



## Advisory Announcement

*For Immediate Release: March 30, 2022*

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### SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 14

The aerial survey conducted on March 30 covered Sitka Sound from Windy Passage to Salisbury Sound. Weather during the flight was poor with 20-knot winds, overcast skies, and rain. Viewing conditions were difficult with turbulence, low cloud ceiling, rain, and fog often obstructing visibility. There was approximately 5.3 nautical miles (nmi) of herring spawn observed today. Active spawning areas include Hayward Strait, eastern Kruzof shoreline, Middle Island, and near Crow Pass (Figure 1). Herring predators were difficult to see with the numerous white caps but appeared to be scattered across Sitka Sound. Most whales were concentrated at Hayward Strait while most sealions were at Inner Point.

Department and industry vessels surveying Sitka Sound on March 30 located very large schools of herring in the shallower waters of Hayward Strait, southern Krestof Sound, and from St. Lazaria Island to Kamenoi Point. Numerous schools of herring were observed in Crow Pass, around Middle Island, and near the Kasiana Islands.

One successful test set was conducted today, the results are as follows:

Time	Area	Tons	% Mature Roe	% Immature Roe	Avg weight	% Female
09:20	Rob Point (Hayward Str.)	50 T	13.5 %	0.46 %	121	55.00 %

Herring mortality associated with test sets is likely minimal and there is no evidence that the small number of fish taken has any measurable impact on the subsistence fishery. Nevertheless, to ensure reasonable opportunity for subsistence harvest of herring roe would not be negatively impacted by test setting, prior to authorizing test fishing in this area the department considered the following: 1) test setting in the area evaluated today was well outside the commercial closed waters and core subsistence areas; and 2) the fish encountered during test fishing in this area would represent a small fraction of the overall biomass in the area.

An opening of the Sitka Sound herring sac roe fishery occurred on March 30, 2022, from 11:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., as stated in field announcement on VHF channel 10. Open waters for this fishery included the area south of 57°10.78' N lat, north of 57°07.98' N lat, and west of 135°30.76' W long (Figure 2). Additionally, the waters within 200-yards from shoreline at mean high tide between a point on the Kruzof Island shoreline at 57°09.19' N lat, 135°34.76' W long and Point Brown at 57°09.02' N lat, 135°34.06' W long were closed to commercial fishing because subsistence roe-on-branch sets were identified by the department in that area of herring spawn.

Harvest estimates from today's fishery will be included on the next fishery update. Harvest from the fishery that occurred on March 29, 2022, was approximately 1,500-tons of herring. Total harvest in the fishery through March 29 is approximately 7,300-tons of herring.

The department has determined that the opening described above would not harm a reasonable opportunity for participants in the subsistence fishery to harvest the amount of roe necessary for subsistence uses. When making this determination, the department considered: 1) vessel surveys conducted by the department beginning on March 22 indicated that there is a very large biomass of herring within Sitka Sound and numerous large schools of herring have been observed within the regulatory closed waters; 2) the department identified subsistence roe-on-branch sets in active herring spawn within the boundaries of today's fishery and took action to close a section of shoreline within 200 yards of mean high tide; 3) approximately 2.0 nmi of herring spawn was observed today within regulatory closed waters on Crow, Middle, and near Gagarin Islands.

The department continues to work with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in response to the grounding of the vessel in Neva Strait. This includes tracking the geographic extent of the spilled fuel and assessing any potential impacts to the subsistence and commercial herring fisheries in Sitka Sound. Today's aerial survey found spotty, light diesel sheen extending from Olga Strait, Neva Strait, and Salisbury Sound. Because the State of Alaska has a zero-tolerance policy with respect to fuel contamination of seafood, the department will not open a commercial fishery or conduct test fishing in areas where there is a risk of fuel contamination of gear, vessels, or harvested fish. More information can be found on the DEC website: <https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/ppr/spill-information/response/2022/01-tug-western-mariner-grounding/>

The next aerial survey and fishery update are scheduled for Thursday, March 31.

