

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



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director*



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Norton Sound Area Office
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Nome, AK, 99762
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Time: 2:45 p.m.

NORTON SOUND COMMERCIAL SAC ROE HERRING FISHERY OPENS

At the request of the buyer, the department will open the commercial sac roe herring fishery to set gillnets effective 6:00 p.m. this evening until further notice. NSEDC has established a market quota of 800–1,200 tons of sac roe herring this season. At the moment, processing and tender vessels are slowly pushing through a lead in offshore ice between Stuart Island and Cape Darby on their way towards Besboro Island. As of this morning, water temperatures between 5–6 degrees Celsius have been recorded amidst the floating ice and further away from melt water plumes, water temperatures as high as 7 degrees have been observed. Approximately 50 tons of herring were also observed by NSEDC biologists on June 5 near Cape Denbigh. Taken collectively, all available assessment information suggests that large schools of ripe herring are accumulating offshore in deeper, relatively warm water, but will soon approach the southeastern Norton Sound coastline to spawn in abundance, possibly as early as this weekend. Once major spawning begins, excellent catch rates with high roe recovery are expected in the fishery for 2–4 days, which will be followed by a sharp decline in catch rates and percent roe as the larger, older age-class herring vacate the spawning grounds.

Opening the fishery today ensures the fishery will commence as the abundance of ripe herring biomass continues to build. Additionally, leaving the fishery open continuously allows the buyer to direct the bulk of the fishing fleet to areas where harvest efficiency and roe recovery can be maximized. Permit holders must register with Norton Sound Seafood Products and should contact them if they are interested in providing test fishery samples. Additionally, permit holders should be in contact with Norton Sound Seafood once the fishery is underway to ensure there is a market for their catch.

The ADF&G Unalakleet field office is open with a test fishery crew to process commercial herring samples and assist the public with information needs. Another ADF&G test fishery crew will also be ready to deploy for Cape Denbigh from Unalakleet as early as Sunday morning, but southwesterly winds could delay the start of the project until Monday morning when these winds

are anticipated to diminish. Initial commercial fishing effort in southeastern Norton Sound may also be hampered by the southwesterly front presenting temporary high surf and floating ice hazards.

If you have any questions regarding the commercial sac roe herring fishery, please call the ADF&G Nome Area office at 1-800-560-2271, or the Unalakleet field office at 1-907-624-3921.

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