

RC-54

Kim Elliot

7 Maksoutoff Street, Alaska 99835

Cell: (907) 738-0748 Email: kelliott55@gmail.com

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BOARD OF FISH COMMENTS 2013

Proposal 243 – I support this proposal.

My name is Kim Elliot. I have been a resident of Alaska since 1959 (not quite born in Alaska) and I'm an avid fisher and gatherer. I am here to ask you to pass proposal 243 and add Pacific herring to Alaska's forage fish management plan.

We all agree that herring are a vital resource to all of us. As stated in the proposal, forage fish are a necessary prey species for pretty much everything that lives in the oceans and around them. Herring fits that description.

We do know there are deficiencies in the existing herring management plan. The 2012 forecast biomass for Sitka Sound was 144,143 tons. Now we are told there was only about 68,440 tons. We should all be grateful that less than half of the total 2012 GHLoF of 28,829 was not harvested. We cannot afford to lose this resource to unintentional mismanagement due to lack of accurate information. A 2010 Fish & Game Report #1J10-01 called "A Program for Improving Management and Research of Fisheries in the Southeast Region – Herring" summarizes research and management information gaps and projects to address those gaps for herring in Southeast Alaska. **Reading it did nothing to give me great confidence in the current herring biomass forecasts.**

This report lists 8+ projects and studies needed to improve herring stock assessment. As an example, I quote from page 9 "There is a poor understanding of herring ecology, abundance, and distribution during larval through age-2 or age-3." It goes on to say, "A method to forecast recruitment to the mature population may be beneficial by potentially allowing more accurate forecasting of overall return, and if so, more appropriate harvest levels." (unquote) It is important to err on the side of caution as we have seen herring resources in many areas of Southeast dwindle to the point where fisheries cannot be held. More information is needed along with very conservative management until that information is available.

I suggest that along with adding Pacific Herring to the Forage Fish Management Plan the Department's 2010 Program for Improving Management and Research of Herring Fisheries in the Southeast Region be implemented to enable the department to have the tools to accurately forecast the herring biomass. This data could possibly be applied elsewhere in the State.

Kim Elliot