



Advisory Announcement

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**CONTACT: Tim Sands,
Area Management Biologist
(907) 842-5227**

2022 TOGIAK HERRING OUTLOOK

The 2022 mature herring biomass forecast is 357,536 tons and is the highest forecast since an age-structured assessment model was first used for the 1993 forecast (Figure 1). Under a 20% exploitation rate, the 2022 potential harvest is 71,507 tons in all fisheries and 65,107 tons in the Togiak sac roe fisheries (purse seine and gillnet). The large forecast is due primarily to the largest estimated recruitment of age-4 fish on record in 2021, (about 1.5 times larger than the large recruitments seen in the early 1980s) and another large recruitment event in 2020. These cohorts are projected to make up an even larger portion of the population in 2022 due to increasing maturity (Figure 2). The majority of the mature population in 2022 will consist of age-5 and age-6 fish, both by number (52% and 20% respectively) and by biomass (45% and 21% respectively; Figure 2). The forecast average weight of a fish in the 2022 mature population is 281 g (Figure 2), whereas the forecast average weight of a fish that is vulnerable to the commercial purse seine fishery is 297 g.

The commercial fishery and spawn timing of Togiak herring are related to several factors, including water temperatures at the spawning grounds in the Togiak District and sea surface temperatures in the southeastern Bering Sea. The department uses a sea surface temperature (SST) model based on temperatures near Unalaska to predict the timing of the Togiak herring run. Additionally, the department tracks ice coverage of the Bering Sea throughout February and March to help inform predictions in run timing, as we consider this a useful index for predicting the maturity of herring bound for the Togiak District to spawn. Based on our SST and sea ice models, we project a first spawn and first harvest to occur in the first week of May.

The Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan (5 AAC 27.865) sets a maximum exploitation rate of 20% for the Togiak District stock. For the 2022 Togiak herring fishery, the guideline harvest level (GHL) will be based on a 20% exploitation rate. Harvest allocation, in accordance with the management plan will be:

Fishery	Harvest allocation
Spawn-on-kelp	1,500 tons
Dutch Harbor food and bait	4,900 tons
Togiak fishery	65,107 tons
Purse seine (80%)	52,086 tons
Gillnet (20%)	13,021 tons

Given the size of the 2022 GHL and expected effort for the 2022 fishery, it is likely less than half of the GHL will be taken and unlikely that inseason reallocation of quota will be needed.

TOGIAK FISHERY

The management strategy for the Togiak herring fishery is designed to provide maximum harvest opportunity and product quality. In 2022, purse seine and gillnet fisheries will be managed to maximize product quality through long openings, which should 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 minimized. A preseason poll indicates that two processors will participate in the 2022 Togiak herring fishery. At this time, it is unclear if there will be any gillnet participation in the 2022 herring fishery; purse seine participation is estimated at 7 – 10 vessels. For the last two decades, the department has opened the herring fishery as soon as the threshold biomass of 35,000 tons has been documented and this strategy will be used again in 2022. This strategy allows individual companies to maximize their processing capacity and decide what quality fish is suitable for their individual market.

Purse Seine

For at least the last decade, the purse seine fishery has operated as individual processor-managed fleets. We anticipate that this will be the case in 2022, and therefore, fishing time and area(s) will be maximized to allow for the harvest of market quality herring. 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 in 2022. However, the department will work with processors that want to make test sets to monitor roe quality prior to the threshold biomass being documented.

Gillnet

Under current regulation in the *Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan* (5 AAC 27.865 (b)(3)), the department may allow only one gear type to operate in an area during any open period. That means if there is any gillnet participation, specific areas of the district will need to be set aside for that gear type. Management of the gillnet fishery, if there is one, will be similar to recent years. Ample fishing time and area will be allowed to take as much gillnet herring as possible. In 2022, 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, and gillnet vessels are on the grounds and ready to fish. 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 2022

Beginning in late April, fishery information will be available by calling the recorded message 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 the Togiak District beginning in mid-April, depending on weather conditions. The department will monitor marine VHF channel 7 from Dillingham and be reachable by calling (907) 842-5227. Fishing announcements and regular fishery updates will be communicated directly to each processor, published on the department website, and distributed by fax and email. Harvest will be sampled from Naknek shore-based processing plants. The department will 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 updates and announcements. Harvest and fishery opening information will also be available at the Division of Commercial Fisheries website at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyfisheryherring.herringannouncements#central>

