

KODIAK MANAGEMENT AREA  
COMMERCIAL HERRING FOOD/BAIT FISHERY  
HARVEST STRATEGY, 2003



By

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
LIST OF FIGURES .....	i
ABSTRACT .....	1
KODIAK FOOD/BAIT HARVEST STRATEGY .....	2
Introduction .....	2
Guideline Harvest Levels and Open Districts.....	2
LIMITED ENTRY .....	2
CO-OP FISHERY .....	3
2003 FISHERY.....	3
REGULATIONS.....	4
Registration.....	4
Season Dates.....	4
Closed Waters.....	4
Gear Restrictions.....	4
FISH TICKETS .....	5
LITERATURE CITED .....	6
FIGURES .....	7

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Map of southwestern Alaska emphasizing the Kodiak Management Area and its relationship to surrounding management areas .....	7
2. Map of the North Shelikof Strait and the Uganik District showing that portion south of the latitude of Miners Point that is open to herring food/bait fishing for the 2003 season .....	8
3. Map showing the Eastside Food/Bait District (F/B 8) and management sections .....	9

## **ABSTRACT**

The 2003 Kodiak herring food/bait fishery may open, by regulation, on October 1, 2003. However, due to market concerns, it may open earlier in late September by emergency order. The fishery may occur on Kodiak herring stocks in that portion of the Uganik District south of the latitude of Miner's Point, with a 122 ton guideline harvest level (GHL), and in the Eastside District, with a 75 ton GHL. The remaining districts are either closed due to the low Kamishak herring biomass estimates, or are areas where the food/bait GHL would be less than 10 tons, and therefore not manageable by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The department is concerned that a competitive fishery, with all permit holders participating, would also be unmanageable given the low GHLs. Therefore, in addition to current regulations stipulations for a potential cooperative (co-op) fishery are specified in the harvest strategy.

# KODIAK FOOD/BAIT HARVEST STRATEGY

## *Introduction*

The Kodiak Management Area (KMA) commercial herring food/bait fishery has a long history, dating back to 1912 (Gretsch 2001). Early harvests were primarily utilized for food and reduction products; these harvests far surpassed current levels. Since the early 1960s the harvest has been utilized mainly as bait for crab and longline fisheries. This harvest strategy will summarize current regulations and the management of the fishery for the 2003 season and specify stipulations for a potential cooperative (co-op) fishery.

In recent years, the majority of the harvest from the food/bait fishery has occurred in the northeast Shelikof Strait of the KMA (Figure 1) with the fishery targeting a mix of Kodiak and Kamishak herring stocks (Johnson 1988). The Kamishak Bay District Herring Management Plan (5 AAC 27.465) outlines criteria for the management of the Kamishak sac roe fishery and provides for a harvest allocation for the Kodiak food/bait fishery, based on the Kamishak spawning biomass. The Kamishak spawning biomass has been below the minimum threshold for a fishery for the last five years. The Kamishak management plan stipulates that when the Kamishak stock herring biomass is below threshold then the Kamishak Bay sac roe fishery and the Kodiak food/bait fishery in Shelikof Strait north of the latitude of Miner's Point will remain closed (Figure 2).

For the remainder of the KMA, the food/bait fishery is allowed to occur in those districts that have strong spawning stocks of Kodiak herring. The management plan that guides the KMA food/bait fishery is described in the Kodiak Area 2002-03 Commercial Herring Fishing Regulations (5 AAC 27.535).

## *Guideline Harvest Levels and Open Districts*

The herring food/bait fishery guideline harvest levels (GHLs) are based on the preceding herring sac roe fishery season's GHLs, with 10% of that GHL, by district, allocated to the food/bait fishery.

The 2003 KMA food/bait fishery may occur on Kodiak herring stocks in that portion of the Uganik District south of the latitude of Miner's Point at 57°54.00' N lat. (Figure 2) with a 122 ton GHL and the Eastside District with a 75 ton GHL (Figure 3). The remaining districts are either closed due to the low Kamishak herring biomass estimates, or are areas where the food/bait GHL would be less than 10 tons, and therefore not manageable.

## **LIMITED ENTRY**

In 2001, the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) designated the KMA herring food/bait fishery a limited entry fishery. In July 2002, the CFEC issued limited entry permits to nine individuals based primarily on fishery participation in the 1994-1998 seasons. Five combination purse seine/gillnet and four trawl permits have been issued.

