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Advisory Announcement

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2021 SOUTHEAST ALASKA HERRING SUMMARY

The following is a summary of 2021 Southeast Alaska herring fisheries, herring spawn observations, and herring assessment surveys.

Section 1-F (Revilla Channel) – Aerial surveys were conducted from March 18 through April 7, with herring spawn first observed March 26 on Double Island. Spawning continued in Revilla Channel through March 30, with additional spawn events observed on April 5 and April 6. Spawn was observed on Double, Cat, Dog, Village, and Mary islands with the most intense spawn occurring on the western shore of Cat Island. The total cumulative spawn mileage of 7.9 nautical miles (nmi) in State waters was above the recent 10-year (2011–2019) average of 5.3 nmi. Herring samples were obtained for age, weight, and length (AWL) analysis and a spawn deposition survey was completed. The last commercial fishery occurred in 1998.

Section 1-E and 1-F (West Behm) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 1 through April 15, with active spawn first observed on April 12 and continued through April 15. Spawn occurred in West Behm Canal along the Cleveland Peninsula shoreline from Point Francis to Bond Bay. The total cumulative spawn mileage of 8.2 nmi was above the recent 10-year average of 5.3 nmi. No herring samples were obtained, and a spawn deposition survey was not conducted. The last commercial fishery occurred in 2011.

District 3 (Craig) – Aerial surveys were conducted from March 18 through April 15, with herring spawn first observed April 5 on Fish Egg Island. Continuous spawning began April 5 and continued through April 14. Peak spawning occurred April 11 with 22.0 nmi of spawn observed. Spawn occurred around the Albertos, Ballenas, Fish Egg, San Fernando, Wadleigh, and Abess islands, as well as the islands in San Christoval Channel. The total cumulative spawn mileage of 34.2 nmi was the second highest spawn mileage documented behind 2020 (56.1 nmi), and well above the recent 10-year average of 20.8 nmi. Samples were obtained and a spawn deposition survey was completed. The biomass forecast and GHL will be available in early fall.

The 2020/21 Craig herring guideline harvest level (GHL) was 19,456 tons of herring and was allocated between the winter food and bait fishery (60%) and the spawn-on-kelp fishery (40% plus any remaining winter food and bait GHL). The 2020/21Craig winter food and bait fishery GHL was 11,674 tons. The fishery opened October 1 and closed February 28. A total of 540 tons was harvested by three vessels. The unharvested portion of the GHL was added to the spawn-on-kelp pound fishery for a final GHL of 18,916 tons. The spawn-on-kelp fishery opened by regulation on March 17 and herring were first introduced to pound structures on April 4. There were a total of 80 pound structures actively fished and 139 permits landed 260 tons of spawn-on-kelp product. Final exvessel value will not be available until the fall.

District 7 (Ernest Sound) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 11 through April 19. A spot spawn was observed on April 14 along the shoreline between Vixen Inlet and Union Point and approximately 0.5 nmi of spawn was observed along the southeast shoreline of Vixen Inlet on April 15. No herring samples were obtained, and a spawn deposition survey was not conducted. A commercial fishery last took place in 2014.

District 10 (Hobart Bay/Port Houghton) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 21 through May 12. Two distinct herring spawning events were observed in the Hobart Bay area; the first between April 26 and 28 and the second between

May 8 and 11. On April 26 approximately 1.4 nmi of spawn was observed in Hobart Bay, followed by an estimated 2.3 nmi on April 27 and then 1.1 nmi on April 28. Subsequent flights did not observe additional spawn. However, on May 8 a report from an industry pilot indicated spawning had restarted and subsequent survey flights on May 8 estimated 2.5 nmi of active spawning, 2.3 nmi of spawning on May 9, and 1.1 nmi on May 10. The two spawn events overlapped in shoreline receiving spawn which is reflected in the total cumulative spawn mileage estimate of 3.5 nmi. The peak spawning in Hobart Bay occurred on April 27 (2.3 nmi) and May 8 (2.5 nmi). In addition, approximately 0.3 nmi of spawn was observed in Port Houghton on May 9 and another 0.3 nmi on May 10 with a total cumulative spawn mileage estimate of 0.5 nmi for the season in Port Houghton. No herring samples were obtained, and a spawn deposition survey was not conducted. A commercial fishery last took place in 2010.

