

Legislative Report

Prince of Wales Island Proposal for Developing Commercial
Utilization of Local Herring Roe-on-kelp Resources

By

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INTRODUCTION

A group of residents from the communities of Craig, Klawock and Hydaburg, located along the outer coast of Prince of Wales Island, are attempting to develop a commercial fishery utilizing the local herring roe-on-kelp resources. Legislative intent was approved in 1988 for the department to assist the group. The purpose of this report is to document the progress made to implement the legislative intent.

BACKGROUND

A major herring stock utilizes the ocean shoreline in the immediate vicinity of Craig, Klawock and Hydaburg for annual spawning. Local residents utilize the herring resources for subsistence purposes, primarily by harvesting herring spawn deposited on kelp. The current commercial utilization of these resources is limited, by regulation, to the winter bait fishery. Local residents do not participate in the winter bait fishery. A commercial wild roe-on-kelp fishery occurred in the area until the early 1970's when it was eliminated by regulatory actions of the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

A group of residents has become interested in starting commercial utilization of the local herring roe-on-kelp resources. A good quality roe-on-kelp product can sell for an ex-vessel price of \$10.00 to \$15.00 per pound. The group formed the Klawock Cooperative Association with support from the Shaan Seet and Klawock Heenya Native Corporations and contracted a consultant to assist them. Since the herring resources are currently dedicated, by regulation, for harvesting in the winter bait fishery, the group needs to get the approval of the Alaska Board of Fisheries to develop a new fishery.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS THROUGH NOVEMBER 1988

Department staff attended a public meeting held in Klawock during March of 1988. One of the major topics discussed was the local herring stocks and the desire to develop a local roe-on-kelp fishery.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1988, the staff provided resource information to various individuals concerning the commercial utilization of Prince of Wales roe-on-kelp resources. This included information provided to the Alaska State Legislature House of Representatives Research Agency for a special report to Representative Peter Goll entitled "Subsistence Permits and Southeast Herring Roe Fisheries" (Research Request 88.223 by Brad Pierce). Additionally, the staff worked with the Klawock Cooperative Association's consultant developing a proposal for a roe-on-kelp pound fishery to be submitted to the Alaska Board of Fisheries for consideration at their January meeting.

The department herring research staff directed new efforts monitoring Prince of Wales Island herring spawning activities during the spring of 1988. This included additional aerial surveys to determine the extent of spawning, sampling of the spawning stock to obtain population age structure, and conducting spawn deposition surveys to estimate the size of the spawning herring stock. Approximately 27 miles of herring spawn was observed in the Craig and Klawock areas. Spawn deposition diving surveys estimated that approximately 32.7 million pounds of herring spawned during the spring of 1988, indicating a healthy herring resource at this time. The age structure sampling indicated the Craig and Klawock herring spawning stock was the same stock contributing to the winter bait fishery in the Meares Passage and Bocas de Finas areas.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The department expects to direct more efforts to the Prince of Wales roe-on-kelp issue during the next several months. This will include:

1. Participation in a roe-on-kelp workshop scheduled for December in Klawock.
2. Conduct vessel surveys to acoustically estimate the size of the herring population in traditional wintering areas along the west coast of Prince of Wales Island in early December.
3. Provide herring resource information to the Alaska Board of Fisheries at their January meeting as requested.