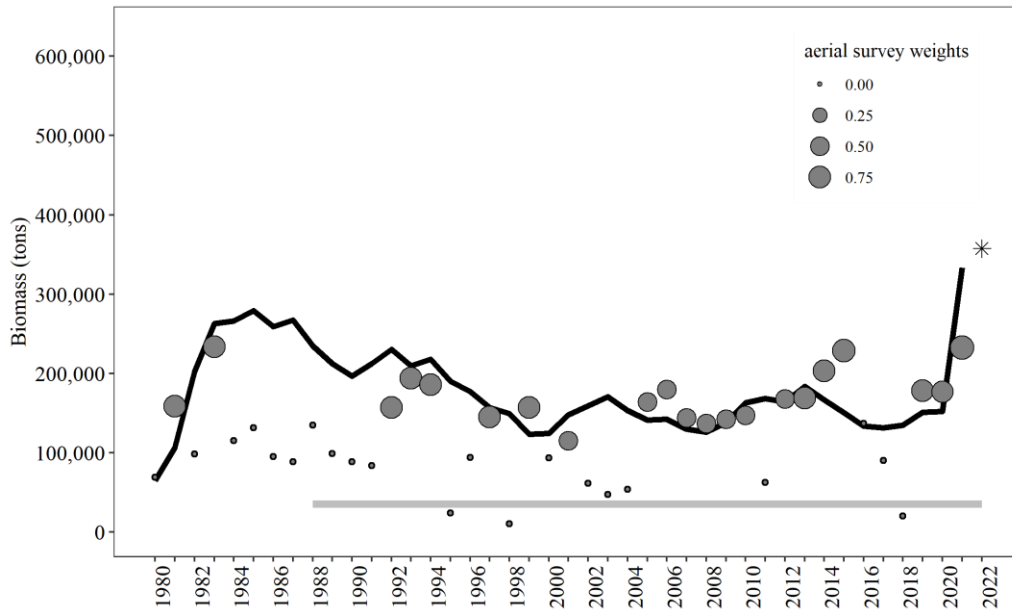


Figure 1.—Aerial survey-estimated biomass plus pre-peak catch that were included in the model (grey circles), model-estimated mature biomass (black solid line), and model-estimated mature biomass forecast for 2022 (black star). The size of the grey circles reflect the confidence weighting of each aerial survey estimate in the model based on weather, number of surveys, quality of surveys, and timing of surveys relative to the spawn (ranging from 0 = no confidence to 1 = perfect confidence). The confidence ranking in 2021 was 0.90.

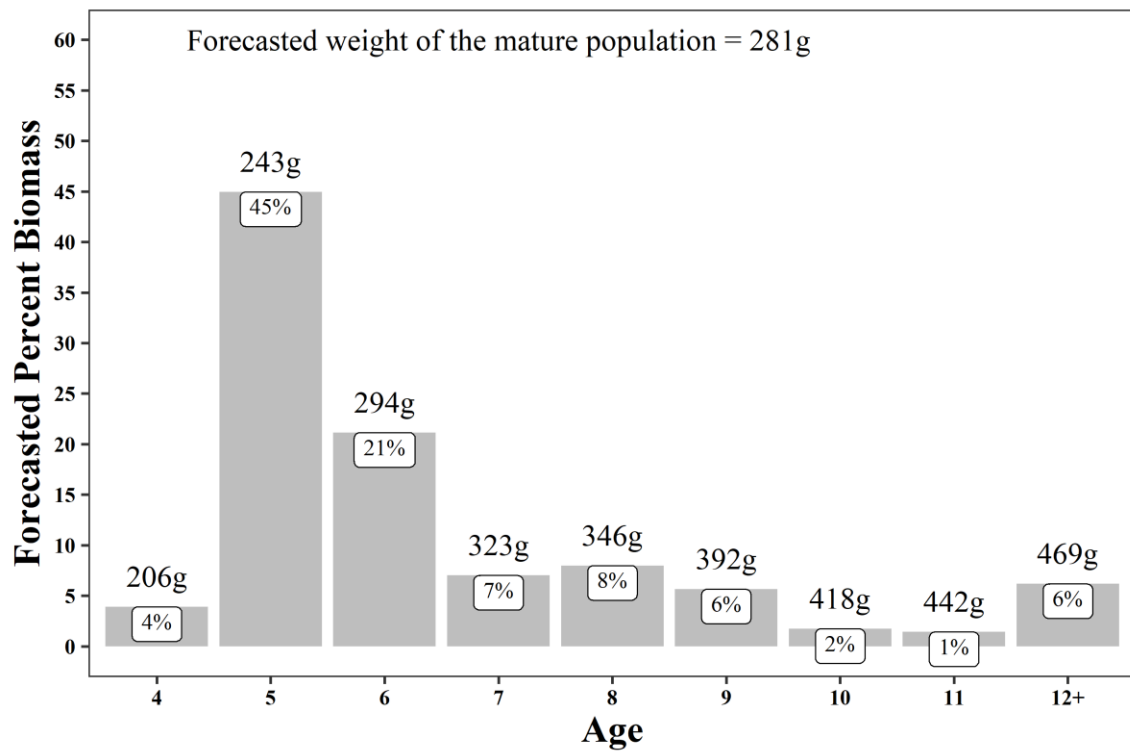


Figure 2.—Forecasted percent mature biomass by age with average weight (grams) for each age class as well as the average weight of the forecasted 2022 mature biomass as a whole (281g).