

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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2013 TOGIAC HERRING FISHERY INFORMATION

This notice is intended to provide information to participants in the 2013 Togiak herring fishery. The 2013 herring biomass in Togiak District is forecast to be 169,094 tons, an increase from 2012. The 2013 forecast is based on an age-structured analysis (ASA) model that has been used since 1993. Ages -7 and -8 herring are expected to comprise 47% of the projected herring biomass, with ages -6 and under making up another 26%. Ages 9-11 are expected to make up 23% of the spawning run, while the remaining 4% will be age 12+ fish. Average weight for age-7 and older herring should exceed 300 grams. The forecasted individual average weight of herring in the harvested biomass is 317 grams.

The Togiak herring fishery occurs on fish at or about the time of spawning. The occurrence and timing of spawning is related to water temperatures experienced by herring on the spawning grounds and also appears related to sea surface temperature and sea ice trends across the southeastern Bering Sea in the weeks prior to spawning. We track the average sea surface temperature reported at Unalaska between 24 February and 16 March, as we consider this a useful index of conditions encountered by maturing herring ultimately bound for spawning grounds in and around the Togiak District. The 1995-2012 historical average temperature for that date range is 3.3° C, whereas the average temperature experienced during 2013 has been considerably warmer at 3.7° C. This is similar to 2009 which experienced water temperatures of 3.6 ° C during this time frame and had first harvests on 13 May. Sea ice conditions throughout the Bering Sea (ice extent and area) are currently very similar to 2010 which experienced first harvests occurred on 11 May. We anticipate the 2013 fishery to have similar timing (see current ice map information at NSIDC.ORG).

The Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan (BBHMP) (**5 AAC 27.865**) sets a maximum 20% exploitation rate for the Togiak District stock. Based on a forecasted run of 169,094 tons, up to 33,819 tons of herring will be available for harvest in 2013. Harvest allocation, in accordance with the BBHMP, will be:

Fishery	Harvest Allocation
Spawn-on-Kelp	1,500 tons
Dutch Harbor Food and Bait	2,262 tons
Togiak Sac Roe	30,056 tons
Purse Seine (70%)	21,040 tons
Gillnet (30%)	9,017 tons

SAC ROE FISHERY

The management strategy for the Togiak herring fishery is designed to provide for maximum sustained yield, while affording the greatest economic benefit to fishermen and processors.

In 2013, sac roe fisheries will again be managed to maximize product quality through long openings allowing permit holders to make smaller sets and harvest the best fish available. Processors will also have more flexibility to control harvest volume so that holding time between harvest and processing is optimal. Available processing capacity is expected to be approximately 2,775 tons per day based on a pre-season poll. This represents a significant increase from the 2012 daily capacity of 2,000 tons per day. The pre-season poll also indicates there will be six (6) processing companies participating in the Togiak sac roe herring fishery and fleet size is expected to be 40 gillnet and 28 purse seine vessels. For the last few seasons, the department has opened the herring fishery as soon as threshold biomass has been documented and anticipates using this strategy again in 2013 to maximize fishing time. The department believes this strategy allows individual companies to maximize their processing capacity and decide what quality is suitable for their individual market.

Purse Seine

In recent years, the seine fleet has operated in conjunction with the processing industry in cooperative groups. Indications are that this will be the case again in 2013 and therefore, fishing time and area will be very liberal. This should allow purse seine vessels to locate high quality herring and each cooperative to fill their company's daily processing capacity. This approach should result in fresher, higher quality roe, thereby maximizing product quality and value.

The department will not be coordinating any test fishing efforts. As always, the department will work with companies that want to make test sets prior to the threshold biomass being documented.

Gillnet

Management of the gillnet fishery will be similar to past years. Ample fishing time and area will be allowed in an effort to take the entire harvest guideline of 9,017 tons, while maintaining the specified 70/30 purse seine/gillnet ratio. Product quality will be a priority throughout the gillnet fishery.

In 2013, the department will primarily focus the gillnet fleet in the area east of Right Hand Point. The department will consider opening areas west of Right Hand Point to the gillnet fleet if

weather conditions are unfavorable in the eastern section. As in 2012, the plan is to open the gillnet area to fishing when threshold biomass is present. Individual companies and fishermen can organize their own test fishing scheme once the area is open and make decisions on when to begin fishing for production. Until it is determined that marketable quality fish are present, participants should test cautiously with a small portion of gear.

At the December 2009 Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) meeting, the Egg Island Section was formally approved and the coordinates are now in regulation. Additionally, the legal compliment of gear was increased to 100 fathoms. There were no changes made to the Togiak herring fishery regulations at the December 2013 BOF meeting.

ADF&G OPERATIONS 2013

Beginning in late April or early May, current fishery information will be available by calling the telephone recorder in Dillingham at (907) 842-5226. Recordings will be updated regularly throughout the season as information becomes available. The department will conduct regular aerial surveys of Togiak District beginning in late April or early May, depending on weather conditions. The department will not relocate to a field office in Togiak for 2013. The department will monitor marine VHF channel 7 from Dillingham and be available at the phone number listed at the top of this document. Fishing announcements and regular fishery updates will be communicated directly to each processor, published on the web and distributed by fax and email.

Visit: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main> to subscribe to herring fax and/or email updates and announcements. Harvest and fishery opening information will also be available at the Commercial Fisheries website:

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.herring_announcements