Section 11-D (Seymour Canal) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 16 through May 26. On May 18, an industry pilot reported 0.3 nmi of spawn south of Twin Islands. On May 19, 1.7 nmi of light discontinuous spawn was documented between Point Hugh and Blackjack Cove. Additional small spawns occurred through May 21. From May 23 through May 25, 1.4 nmi of spawn was observed in and around Sore Thumb Cove. The 3.1 nmi total cumulative spawn mileage estimate was slightly more than was documented in 2019 and 2020 and is less than the ten-year average of 5.2 nmi. The spawn event continued later than any spawn event on record. AWL samples of spawning herring were obtained, but a spawn deposition survey was not conducted. A commercial fishery last occurred in 2014.

Section 12-A (Tenakee Inlet and Chatham Strait) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 16 through May 17. No herring spawn was observed in Tenakee Inlet. From April 20 through April 23, 1.0 nmi of spawn was observed in Chatham Strait along Chichagof Island shoreline near Basket Bay, one of the earliest spawn events for this area on record. An additional 0.7 nmi was observed on April 23 at Point Craven near the mouth of Peril Strait. Total cumulative spawn of 1.7 nmi was below the recent 10-year average of 2.1 nmi. No herring samples were obtained, and a spawn deposition survey was not conducted. A commercial fishery last occurred in 2014.

Section 13-A/B (Sitka Sound) – Aerial surveys were conducted from March 9 through April 17. Herring spawn was observed from April 4–17; active spawn peaked on April 7 when 28.3 nmi of herring spawn was observed. The total cumulative spawn mileage of 102.3 nmi was higher than the 40-year average (1981–2020) of 59.1 nmi. The commercial herring sac roe fishery total harvest was approximately 15,600 tons of herring with an average mature roe percentage of 11.5%. This year's harvest was the fourth largest in the fishery since 1970 but was well short of the 2021 GHL of 33,304 tons, as expected. The fishery was opened for 14 consecutive days from March 27 to April 9 with an average daily harvest of approximately 1,200 tons of herring. For more detailed information on the 2021 Sitka Sound herring stock and fishery, see the *Sitka Sound Sac Roe Herring Fishery Announcement* from April 30, 2021.

Section 13-C (Hoonah Sound) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 4 through April 23 and no herring or herring spawn were observed. No spawn has been documented since 2015 and the 2006–2015 average miles of spawn was 9.0 nmi. A commercial fishery last took place in 2012.

Sections 11-A, 15-B, and 15-C (Lynn Canal) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 16 through May 17, with a total cumulative spawn mileage estimate of 0.9 nmi of herring spawn observed. On May 5 through May 6, 0.6 nmi of spawn was documented near Point Sherman. On May 8, an additional 0.3 nmi of herring spawn was observed in Lena Cove. This is the smallest total cumulative spawn mileage documented for the Lynn Canal spawning stock since regular observations began in 1972 and well below the recent 10-year average of 5.3 nmi. The spawn observed near Point Sherman was the furthest north herring spawn documented for this area. Commercial fisheries last occurred in 1982 and the commercial sac roe herring fishery was repealed by the Board of Fisheries in 2018.

Additional spawn was observed by ADF&G in other areas throughout Southeast Alaska on the way to or from surveys of the above listed areas. Typically, these additional spawning events are minor, but there were some relatively larger than normal spawn events observed in Sea Otter Sound and Kasaan Bay. Sea Otter Sound had three days of spawn and a total cumulative spawn mileage estimate of 4.3 nmi and Kasaan Bay had 2 days of spawn with a total cumulative spawn mileage estimate of 5.1 nmi. Other herring spawn events observed around the region included: 0.1 nmi observed in Port Frederick on April 23; 0.1 nmi in Gambier Bay on May 4; 2.9 nmi in northern Stephens Passage on May 19–22 with AWL samples obtained; and 0.2 nmi in Funter Bay on May 20. Based on concentrations of birds, other predators, and herring, it is likely a spawning event occurred in Farragut Bay, but its duration was short (1-2 days) and exact timing is unknown.

Under Alaska's Health Advisories 1, 2, 3, and 4, 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 Advisories. COVID-19 Health Advisories may be found here: https://covid19.alaska.gov/health-advisories/.

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

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