



## **Advisory Announcement**

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### **Prince William Sound Herring Announcement #1**

**All commercial herring fisheries in Prince William Sound (PWS) will remain closed through June 30, 2024.** These are the fall food and bait, purse seine and gillnet sac roe, spawn-on-kelp in pounds, and wild spawn-on-kelp fisheries. According to 5 AAC 27.365(b) Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan, the minimum spawning biomass threshold is 22,000 tons, and no fishery may be opened if this estimate is below that threshold. At projected biomass estimates between 22,000 and 42,500 tons, the department may allow, based on age-class strength, a harvest of herring at an exploitation rate between 0 and 20 percent.

This year's preliminary estimate is again above the 22,000-ton threshold and the population is seeing some continued recruitment. However, biomass estimates in recent years have primarily been driven by a single age class (the 2016 cohort). It remains uncertain if new recruits will offset older age class mortality and any fishing-related mortality. With the single 2016 cohort driving the biomass over the threshold, dropping back below the biomass threshold is likely without strong age classes continuing to recruit into the spawning population. Multiple years of above threshold biomass estimates are encouraging but signs of improving recruitment will need to be seen before a fishery is opened. Recognizing the positive trends in biomass growth, department staff and stakeholders have been meeting over the past two years to review information and develop a potential plan for a fishery.

The next herring announcement will be released when the final biomass estimate and age composition become available in December.