



Advisory Announcement
For Immediate Release: March 24, 2024

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 7

Today's aerial survey covered Sitka Sound from Cape Burunof to Salisbury Sound and Cape Edgecumbe. Herring schools were visible from the air in the vicinity of St. John Baptist Bay. Approximately 3.2 nautical miles (nmi; Figure 1) of herring spawn was observed on Kasiana Island, Halibut Point, Neva Strait, Degroff Bay, and Fred's Creek. Herring predators were seen throughout the surveyed area; however, predator activity was focused along the Kruzof Island shoreline from St. Lazaria to Hayward Strait. The largest concentrations of humpback whales were located near St. Lazaria Island and in Hayward Strait. Sea lions were concentrated on points and rock piles between Sitka Point and the Magoun Islands.

Department and industry vessels surveyed Sitka Sound from Harbor Point to Cape Burunof and from Hayward Strait to Krestof Sound. Very large schools of herring were observed between Cape Burunof and Long Island and from Kamenoi Point to Brady Island.

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

Time	Area	Tons	% Mature Roe	% Immature Roe	Avg weight	% Female
9:12	Rob Point	200	10.1 %	1.6 %	130 g	50.4 %

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 area near Rob Point is outside the commercial closed waters and core subsistence areas; 2) the fish encountered during test fishing represented a small fraction of the overall biomass in this area; 3) herring spawn was observed within commercial closed waters and core subsistence areas today.

An opening of the Sitka Sound herring sac roe fishery occurred today from 12:30 p.m. until 5:00 p.m., as stated in field announcement on VHF channel 10. The initial open area for this fishery included the waters of Hayward Strait and Krestof Sound south of 57°11.24' N lat, north of 57°08.00' N lat, and west of 135°30.76' W long (Figure 2). The emergency order corresponding with today's opening is EO 1H0324. No harvest estimates from today's fishery are available at this time but 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 20 indicated that there is a very large biomass of herring distributed throughout Sitka Sound; 2) schools of herring were observed within regulatory closed waters on the vessel survey that occurred on March 23 from Harbor Point to Starrigavan Bay; 3) herring spawn was observed within commercial closed waters and core subsistence areas today; 3) while subsistence branch sets were observed within the open area, no herring spawn was observed.

The next aerial survey and fishery update are scheduled for Monday, March 25.

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>ADF&G</i>	225-5195	772-3801		747-6688	465-4250	766-2830	784-3255
<i>AWT</i>	225-5111	772-3983	874-3215	747-3254	465-4000	766-2533	784-3220