## **CO-OP FISHERY**

A co-op fishery occurred during the 2001 and 2002 herring food/bait seasons. Due to department concerns of controlling the harvests on relatively small GHGs, competitive fisheries were not allowed. Since the market demands for fresh herring bait were strong, the permit holders requested that the department allow co-op fisheries to occur. The department allowed co-op fisheries under certain guidelines, including 100% agreement by all CFEC permit holders that only one fishing vessel would be allowed on the grounds to conduct the harvest, and a department observer must be onboard the fishing vessel to monitor the fishery. Permit holders were fully responsible for determining which vessel would conduct the harvests, all marketing aspects, and all costs associated with harvesting and tendering the herring. Co-op fisheries were successfully conducted during the 2001 and 2002 herring food/bait seasons.

## **2003 FISHERY**

Due to the small available GHGs and the potential harvest capabilities of five purse seine and four trawlers competing for the fish, the department is again expressing concern about the manageability of the Kodiak herring food/bait fishery. In order to slow harvest rates, the department may be forced to manage this fishery in much the same manner as the 2003 Uganik Bay herring sac roe fishery (Gretsch 2003). That is, the fishery would only be opened by emergency order. A management biologist would need to be on the fishing grounds to assess the availability of fish, fishing effort, and capability of the fleet. Any fishery opening would likely be of short duration in a limited area. If, in the opinion of department personnel, there is a potential for over harvest due to the effort present, a fishery may not be allowed.

In order to facilitate the harvest, several permit holders have requested that the department again allow a co-op fishery for the 2003 season. The department will consider a co-op fishery under the same guidelines as during the previous two seasons. All nine CFEC permit holders must notify the department that either they support a co-op fishery or they will not participate in the 2003 fishery, before the department will consider opening the food/bait fishery. Some permit holders and processing industry representatives have requested that the department open the fishery prior to the regulatory opening date

of October 1. An early opening would make fresh bait available for the Bering Sea king crab fishery, which begins October 15. The department will be considering opening the fishery prior to October 1, to facilitate market needs. However, this earlier opening may only occur if approved by the Commissioner of ADF&G and the Director of the Division of Commercial Fisheries. The department will require that only one catcher vessel be used and that a department observer be onboard the fishing vessel during the fishery. The department observer will monitor the harvest, close the fishery when the GHL is reached, and will collect commercial catch samples for age composition data.

## **REGULATIONS**

### ***Registration***

CFEC permit holders must be registered with the department before participating in the food/bait fishery (5 AAC 27.510. (3)(b)). Buyers and tender operators must also be registered with the department prior to taking Kodiak herring food/bait (5 AAC 27.540).

### ***Season Dates***

The fishery may open by emergency order, between October 1 and February 28 or earlier if approved. A News Release will be issued to announce the fishery opening date and open areas. The duration of the fishing period and areas opened to fishing will be determined by department management biologists, based on effort and availability of the herring. The department will close the fishery when the GHL has been harvested for each district. A News Release will also be issued that announces the closure of each district, after the GHL has been reached.

In the event that CFEC permit holders agree to form a co-op for the 2003 food/bait fishery, the fishery may open without restrictions on the duration of fishing periods.

### ***Closed Waters***

Herring may not be taken in the closed waters described in the 2002-05 Kodiak Commercial Salmon Fishing Regulations (5 AAC 18.350; pages 93-96). These closed waters are in effect for the herring food/bait fishery through October 31, 2003. Closed waters may be reduced by ADF&G management staff, if needed to access the herring food/bait, but only by emergency order.

### ***Gear Restrictions***

Following are the gear restrictions for purse seine/gillnet and trawl permit holders for the Kodiak food/bait fishery. Only one gear type may be fished at a time for the combination permit holders.

#### **Gear Code**

- 01 - Purse Seine
  - Maximum length: 150 fathoms
  - Maximum depth: 1,625 meshes. For Area K there are no web size restrictions.
  
- 34 - Gillnet
  - Maximum length: 150 fathoms; mesh size: 2-1/8" to 2-1/2".
  - No depth restrictions.
  
- 07 - Trawl
  - No restrictions

Consult the 2002-03 Commercial Herring Fishing Regulations for a complete listing of all regulations.

### **FISH TICKETS**

All fish tickets must be completed and sent to the Kodiak Fish and Game office within a week of each landing.

Send to: Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
ATTN: Dennis Gretsch  
211 Mission Road  
Kodiak, Alaska 99615

## LITERATURE CITED

- Johnson, B.A., C. Burkey, and D. Gaudet. (Draft manuscript 1988). Stock identification of Pacific herring in the bait fishery in Shelikof Strait, Alaska, 1985/86. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries. Juneau.
- Gretsch, D.R. 2001. Kodiak Management Area Annual Herring Fisheries Management Report, 2001. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries, Regional Information Report 4-K02-25, Kodiak.
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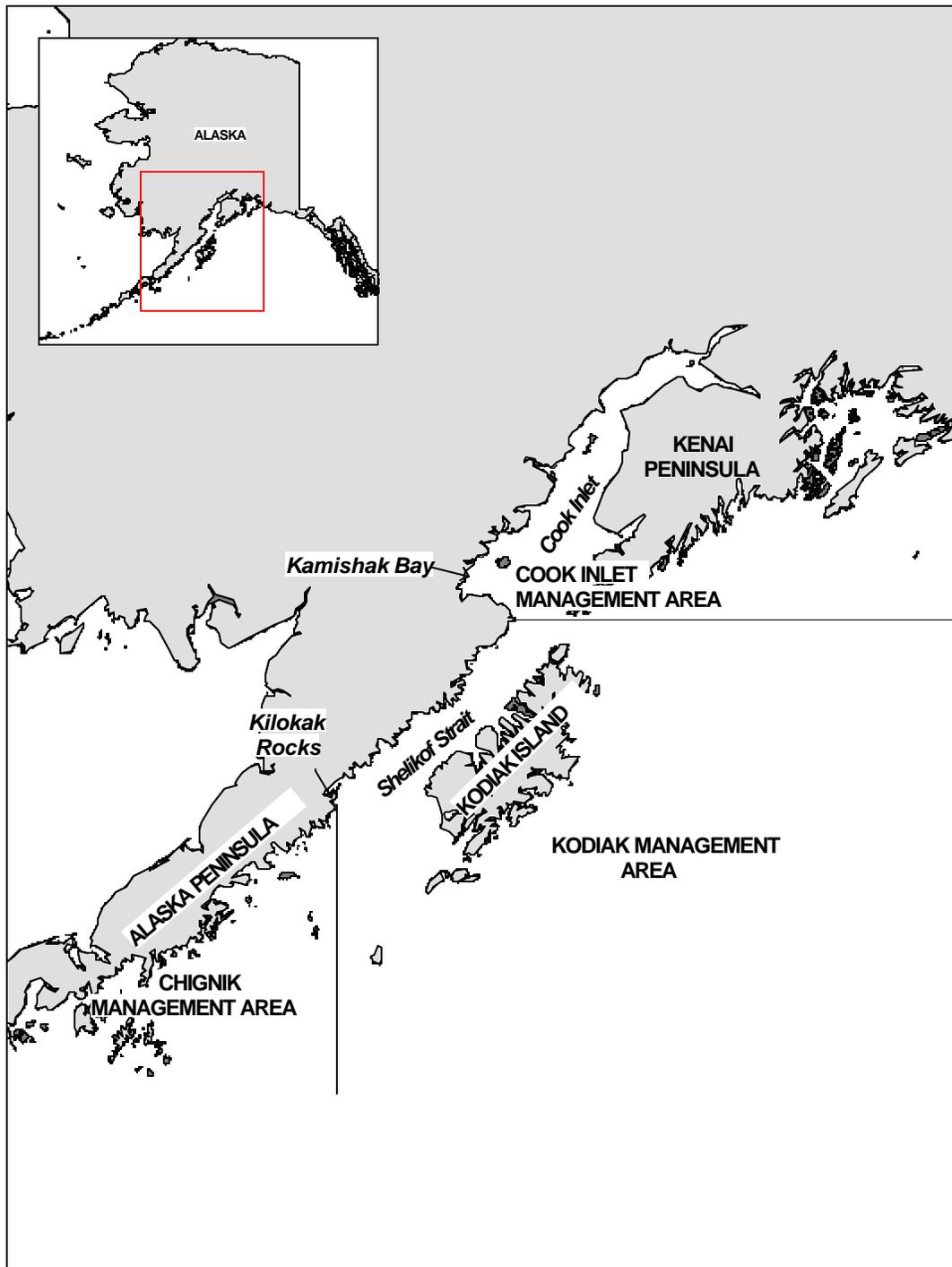


Figure 1. Map of southwestern Alaska emphasizing the Kodiak Management Area and its relationship to surrounding management areas.

