



**Advisory Announcement**  
*For Immediate Release: March 20, 2026*

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**SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 3**

Aerial surveys were conducted on March 19 and March 20 and covered Sitka Sound from Eastern Channel to Biorka Island, and St. Lazaria Island to Eastern Bay. No herring schools or spawn were observed. Weather conditions were fair with scattered snow showers and moderate winds. Few herring predators were seen throughout the surveyed area on March 19; however, there was a shift in humpback whale numbers and locations noted during today's aerial survey. Humpback whale numbers increased in the Eastern Channel area of Sitka Sound near Entry Point relative to the previous day's survey. Additionally, there was a very large group of humpback whales located between Cape Edgecumbe and Biorka Island that have appeared to move closer into Sitka Sound. Predator numbers and locations observed during today's flight are becoming more typical for surveys conducted during this time of year.

Department and industry vessels surveyed Sitka Sound on March 19 and March 20 from Crescent Bay to Entry Point, and from Deep Inlet to Whale Island. Herring schools were observed throughout the surveyed area on both days. The survey conducted on March 20 noted a significant increase in herring abundance in Eastern Channel south of Marshal Island relative to the previous day's survey.

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

Time	Area	Tons	% Mature Roe	% Immature Roe	Avg weight	% Female
12:57	Eastern Channel	100	4.9%	5.7%	146g	41%

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 Eastern Channel is 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 this area.

The next aerial survey is scheduled for Saturday, March 21 and the next fishery update can be expected on Monday, March 23, or sooner if a significant change in predator numbers or distribution is observed.

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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