



Advisory Announcement
For Immediate Release: April 7, 2023

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 23

Today's aerial survey covered Sitka Sound from as far south as Lodge Island, to as far north as Sukoi Inlet and St. John Baptist Bay, and west to Shoals Point. Survey conditions today were fair with variable visibility from passing showers, cloudy skies with rain, and calm winds. Approximately 3.9 nautical miles (nmi) of active spawn was observed today, mostly concentrated in the Magoun Islands, Eastern Bay, Olga Strait, Middle Island, Kasiana Islands, and Goddard area. The cumulative spawn estimate through today is approximately 59.3 nmi.

Department and industry vessels surveyed Sitka Sound from Crescent Bay to West Crawfish Inlet. Several schools of herring were located on sonar throughout the surveyed area. Several large schools of herring schools were located between Frosty Reef and Hotsprings Bay, near Dorothy Narrows, and in Big Bay.

Two successful test set was conducted today; the results were:

Time	Area	Tons	% Mature Roe	% Immature Roe	Avg weight	% Female
13:30	Big Bay	100	7.1 %	0.4 %	110 g	48.6 %
14:16	Windy Passage	100	11.1 %	0.5 %	125 g	48.7 %

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.

Two openings of the Sitka Sound herring sac roe fishery occurred today. The first opening occurred from 9:45 a.m. until 1:15 p.m. in the waters of Sitka Sound north of 56°50.20' N lat, south of 56°52.21' N lat, and east of 135°25.09' W long as stated in field announcement on VHF channel 10. The second opening occurred from 4:00 p.m. until 5:15 p.m. in the waters of Windy Passage north of 56°48.23' N lat, south of 56°49.08' N lat, east of 135°23.64' W long, and west of 135°21.34' W long as stated in field announcement on VHF channel 10. The emergency order corresponding with today's openings is EO 1H0923. Approximately, 2,095-tons of herring were harvested during the fishery that occurred on April 6. Approximately 9,300-tons of herring have been harvested this season. Harvest estimates from today's fishery will be included on the next fishery update.

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) while herring spawn was observed in the area near Calligan Island today, no known subsistence branch sets were observed within the area opened today; 3) herring have been spawning in Sitka Sound since March 26 through today, April 7, and the cumulative spawn estimate is 59.3 nmi; and 4) a cumulative estimate of approximately 17.1 nmi of herring spawn has been observed within regulatory closed waters this season.

The next aerial survey and fishery update are scheduled for Saturday, April 8.

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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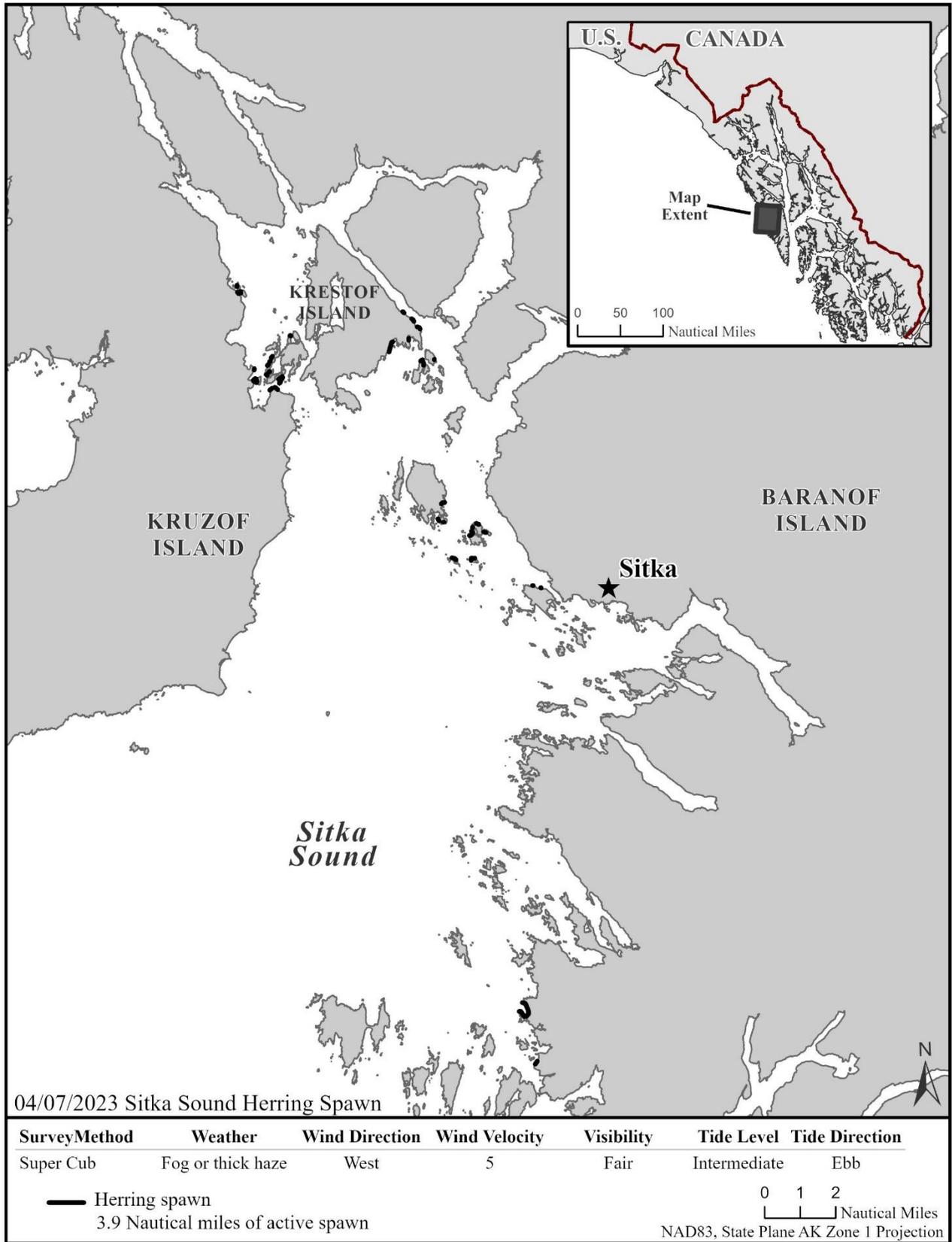


Figure 1.— Map of the active spawning areas in Sitka Sound during the aerial survey on April 7, 2023.

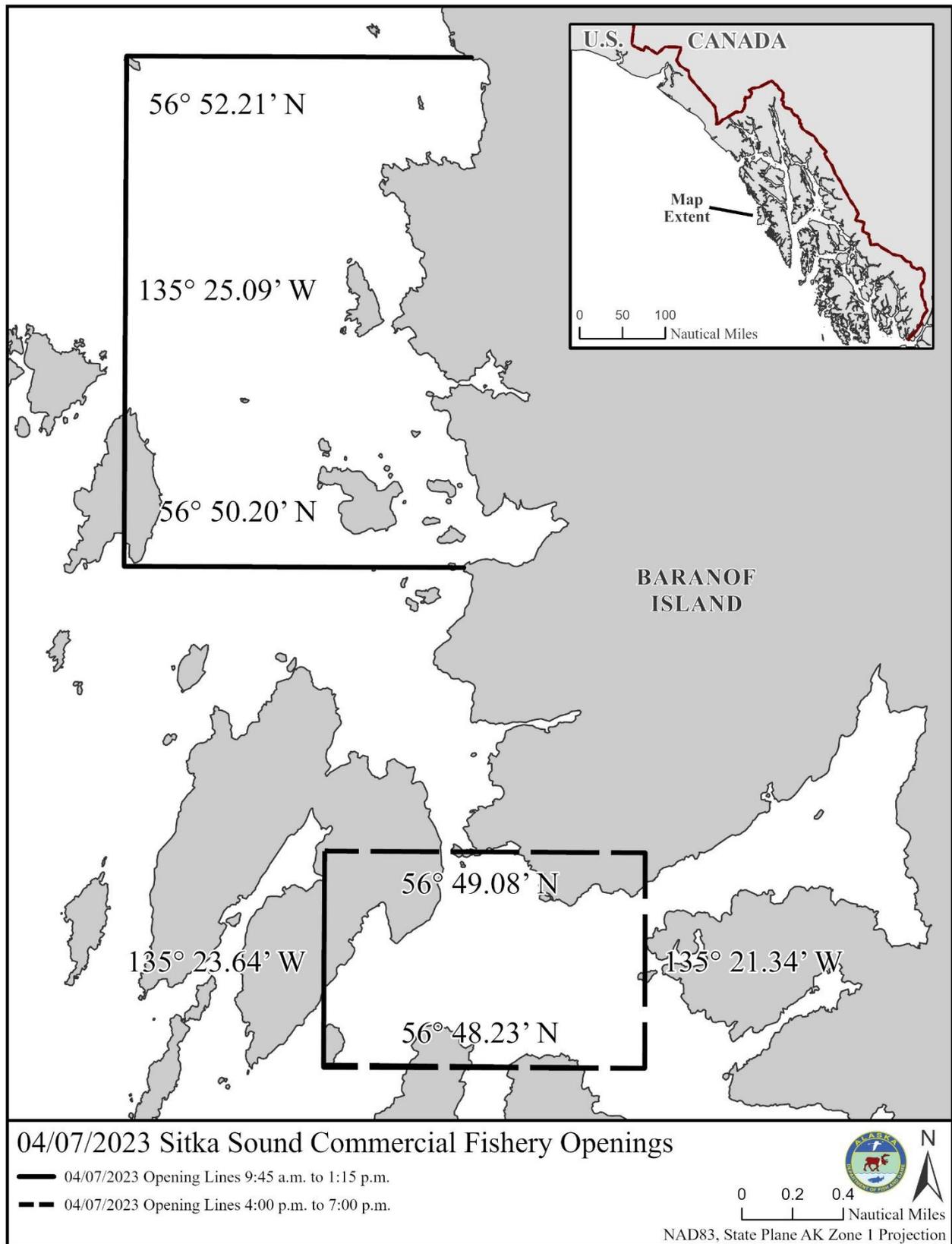


Figure 2.— Map of the Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery southern opening on April 7, 2023.