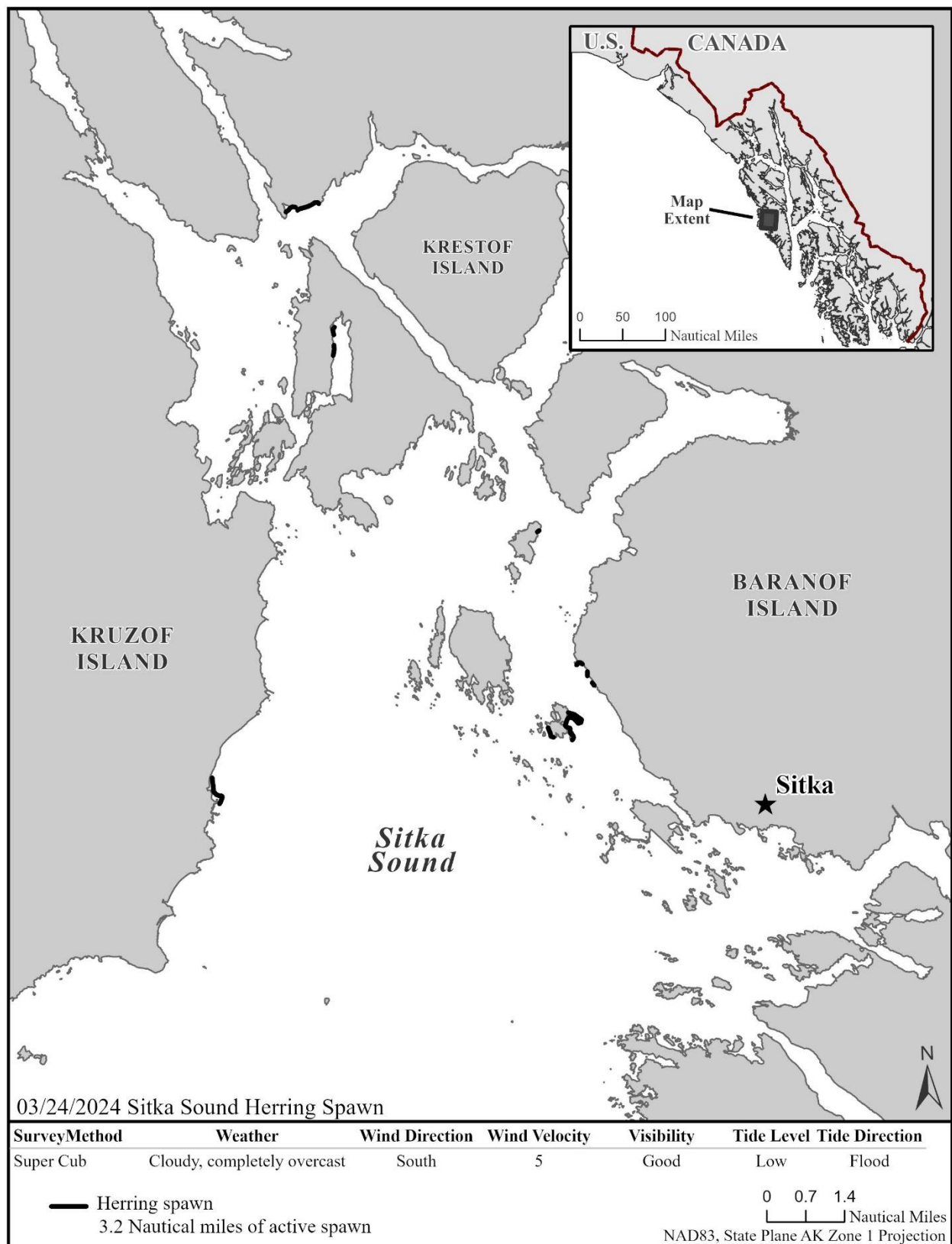


Figure 1.— Map of the active spawning areas in Sitka Sound during the aerial survey on March 24, 2024.

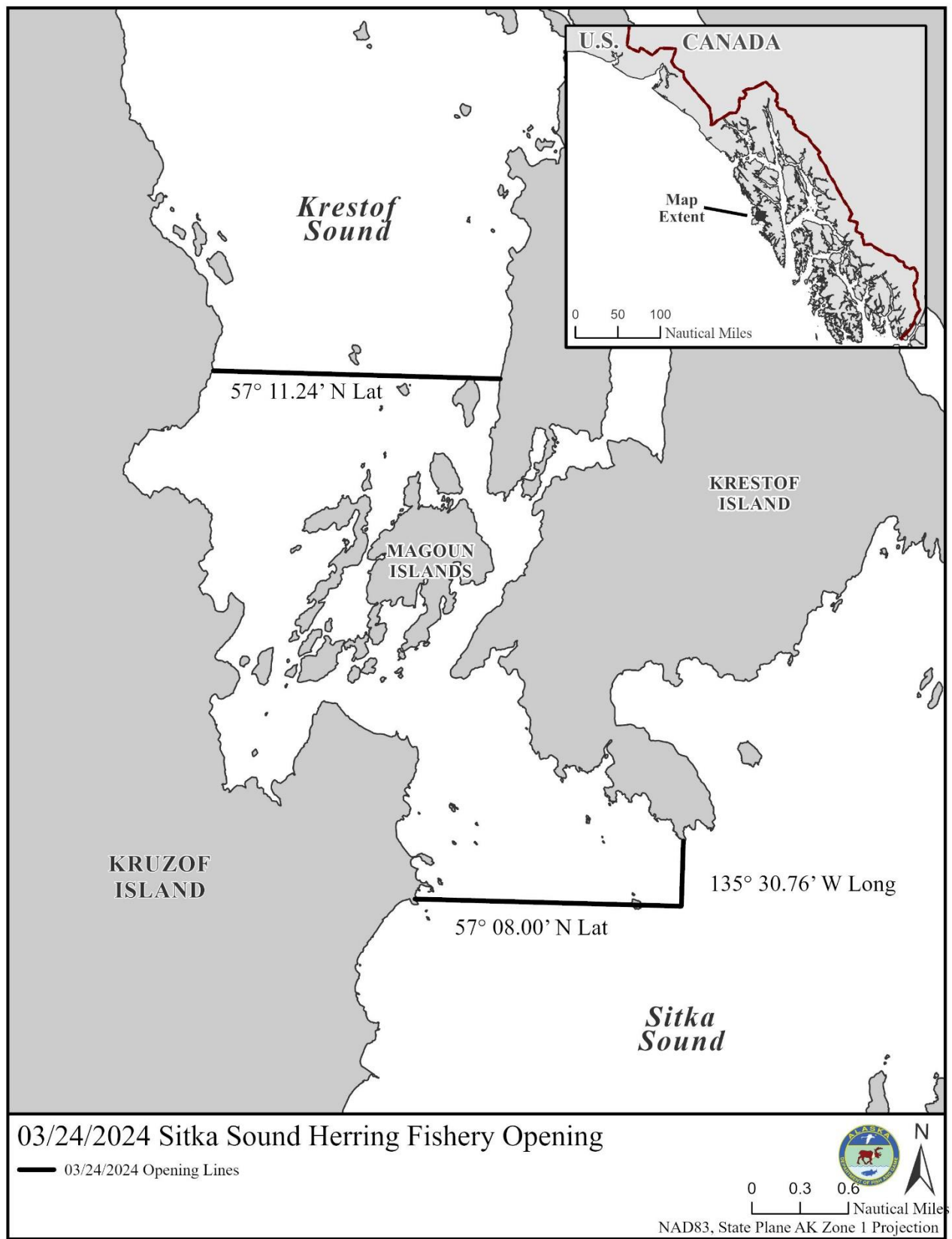


Figure 2.— Map of the initial area open for the March 24, 2024, Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery.