



Advisory Announcement
For Immediate Release: March 30, 2023

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 15

Today's aerial survey covered Sitka Sound from as far south as Goddard, to as far north as Salisbury Sound, and west to Shelikof Bay. Survey conditions were excellent with cloudy skies and 5-knot winds. Herring schools were seen from the aerial survey in Leesoffskaia Bay and Sukoi Inlet. Approximately 5.3 nautical miles (nmi) of active herring spawn was seen from Cape Edgecumbe and along the southern and southeastern Kruzof Island shorelines to near Fred's Creek (Figure 1). Herring predators were concentrated around Shoals Point and Low Island, near the causeway, and south of Peisar Island.

Department and industry vessels surveyed Sitka Sound from near Peisar Island, along the eastern shoreline of Kruzof Island, St. John Baptist Bay, and Salisbury Sound. Several very large schools of herring were located on sonar near Inner Point, near Peisar Island, and from St. John Baptist Bay to Scraggy Island. Numerous small schools of herring were observed from Harbor Point to Middle Island.

Four successful test sets were conducted today; the results are as follows:

Time	Area	Tons	% Mature Roe	% Immature Roe	Avg weight	% Female
7:50	N. Calligan Island	200	6.5 %	1.1 %	101 g	36.6 %
8:46	St. John Baptist Bay	200	11.9 %	1.1 %	150 g	49.0 %
9:27	Gilmer Cove	200	12.7 %	1.3 %	156 g	55.7 %
9:51	S. Frosty Reef	200	11.3 %	0.5 %	137 g	46.1 %

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 these areas the department considered the following: 1) the areas sampled today were outside the commercial closed waters and core subsistence areas; and 2) the fish encountered during test fishing represented a small fraction of the overall biomass in each area.

An opening of the Sitka Sound herring sac roe fishery occurred today from 1:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m., as stated in field announcement on VHF channel 10. The open area for this fishery included the waters of St. John Baptist Bay, Sukoi Inlet, and a portion of Salisbury Sound, south of 57°20.26' N lat, north of 57°16.91' N lat (Figure 2). The emergency order corresponding with today's opening is EO 1H0423. Harvest estimates from today's fishery will be included on the next fishery update. The harvest estimate from the fishery that occurred on March 29 was approximately 560 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 23 indicated that there is a very large biomass of herring distributed within Sitka Sound; 2) no herring spawn nor known subsistence branch sets were observed in the area; 3) herring have been spawning in Sitka Sound since March 26 through today, March 30, and the cumulative spawn estimate is 11.6 nmi.

The next aerial survey and fishery update are scheduled for Friday, 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

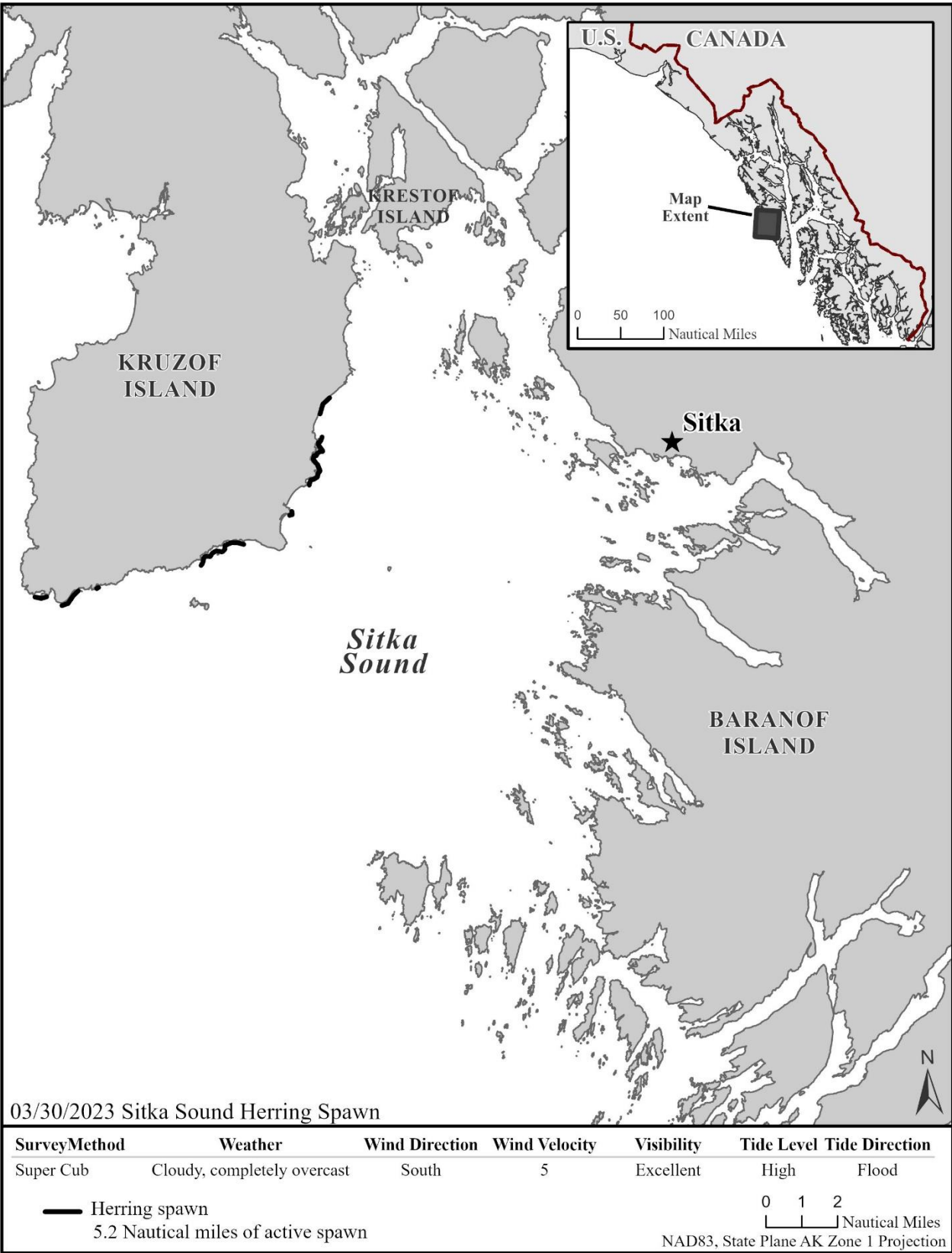


Figure 1.– Map of the active spawning areas in Sitka Sound during the aerial survey on March 30, 2023.

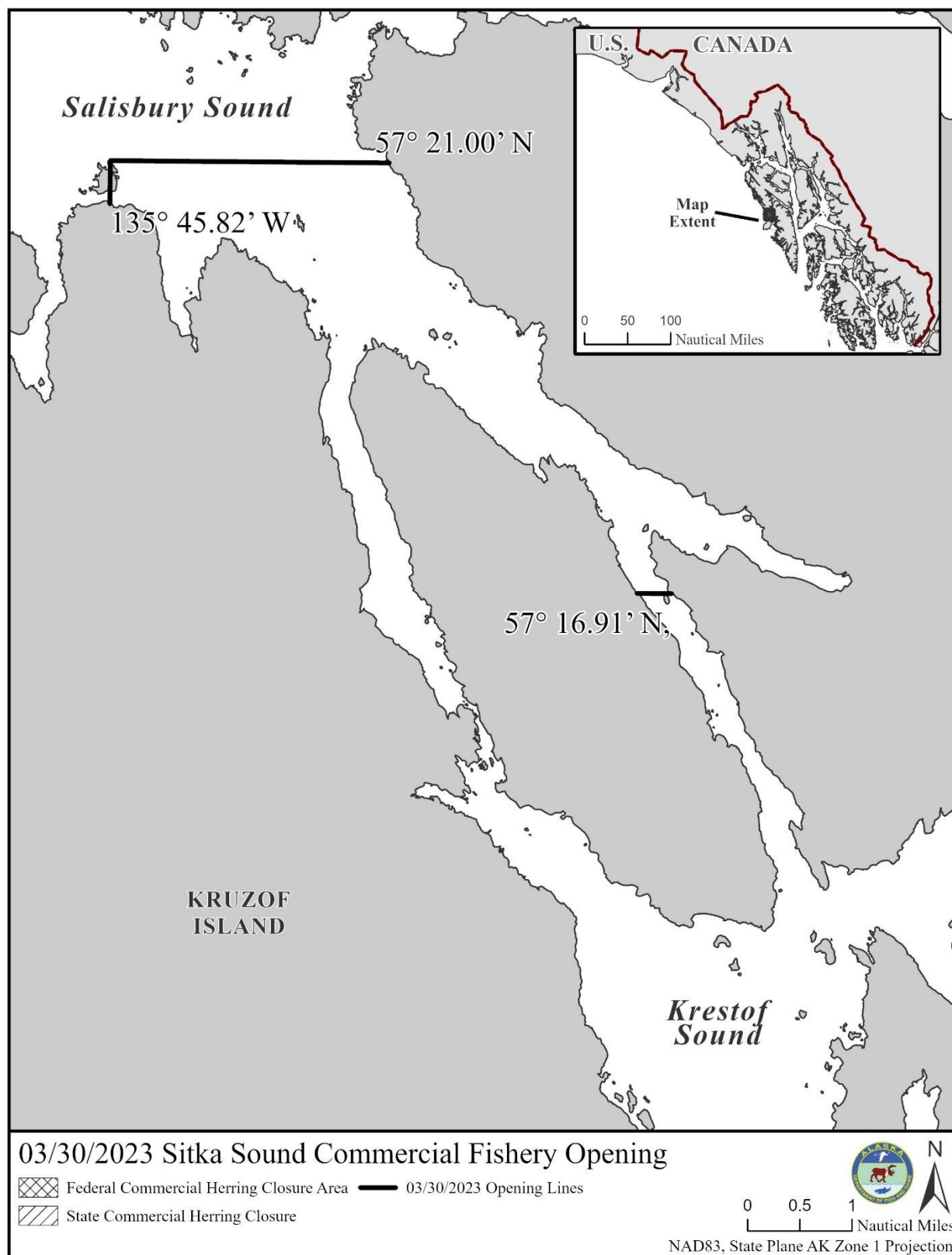


Figure 2.— Map of the Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery opening on March 30, 2023.