

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



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2014 Togiak Herring Season Summary

The following is a summary of the 2014 herring sac roe and spawn-on-kelp fisheries in the Togiak District, Bristol Bay. Herring are harvested for sac roe using gillnets and purse seines; while herring spawn on wild kelp is harvested by hand. In July a food and bait fishery occurs near Dutch Harbor primarily on the Togiak herring stock with the allocation based on the forecasted biomass of Togiak herring. The Dutch Harbor fishery is summarized separately. All data in this summary are preliminary.

STOCK ASSESSMENT

Biomass Estimation

Togiak District aerial surveys began April 22, 2014 and herring were first observed in the district on April 24. ADF&G staff observed approximately 3,000 tons of herring just entering the district on the Southeast end of Hagemeister Island on April 24. The fishery opened on April 27 after 37,285 tons of herring was documented, exceeding the threshold biomass of 35,000. Peak biomass was documented on May 2 when 99,219 tons of herring and 6.4 miles of spawn were documented. Excellent weather allowed staff to fly nearly every day for the first week of the season. Over 80 miles of spawn and more than 500,000 combined tons of biomass were documented. The last survey was flown on May 23 when over 70,000 tons of herring were still on the grounds and spawn still occurring.

AGE COMPOSITION

Herring were sampled for age and sex composition during 2014. The preliminary analysis indicates similar composition to the expected forecast. A more complete analysis and summary will be available in the 2014 Bristol Bay Annual Management Report.

COMMERCIAL FISHERY

Togiak District herring fisheries are managed in accordance with the **BRISTOL BAY HERRING MANAGEMENT PLAN (5 AAC 27.865)**, which specifies a maximum allowable

exploitation rate of 20% and allocates the harvestable surplus among all the fisheries harvesting the Togiak herring stock. The 2014 pre-season biomass forecast was 157,448 tons. The projected harvest guideline for each fishery was as follows: 1,500 tons herring equivalent or 350,000 lbs. of product for the spawn-on-kelp fishery, 2,099 tons for the Dutch Harbor food and bait fishery, and the remaining 29,990 tons for the sac roe fishery. The management plan further specifies that the department will manage the sac roe fishery so that 70% of the harvest is taken by purse seine (19,523 tons in 2014) and 30% of the harvest is taken by gillnet (8,367 tons in 2014).

The **BRISTOL BAY HERRING MANAGEMENT PLAN** and other regulations direct the department to conduct an orderly, manageable fishery and strive for the highest level of product quality with a minimum of waste. In recent years, the seine fleet has been comprised of processor-organized cooperatives. For the 2014 season, management staff allowed long duration seine openings over a large area of the district and let processors limit harvest for their individual fleets based on processing capacity.

Department staff polled processing companies prior to the 2014 season to assess processing capacity and to inquire about additional concerns or issues. The poll indicated that seven companies intended to participate in the 2014 Togiak herring fishery. One company indicated they planned to buy only gillnet fish and one company planned to buy only purse seine fish. The processing capacity for 2014 was estimated to be 2,600 tons per day. In the end only six companies participated in the 2014 Togiak sac roe herring fishery. All six companies bought purse seine fish while five companies bought gillnet fish.

Purse Seine

The Togiak purse seine fishery opened at 6:00 p.m. on April 27. The department initially opened the purse seine fishery for 76 hours. Commercial quality fish were available late on April 29 when 1,611 tons of herring were harvested by the purse seine fleet. Herring continued to be of marketable quality for the remainder of the purse seine fishery and the department extended the fishery on April 30 for 48 hours, again on May 2 for 72 hours and finally on May 5 until further notice. Excellent weather prevailed throughout the season and the purse seine fleet steadily harvested the quota at a pace of about 1,700 tons per day for the first 10 days of the fishery. Day 11 was somewhat slower with only 584 tons harvested, but the harvest increased to almost 1,000 tons for each of the next two days. On May 11, all but one company completed its purse seine fishing operations for the season. The last company finished operations on May 13. The final harvest was 18,668 tons of herring, equal to 96% of the purse seine quota. Purse seine participation was documented at 17 vessels, down from 26 in 2013.

Gillnet

The Togiak gillnet fishery opened at 6:00 p.m. April 27 until further notice with no prior test fishing. In 2014, five companies participated in the Togiak sac roe gillnet fishery, a decrease from 6 in 2013. Fishermen participation was significantly lower than 2013, when 37 vessels participated; only 24 gillnet vessels were involved in the 2014 fishery. Although the season opened on April 27, the first day that more than three companies purchased fish was April 30. The combined harvest from April 29 and 30 was 1,181 tons of herring. Harvest continued at a somewhat erratic rate for the entire season. The best single day catch was May 1 with 991 tons of herring harvested. May 8 was the slowest day with only 109 tons of herring harvested. The fishery ended on May 13 when the last company ceased operations. Allocation between the purse seine fleet and the gillnet fleet was not an issue during the season. Both gear groups were very

close in their respective harvest percentages until after they each passed the 50% mark. The season officially closed at 12:00 noon on May 14, when the last company ceased operations. The total gillnet harvest was 6,468 tons of herring, representing 77% of the quota.

Spawn on Kelp

No companies registered to buy herring spawn-on-kelp in 2014, therefore there were no openings and no commercial harvest.

EXPLOITATION

The 2014 Togiak herring fisheries were managed for a maximum exploitation rate of 20% of the preseason biomass estimate. The purse seine harvest was 18,668 tons with a reported average weight of 364 grams and an average roe percentage of 10.3%. The gillnet harvest was 6,468 tons with a reported average weight of 404 grams and an average roe percentage of 11.3%, making the combined harvest 25,136 tons with an average weight of 374 grams and an average roe percentage of 10.6%. The Dutch Harbor food and bait fishery has not occurred at this time. If the Dutch Harbor fishery harvest is equal to the quota of 2,099 tons, then the total harvest for 2014 would be estimated at 27,235 tons. Based on the preseason biomass estimate of 157,448 tons, the 2014 exploitation rate would be approximately 17.3%.

EXVESSEL VALUE

The projected exvessel value of the 2014 Togiak herring fishery is approximately \$1.26 million. This is based on a grounds price estimate of \$50 per ton for seine caught fish and \$50 per ton for gillnet caught fish and does not include any postseason adjustments.