



Advisory Announcement

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

Sitka... No commercial herring sac roe fishing occurred in 2020. Although the herring GHJ was 25,824 tons, the forecast was comprised primarily (83%) of age-4 herring with an anticipated average age-4 weight of 92 grams. The expected average weight of herring across all age classes was 97 grams. Processors indicated that herring of this size would be below market requirements and because of this they intended to not purchase herring in 2020.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game mapped 58.5 nautical miles (nmi) of herring spawn in 2020 from March 25 through April 20 (Figure 1), which is slightly below the 20-year (2000–2019) average of 59.5 nmi.

The first herring spawn occurred on southern Kruzof Island between Shoals Point and Lava Island on March 25 and continued along southern Kruzof Island for several days. The spawn then expanded into areas in and around Sitka Sound including western Kruzof Island south of Shelikof Bay, Eastern and Promisla bays, Hayward Strait, Magoun Islands, Middle and Crow Islands, Kasiana Island, Apple Island, Whiting Harbor, Katlian Bay, and from Starrigavan Bay to the Eliason Harbor breakwater (Figure 1). South of Sitka, spawn was observed near Indian River, Jamestown Bay, Galankin and Whale islands, from Cape Burunof to Redoubt Bay, and near West Crawfish Inlet (Figure 1).

The department was able to successfully conduct spawn deposition surveys and sampling for herring age and size composition using the same methods as past years. The spawn deposition dive surveys were conducted from April 4–9. Observed egg deposition was very high throughout most of Sitka Sound. The spawn deposition that occurred along the Kruzof Island shoreline was exceptional due to high egg density coupled with a wide spawning area. Herring were sampled throughout the spawning period to determine age and size composition of the spawning stock and will be analyzed in coming months. Final results from this year's stock assessment will not be available until late 2020.

In 2019, 55.8 nmi of herring spawn was mapped; peak spawn occurred on April 4 and the last spawn was observed on April 13. The estimate of 2019 mature biomass from the 2020-forecast model was 130,738 tons and was dominated by age-3 herring. The extremely high recruitment of age-3 herring in 2019 and the resulting increase in spawning biomass seen in Sitka Sound, Craig, Prince William Sound, and Kodiak indicated a highly successful 2016 brood year across the Gulf of Alaska. Preliminary results from 2020 confirm the strength of the 2016 year class and are consistent with expectations of stock growth as the year class matures.

The daily herring spawn locations and photographs from 2020 will continue to be made available through the interactive herring spawn maps on the department's website. The "Sitka Sound herring surveys" map allows users to view all the data collected for each survey throughout the 2020 season. Daily survey data on website maps have not been edited and are for general reference purposes only. The interactive maps are located on the department website at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.herring#maps>.

Under Alaska’s Health Mandates 10, 11, 12, and 17 commercial fishing is an Essential Business and is part of Alaska’s Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Commercial fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities in support of commercial fishing operations follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Mandates. COVID-19 Health Mandates may be found here: <https://gov.alaska.gov/home/covid19-healthmandates/>.

Advisory Announcement web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

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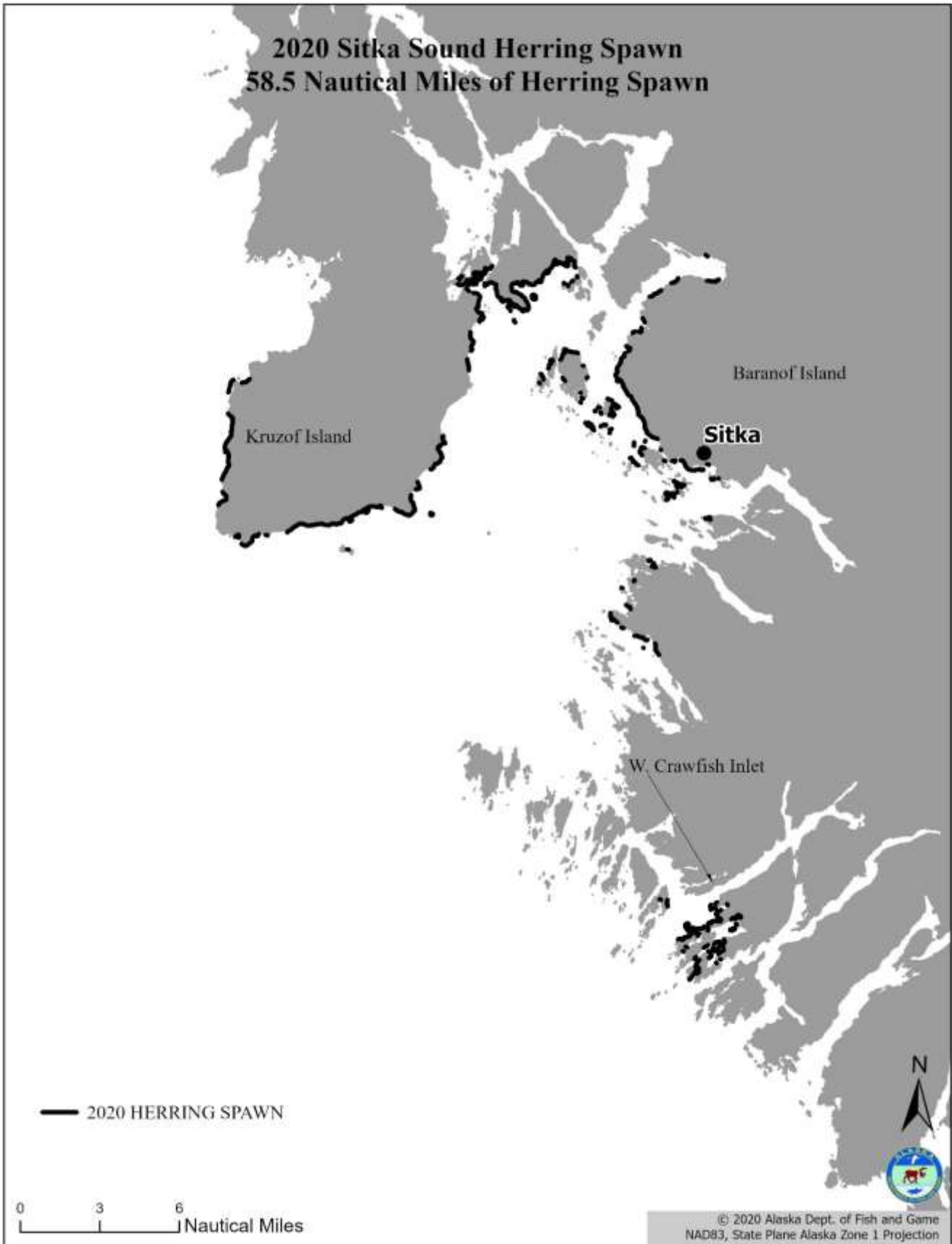


Figure 1. Cumulative Sitka Sound shoreline with observed herring spawn in 2020.