

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



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director*



Contact:
Tim Sands, Area Management Biologist
Matt Jones, Assistant Area Biologist
Phone: (907) 842-5227
Fax: (907) 842-5937

Dillingham Area Office
546 Kenny Wren Road
Dillingham, AK, 99576
Date Issued: March 4, 2014
Time: 9:00 a.m.

2014 TOGIK HERRING OUTLOOK

This notice is intended to provide information to participants in the 2014 Togiak herring fishery. The 2014 herring biomass in Togiak District is forecast to be 157,448 tons, a 7% decrease from 2013 but 20% above the recent 10 year average. The 2014 forecast is based on an age-structured analysis (ASA) model that has been used since 1993. Age -6 herring are expected to comprise 11% of the projected biomass, ages -7 and -8 comprising 35%, ages 9-11 are expected to make up 48% while the remaining 6% 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 372 grams.

The commercial fishery and spawn timing 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 in late February and early March, as we consider this time window a useful index of conditions encountered by maturing herring ultimately bound for spawning grounds in and around the Togiak District. Currently the Unalaska sea surface temperature is approximately 1.8 ° C above the average for this date and at a level most similar to 2003 when the first harvest occurred on 25 April. Sea ice extent in the Bering Sea is currently 5% below recent years (2006-present) suggesting a slightly earlier harvest than that seen in recent years (e.g. earlier than 10 May; Follow current ice map information at <http://nsidc.org/>).

The Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan (**5 AAC 27.865**) sets a maximum 20% exploitation rate for the Togiak District stock. Based on a forecasted run of 157,448 tons, up to 31,490 tons of herring will be available for harvest in 2014. Harvest allocation, in accordance with the management plan will be:

Fishery	Harvest Allocation
Spawn-on-Kelp	1,500 tons
Dutch Harbor Food and Bait	2,099 tons
Togiak Sac Roe	27,890 tons
Purse Seine (70%)	19,523 tons
Gillnet (30%)	8,367 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 2014, 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 3,365 tons per day based on a preseason poll. This represents a significant increase from the 2013 daily capacity of 2,500 tons per day. The preseason poll also indicates there will be 7 processing companies participating in the Togiak sac roe herring fishery and fleet size is expected to be 38 gillnet and 29 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 2014 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

For at least the last decade, the seine fishery has operated as individual processor controlled fleets. Indications are that this will be the case again in 2014 and therefore, fishing time and area will be very liberal. This should allow purse seine vessels to locate high quality herring and 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 8,367 tons, while maintaining the specified 70/30 purse seine/gillnet ratio. Product quality will be a priority throughout the gillnet fishery.

In 2014, 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 2013, 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 commercial quality fish are present, participants should test cautiously with a small portion of gear.

ADF&G OPERATIONS 2014

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 2014. 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.