

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



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PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND HERRING ANNOUNCEMENT # 1

All commercial herring *Clupea pallasii* fisheries in Prince William Sound (PWS) **between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2014 are closed**. This includes: fall food and bait, purse seine and gillnet sac roe, spawn-on-kelp in pounds, and wild spawn-on-kelp fisheries. Age Structured Assessment (ASA) modeling results are not yet available, but observed mile-days of spawn in 2013 indicate that the prefishery run biomass for 2014 will likely be below the regulatory threshold. According to 5AAC 27.365(b) Prince William Sound herring management plan, no fishery may be opened if the estimated spawning biomass is projected to be below 22,000 tons. Because of the limited amount of observed spawn in 2013, all herring fisheries will be closed.

Hydroacoustic surveys, net sampling, and aerial surveys were conducted in 2013 to assess herring biomass, disease prevalence, age composition, and growth. In April 2013, acoustic surveys of adult herring were conducted with the ADF&G vessel R/V *Solstice*. Broad scale surveys were conducted in eastern PWS up to Boulder Bay. Detailed acoustics data were collected on fish aggregations in Port Gravina, between St. Matthews Bay and Knowles Head. The preliminary acoustics results from the 2013 ADF&G surveys will be provided when complete.

Nineteen aerial surveys were conducted between 2 April and 9 May 2013. Surveys documented spawn in eastern PWS between St. Matthews Bay and Knowles Head (5–6, 20–21, 26 April and 8 May); around Gravina Point (20–22 and 24–26 April); within Tatitlek Narrows (21 April and 8 May); between Knowles Head and Two Moon Bay, and in Landlock Bay (9 April and 7–8 May); on the northwest side of Boulder Bay (8 May), between Port Chalmers and Stockdale Harbor (24 April) and directly south of Port Chalmers (9 May). Preliminary spawn estimates are 20.7 mile-days (south of Knowles Head) and 5.5 mile-days (north of Knowles Head), and 3.2 mile-days (Montague Island) for a total of 29.3 mile-days of spawn. This is fewer mile-days of spawn in PWS than in any year in which commercial fishing occurred since 1973. No fish or spawn were documented in Fairmont Bay, Naked Island, or Knight Island. An additional 5.3 mile-days of spawn were documented on Kayak Island on 5 April, but are not included in our assessment for PWS.

Age composition samples taken during spring 2013 varied by location and sample gear. Spawning fish samples from southeast PWS were predominately made up of five age classes: age 4 (19%), 6 (19%), 7 (15%), 8 (20%), and 9 (13%). No collections were made from the smaller spawning events in the Port Fidalgo and Montague Island areas. A small grab sample from one of the Kayak Island spawn events were predominately 7 (18%), 8 (31%), and 9 (28%) year old fish. Some prespawning samples from Eastern PWS (upper Port Gravina) were predominantly younger fish (66% age 2).

Herring disease assessment has been included as part of the annual age, sex, and size assessment completed each spring since 1993. Disease sampling in April 2013 found no fish positive for viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus (VHSV) in 119 fish examined. In adult herring, the prevalence of *Ichthyophonus hoferi* was 32.8% in Port Gravina (119 fish), representing a decrease in prevalence from samples collected in 2011 and 2012.

Additional updates on the status of the PWS herring population will be announced when new information becomes available.