All aerial herring survey data can be reviewed online, including spawn lines and photos, in an interactive map application found at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.herring#maps> or scan:



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

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<i>AWT</i>	225-5111	772-3983	874-3215	747-3254	465-4000	766-2533	784-3220

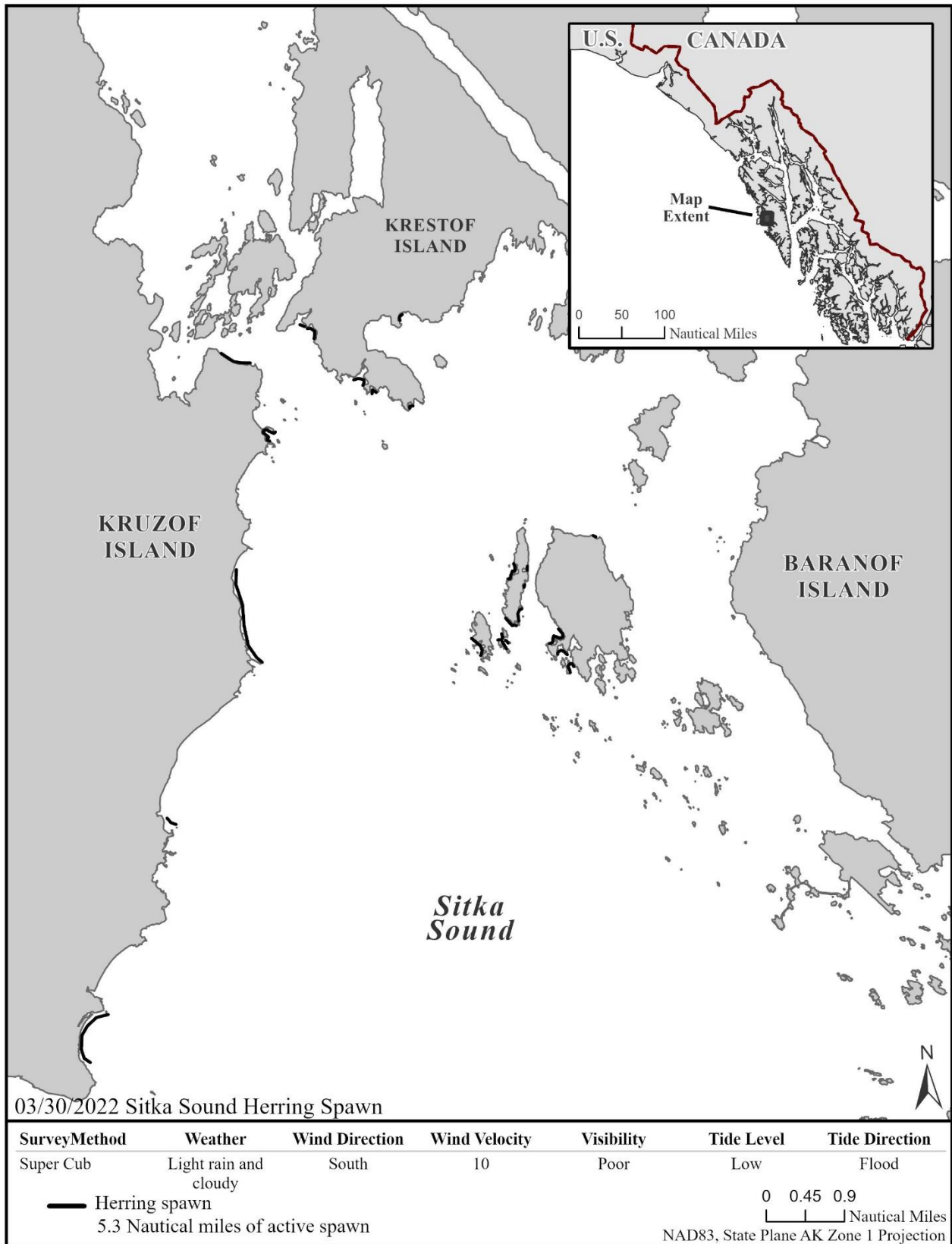


Figure 1.— Map of the active spawning areas in Sitka Sound during the aerial survey on March 30, 2022.

