

**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 2012 and 30 June 2013 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. According to 5 AAC 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. Age structured assessment (ASA) modeling projects the 2013 pre-fishery run biomass to be just above the regulatory threshold. Recruit-age fish (age 3 and 4) are projected to represent 37% by weight or 59% by number. Because a majority of the population is projected to be recruit-age fish, and uncertainty in the forecast point estimate, all commercial herring fisheries are closed.

Through 12 April 2013, hydroacoustic surveys, net sampling, and some aerial surveys have been conducted to assess herring biomass, disease prevalence, and age composition. Acoustic surveys of adult herring were conducted with the ADF&G vessel R/V *Solstice* in March and early April. Broad scale surveys were conducted in eastern PWS up to Port Fidalgo. Detailed acoustics data were collected on fish aggregations in Port Gravina, near Red Head. Preliminary acoustics results from the ADF&G surveys will be provided when complete. Additional acoustics surveys were conducted by the Prince William Sound Science Center using the M/V *Auklet*. Aerial surveys began on 2 April and four surveys have documented spawn in eastern PWS between Hells Hole and the west end of Knowles Bay (5–6 April) and on the northeast side of Kayak Island (5 April). A survey of Fairmont Bay and Naked Island on 2 April did not document any fish, spawn, or marine mammals. Preliminary spawn estimates are 5 mile-days in PWS and 5.5 mile-days on Kayak Island for a total of 10.5 mile-days. Additional spawn was documented near Red Head by the R/V *Solstice* on 7 April and on Kayak Island by private pilots on 4 and 6 April. No department surveys of Montague Island have been conducted, but private pilot reports have not indicated activity in the area. A survey of Montague Island is anticipated for Saturday and additional surveys will be conducted when possible.

The department would like to thank pilots and boat captains for herring reports this spring and encourages the public to report sightings of herring schools or spawn as soon as possible.

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