

**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

Issuing Area Office  
546 Kenny Wren Road  
P.O. Box 230  
Dillingham, AK, 99576  
Date Issued: June 7, 2013

---

**2013 Togiak Herring Season Summary**

The following is a summary of the 2013 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 (*Fucus spp.*) 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**

Aerial surveys of the Togiak District began April 28, 2013 and herring were first reported in the district on May 8. Staff first observed herring on May 10 when 43,170 tons of herring were documented. On May 12, department staff documented 79,548 tons of herring and 9.7 miles of spawn. Peak biomass was documented on May 13 when staff documented 85,888 tons of herring and 7.7 miles of spawn. On May 24, department staff documented 15.6 miles of spawn. Biomass had decreased by this point and only 34,923 tons of herring was documented. A total of 46.9 miles of spawn were documented in 2013. As with past years, this does not represent the total amount of spawn that occurred because staff were unable to fly daily surveys due to weather constraints.

**AGE COMPOSITION**

A total of 6,060 herring from the commercial harvest between May 11 and 19 were sampled. Information on age, size, and sex was gathered from each fish and samples were taken from the commercial purse seine and commercial gillnet fisheries. Sampling coverage was temporally and geographically well represented. With approximately 49% of herring samples aged, it appears that age-7, -8 and -9 herring accounted for approximately 20%, 28% and 20% of the Togiak commercial gillnet fishery respectively, while age-6 and under fish made up 5% and the remainder were age-10 and older. Age-7, -8 and -9 herring accounted for approximately 28%,

31% and 12% of the Togiak commercial purse seine fishery, while age-6 and under fish made up 16% and the remainder were age-10 and older. The mean weight of sampled herring was 375 g; 362 g in the purse seine fishery and 414 g in the gillnet fishery. Females accounted for 39% of the fish sampled from the gillnet harvest and 47% of the fish sampled from the purse seine harvest. These estimates of age, size, and sex composition are based on inseason analysis and should be considered preliminary. A final analysis will be included in the Bristol Bay Annual Management Report (AMR) and in the Fisheries Data Series (FDS) report associated with this fishery.

## COMMERCIAL FISHERY

The Togiak District herring fisheries are managed in accordance with the **BRISTOL BAY HERRING MANAGEMENT PLAN (5 AAC 27.865)**, which was modified by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in December 2006. The plan specifies a maximum allowable exploitation rate of 20% and allocates the harvestable surplus among all the fisheries harvesting the Togiak herring stock. The 2013 preseason forecasted biomass was 169,094 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, 2,262 tons for the Dutch Harbor food and bait fishery, and the remaining 30,056 tons to the sac roe fishery. The management plan specifies that the department will manage the sac roe fishery so that 70% of the harvest is taken by purse seines (21,040 tons in 2013) and 30% of the harvest is taken by gillnets (9,016 tons in 2013).

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 2013 season, management staff again allowed long duration seine openings over a large area of the district and let the processors limit harvest for their individual fleets based on processing capacity.

Department staff polled processing companies prior to the season to assess processing capacity for the 2013 season and to inquire about additional concerns or issues. The poll indicated that 6 companies would be participating in the 2013 Togiak herring fishery, all of which would buy gillnet and purse seine caught herring. The processing capacity for 2013 was estimated to be 2,675 tons per day.

## Purse Seine

The Togiak purse seine fishery opened at 12:00 p.m. on May 11. The department initially opened the purse seine fishery for 82 hours. Commercial quality fish were available late on May 11 and 776 tons of herring were harvested during the first day of fishing. Herring continued to be of marketable quality for the remainder of the purse seine fishery and the department extended the fishery in 48 hour increments for the duration of the fishery. Although harvest was reduced due to poor weather on May 16 and 17, the fishery progressed at a steady pace. Improved weather conditions on May 18 allowed the purse seine fleet to harvest 4,110 tons of herring, the largest single day harvest in 2013. The fleet harvested an additional 2,780 tons the following day, May 19. After the large harvests of May 18 and 19, only 1,970 tons remained on the quota. The fishery was allowed to close as scheduled so the department could evaluate the harvest for that day and determine if additional fishing time was warranted. The fleet was able to harvest 1,180 tons on Monday, May 20, leaving only 790 tons remaining on the quota. The department determined that after subtracting documented dead loss it would not be possible to

conduct an orderly fishery for such a small amount of herring without the risk of significantly exceeding the quota. Therefore, the purse seine fishery remained closed for the rest of the season. The final harvest was 20,241 tons of herring, equal to 96.3% of the quota.

### **Gillnet**

The Togiak gillnet fishery was opened at 12:00 p.m. May 11 until further notice with no prior test fishing. In 2013, there were 6 companies participating in the Togiak sac roe gillnet fishery, an increase from 3 in 2012. Subsequently, participation by fishermen also increased to 37 vessels, up from 18 in 2012. Although the season opened on May 11, the first day that all 6 companies purchased fish was May 13. The combined harvest from May 11 and 12 was 346 tons of herring. Harvest continued at a steady pace until May 17. The gillnet fleet was able to harvest 30% of the daily total harvest beginning on May 13, the first full day of good fishing. The fleet continued to harvest 30% of the daily total until May 18. Gillnet harvest slowed on May 17 and was only 107 tons on May 18. Harvest increased again on May 19 to 479 tons of herring. The harvest was similar on May 20, but deteriorating weather developing by the afternoon of May 20 essentially prevented fishing until May 23. Fishing improved on May 23 and stayed good until May 25 when weather again deteriorated. Weather improved on May 26, however herring abundance had diminished and fishing was much slower than previously. The fleet continued to fish until Monday, May 27, but poor fishing and some processors ceasing operations provided the impetus for all the participants to end the season. The season officially closed at 12:00 noon on May 28, although the last delivery was made the morning of May 27. The total gillnet harvest was 8,552 tons of herring, representing 94.8% of the quota.

### **Spawn on Kelp**

No companies registered to buy herring spawn-on-kelp in 2013, therefore there were no openings and no commercial harvest.

### **EXPLOITATION**

The 2013 Togiak herring fisheries were managed for a maximum exploitation rate of 20% of the preseason biomass estimate. The purse seine harvest was 20,241 tons with a reported average weight of 380 grams and an average roe percentage of 9.8%. The gillnet harvest was 8,552 tons with a reported average weight of 397 grams and an average roe percentage of 10.6%, making the combined harvest 28,808 tons with an average weight of 385 grams and an average roe percentage of 10%. 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 2,262 tons, then the total harvest for 2013 would be estimated at 31,070 tons. Based on the preseason biomass estimate of 169,094 tons, the 2013 exploitation rate would be approximately 18.4%.

### **EXVESSEL VALUE**

The projected exvessel value of the 2013 Togiak herring fishery is approximately \$2.88 million. This is based on a grounds price estimate of \$100 per ton for seine caught fish and \$100 per ton for gillnet caught fish and does not include any postseason adjustments.