58.055. (g) are added by this emergency order. Under this emergency order the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Monday, May 15 through 11:59 p.m. Monday, July 31, 2023:

#### **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° 40.00' N. lat.):

(A) 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**

(g) Notwithstanding (d) of this section, from May 15 through July 31, in the Cook Inlet salt waters north of the latitude of Bluff Point (59° 40.00' N. lat) sport fishing is allowed, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

Doug Vincent-Lang,  
Commissioner

By delegation to:

*Mike Booz*

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Mike Booz  
Lower Cook Inlet Sport Fish Area Manager

### **JUSTIFICATION:**

King salmon harvest in the Upper Cook Inlet summer saltwater fishery north of the latitude of Bluff Point is composed of a mixture of returning early-run and late-run Cook Inlet king salmon and feeder king salmon stocks from outside of Cook Inlet. Given the uncertainty of run strength in 2023 for all Cook Inlet

king salmon stocks, including Kenai Peninsula and Northern Cook Inlet, it is justified to begin the season conservatively. Many of the inriver sport fisheries for these Cook Inlet stocks are also starting with preseason emergency order closures or restrictions. Despite the preseason and inseason restrictions in 2022, the sustainable escapement goals for several Cook Inlet stocks, including the Anchor River, Kenai River early-run and late-run, and Deshka River were not met. Based on genetic analysis from 2014–2018, on average 20% of the early run harvest north of Bluff Point originated from Cook Inlet streams. Based on run timing at escapement monitoring locations, these early-run Cook Inlet stocks should mostly be through Cook Inlet salt waters by June 30.

Consistent with the *Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan*, it is necessary to close the king salmon sport fishery from July 1 through July 31 in order to achieve the OEG. As specified in the management plan, if the projected late-run king salmon escapement is less than 15,000 king salmon, 75 cm mid eye to tail fork and longer, the sport fisheries in the Kenai River and in the salt waters of Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point will be closed to the taking of king salmon. In addition, the department shall close the commercial drift gillnet fishery in the Central District within one mile of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline north of the Kenai River and within one and one-half miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline south of the Kenai River; and close the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict and the Central District.

**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.