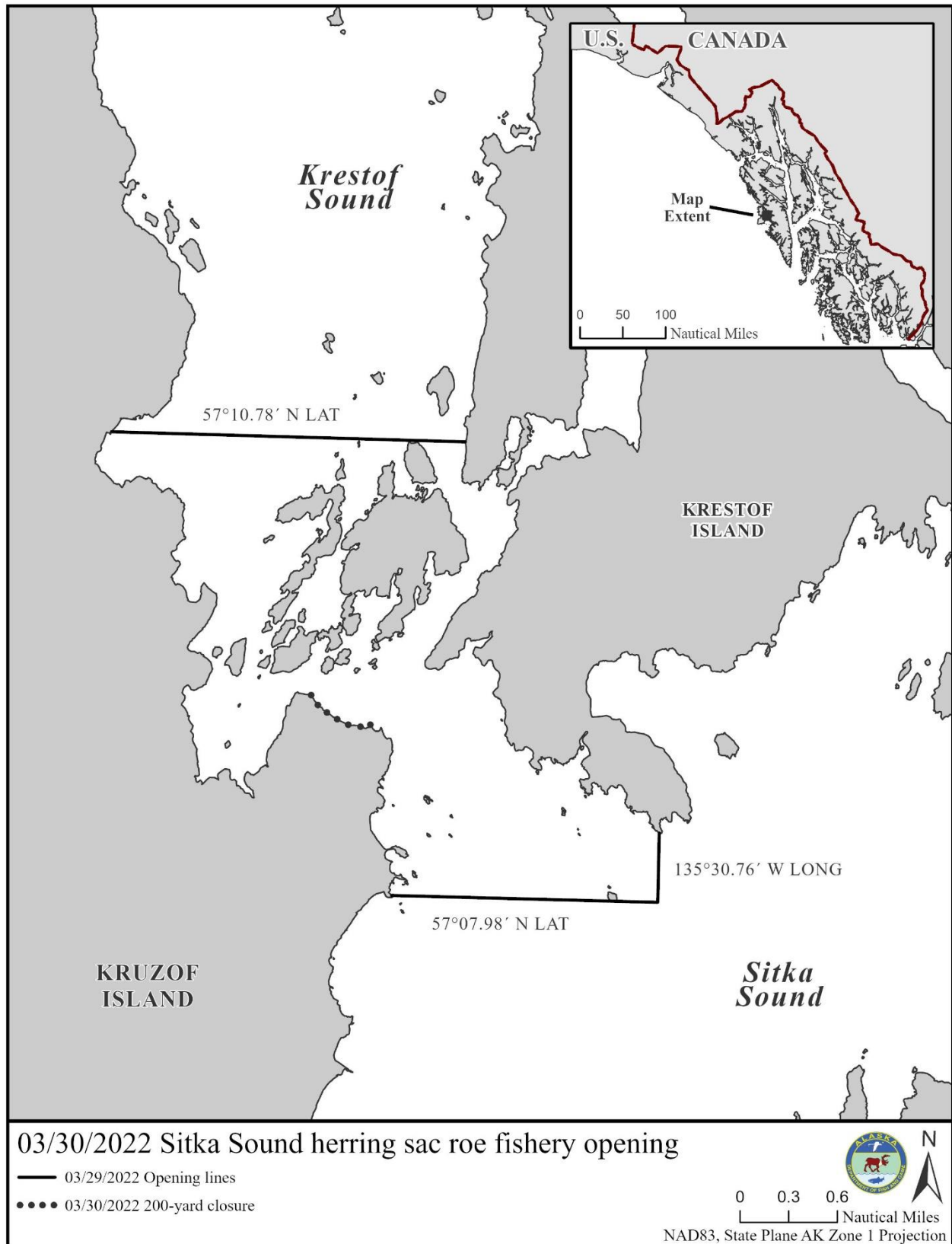


Figure 2.— Map of the area open for the March 30, 2022, Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery.