

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Cora Campbell, Commissioner



DIVISION OF SPORT FISH

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For Immediate Release

**Ninilchik Beaches Closed for Clams; Bag and Possession Limit
Decreased on Remaining Eastside Beaches**

The Ninilchik Beach areas from the north bank of Deep Creek to a marker located approximately 3.2 miles north of the Ninilchik River just north of Lehman’s point at 60° 05.66’ N. lat., are closed to the taking of all clam species. The bag and possession limit for razor clams harvested from the remaining eastside Cook Inlet beaches, extending from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit, is reduced to the first 25 razor clams dug per day and only 25 razor clams may be in possession. These restrictions are effective beginning 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, March 12, 2014, through 11:59 p.m., Wednesday, December 31, 2014.

In 2013, the razor clam bag and possession limit was decreased from 60 to 25 clams for all eastside Cook Inlet beaches due to low clam abundance. In April 2013, razor clam abundance on Ninilchik Beach was the lowest on record, and surveys conducted during that month showed a substantial decline in abundance of exploitable clams (clams greater than 80 millimeters; 3.14 inches).

Digger interview data and anecdotal reports indicate reduction in razor clam abundance may be occurring all along the eastside Cook Inlet beaches, though most pronounced on Ninilchik beaches. Aerial surveys flown to estimate digger effort among all eastside Cook Inlet beaches has not detected a shift in effort from Ninilchik to the other beaches.

The cause of the decline in razor clam abundance on eastside beaches is unknown but is thought to have resulted from poor spawning and/or settling success. Since the abundance of sexually mature clams in 2013 was at a record low and effort did not shift from the Ninilchik beach this beach will be closed to the harvest of clams. To mitigate shifts in effort and harvest to other eastside Cook Inlet beaches it is justified to reduce the bag and possession limit to 25 razor clams.

Abundance of exploitable razor clams will be reassessed on the Ninilchik Beach in April and May 2014.



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