

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2017 TOGIAC HERRING OUTLOOK

The Pacific herring spawning biomass in the Togiak District was not estimated in 2016 nor was any estimation made of the age composition of the 2016 harvest due to budget cuts. Traditionally, the department has used an age structured assessment (ASA) model to forecast the spawning biomass of Togiak herring. The ASA model requires estimates of the spawning biomass as well as estimates of the age composition of the spawning biomass and the harvest. Because that data is no longer available to us, we forecast the 2017 biomass as the average spawning biomass for all years for which we have data (1978-2015) less 10% in order to be conservative. This method produces an estimate of 130,852 tons. Because we are not using the ASA model for the 2017 forecast we have no predictions regarding age composition or individual size of herring for 2017.

The Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan (**5 AAC 27.865**) sets a maximum 20% exploitation rate for the Togiak District stock. Based on the forecast of 130,852 tons, 26,170 tons of herring will be available for harvest in 2017. Harvest allocation, in accordance with the management plan will be:

Fishery	Harvest Allocation
Spawn-on-Kelp	1,500 tons
Dutch Harbor Food and Bait	1,727 tons
Togiak Sac Roe	22,943 tons
Purse Seine (70%)	16,060 tons
Gillnet (30%)	6,883 tons

SAC ROE FISHERY

The management strategy for the Togiak herring fishery is designed to provide for maximum sustained yield. In 2017, sac roe fisheries will again be managed to maximize product quality through long openings which allow permit holders to make smaller sets and harvest the highest quality fish. Long openings also allow processors to have flexible control of harvest volume so

that holding time between harvest and processing is optimal. Based on a preseason poll, processing capacity is expected to be approximately 2,150 tons per day. The preseason poll also indicates that 4 processors will participate in the Togiak sac roe herring fishery with a fleet size of 16 gillnet and 19 purse seine vessels. For the last decade, the department has opened the herring fishery as soon as the threshold biomass of 35,000 tons has been documented and will use this strategy again in 2017. This strategy allows individual companies to maximize their processing capacity and decide what quality fish is suitable for their individual market.

The department uses a sea surface temperature model (SST) based on temperatures near Unalaska to predict Togiak herring run timing. Based on this model the fishery should commence around the first week of May. However, fishermen and processors are cautioned that this timing model has not performed very well the last couple of years.

The department has secured funding for the 2017 herring season sufficient to fly aerial surveys and process herring for age sex and length samples. This will allow staff to resume the use of the ASA model for forecasting herring biomass.

Purse Seine

For at least the last decade, the seine fishery has operated as individual processor controlled fleets. Indications are that this will be the case again in 2017 and therefore, fishing time and area will be very liberal. This should allow purse seine vessels to locate high quality herring and fill their company's daily needs. This approach should result in fresher, higher quality roe, thereby maximizing product quality and value. The department will not be coordinating any test fishing efforts. As always, the department will work with processors that want to make test sets to monitor roe quality prior to the threshold biomass being documented.

Gillnet

Management of the gillnet fishery will be similar to past years. Ample fishing time and area will be allowed in an effort to take as much gillnet herring as possible. At the December 2015 Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting the board removed language from the Togiak herring management plan that tied purse seine and gillnet harvest together for the first 50% of the quota. With that language removed each gear type will be able to fish freely until their respective quotas are harvested. In 2017, the department will primarily focus the gillnet fleet in the area east of Right Hand Point. The department will consider opening areas west of Right Hand Point to the gillnet fleet if weather conditions are unfavorable in the eastern section. As in past years, the plan is to open the gillnet area to fishing when threshold biomass is documented. Processors and fishermen may organize test fishing to monitor product quality once the area is open to determine when to begin fishing for production. Until it is determined that commercial quality fish are present, participants should test cautiously with a small portion of gear to reduce waste.

ADF&G OPERATIONS 2017

Beginning in late April or early May, current fishery information will be available by calling the telephone recorder in Dillingham at (907) 842-5226. Recordings will be updated regularly throughout the season as information becomes available. The department will conduct aerial surveys of Togiak District beginning in late April or early May, depending on weather conditions. The department will monitor marine VHF channel 7 from Dillingham and be available at the phone number listed at the top of this document. Fishing announcements and regular fishery updates will be communicated directly to each processor, published on the web,

and distributed by fax and email. The harvest will be sampled from Naknek shore plants. The department will seek to coordinate directly with plant managers as the season progresses to meet our sampling needs.

Visit <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main> to subscribe to herring fax and/or email updates and announcements. Harvest and fishery opening information will also be available at the Commercial Fisheries website at http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.herring_announcements.