
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Contact:
Dave Gordon

Sitka Area Office
304 Lake Street, Room 103
Sitka, Alaska 99835

Phone: (907) 747-6688

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Fax: (907) 747-6693

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

Sitka. . . The Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced today the preliminary guideline harvest level (GHL) for the 2015 Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery is 8,712 tons based on a 19.7% harvest rate of a forecast mature biomass of 44,237 tons.

The department uses an age structured analysis (ASA) model which uses a long time series of abundance and age composition data from department surveys conducted during and following the spring fishery. Herring abundance is estimated using aerial surveys designed to map the length of shoreline receiving spawn, and dive surveys which estimate the density of eggs and the average width of the spawn. The department mapped 50 nautical miles of herring spawn in the Sitka Sound area during the spring of 2014, compared to the recent 10-year average of 60 nautical miles. The estimated post-fishery spawning biomass in 2014 was 51,321 tons and the total sac roe harvest was 16,957 tons. An additional 121 tons were harvested in personal use and test fisheries for a total mature population biomass of 68,399 tons, which was below the forecast of 81,663 tons. Samples of the spawning herring in 2014 resulted in an age composition of 1% age-3, 39% age-4, 10% age-5, 8% age-6, 15% age-7, and 27% age-8+.

Contributing to the forecasted decline of the Sitka Sound mature herring biomass was very low numbers of age-3 recruit herring in 2014. Poor recruitment of age-3 herring was also observed for most other herring stocks in Southeast Alaska. The forecast indicates that the Sitka mature biomass in 2015 will consist of 17% age-3, 5% age-4, 33% age-5, 5% age-6, 6% age-7, and 34% age-8 and older herring.

The forecast and GHL for the 2015 fishery will be finalized using average weight-at-age from samples obtained in the winter test fishery, to be conducted in late-January or early-February, 2015. The final forecast will be announced in late-February or early-March.

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