

My name is Dennis Gray, Jr. and I am a commercial fisherman and the City Administrator for the community of Hoonah. I am writing this letter on my own behalf. I care deeply for my community. That is why I am writing to the Sitka Sentinel and appealing to the Board of Fish in solidarity with the Assembly of Sitka in support of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska's efforts to encourage more conservative management of the sac-roe fishery. Sitka's herring are not only important for Sitkans.

I remember hearing stories of herring spawning in Hoonah so we could harvest Herring roe locally but those days are gone in Hoonah and unfortunately, for much of the Southeast. Today, our residents depend on relatives in Sitka. We also depend on the Shirley N, a Troller in Hoonah whose crew volunteer their time and vessel each spring to head to Sitka Sound and chase the herring spawn. They spend weeks away from home, laying and pulling branches hopefully filling their fish hold with eggs. The task is becoming increasingly difficult, the herring spawn more sparse and unpredictable. When they return to Hoonah, our docks are jam packed with eager residents clambering in anticipation for the return of the Shirley N. Within minutes, those eggs are gone. Hoonah's residents are grateful for this resource and we fill our freezers with eggs to share on special occasions, at Koo'eex's, with family and with friends.

When making decisions this week that impact the future of this important resource, please remember that herring are not only critical for Sitka's people. They are invaluable to families and communities across the state who look to the final stronghold of Southeast Alaska's once abundant herring to fill their plates with herring.

Respectfully,

Dennis H. Gray, Jr.

Hoonah