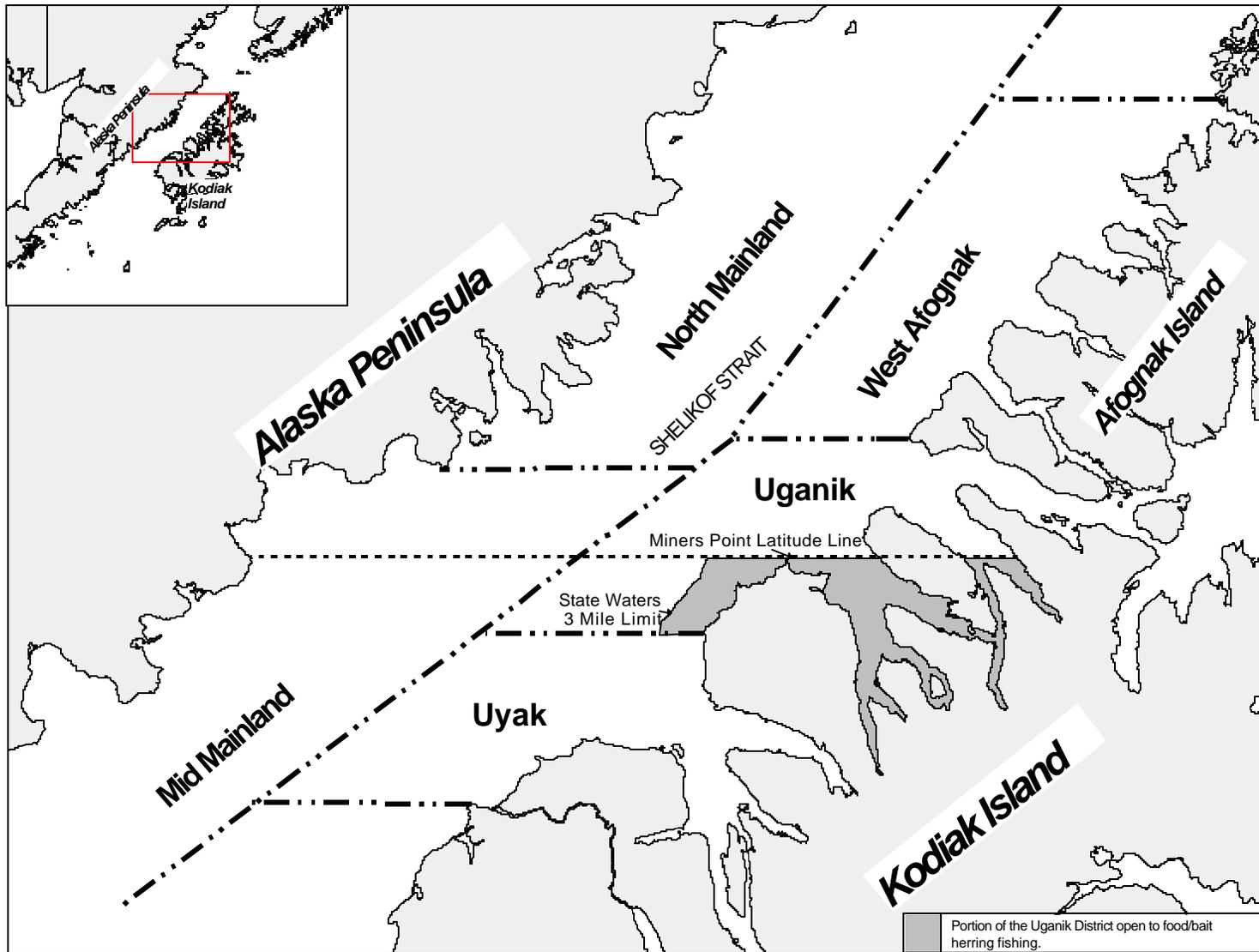


Figure 2. Map of the North Shelikof Strait and the Uganik District showing that portion south of the latitude of Miners Point that is open to herring food/bait fishing for the 2003 season.

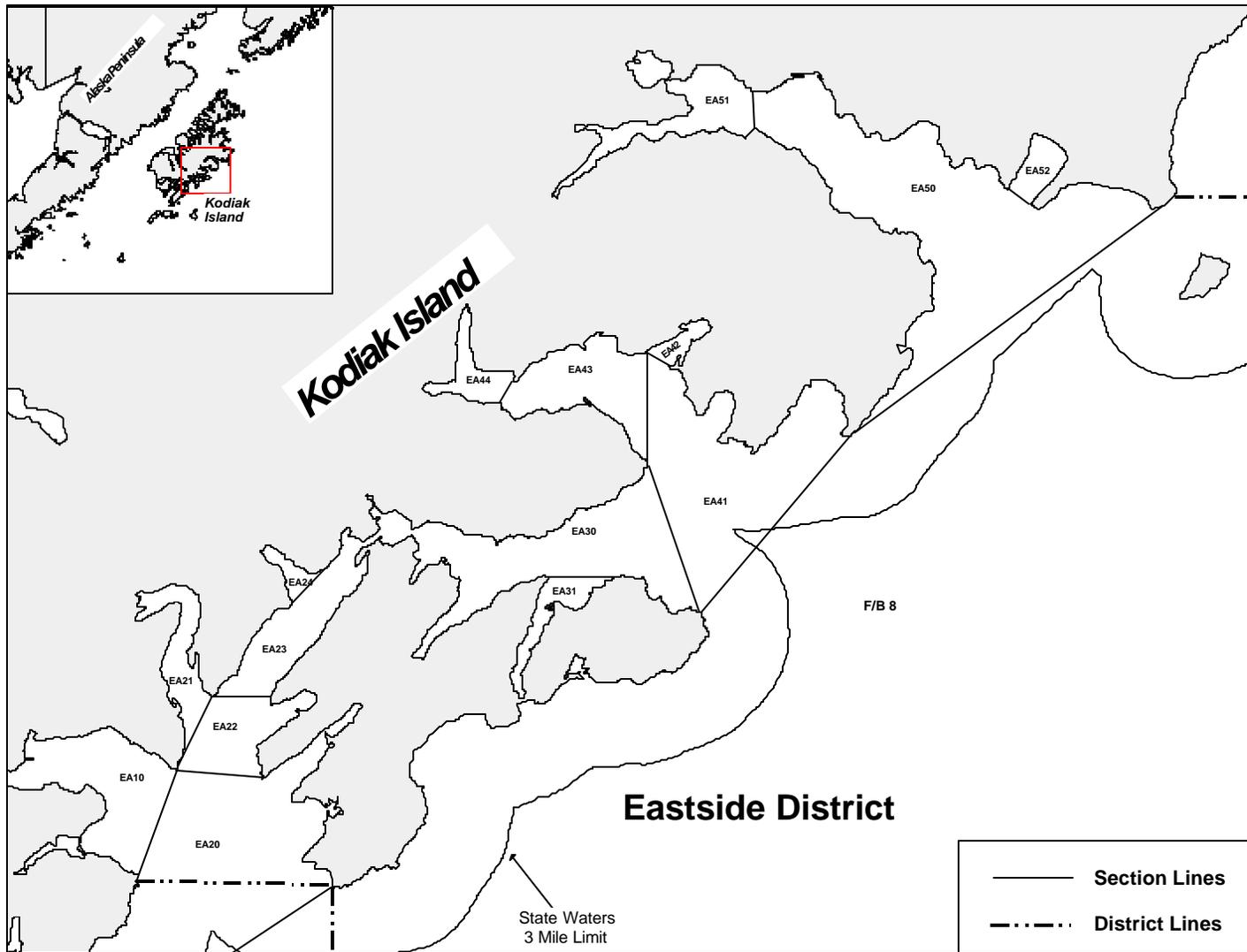


Figure 3. Map showing the Eastside Food/Bait District (F/B 8) and management sections.

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