

Dear Board of Fish:

The Herring Sac Roe fishery has a long and contentious history. Since the tribal community starting writing resolutions to stop the herring fishery in lower Chatham decades ago, subsistence users have been given excuses for one reason the commercial fishery must happen or another. But every conscientious examination of the issue shows that conservation and subsistence use must take precedence over a commercial sac-roe fishery. Everyone wants a piece of the pie, but the rule of law says that whoever had the pie first should keep it. When it comes to herring, the Tlingit people have had a relationship with herring since time immemorial, herring is their pie to share, and for decades the tribal community in Sitka has demanded more conservation of the herring.

The fundamentals of conservation dictate that we should err on the side of caution when it comes to managing populations. Herring fisheries up and down the Pacific Northwest Coast have collapsed, and the Sitka Sound population the last sizable population. The fundamentals of fishery management dictate that we manage this last viable population conservatively. Herring play a fundamental role in the marine ecosystems that support all of Alaska's fisheries. Yet the sac-roe fishery is extremely wasteful. Subsistence users have always known, and Alaskan statute dictates, that wasteful harvest is unethical. Yet the sac-roe fishery is mostly waste. It's like killing herds of deer but only harvesting the livers. Everything but the roe is ground up into fish meal for fertilizer or worse, to feed farmed fish, including BC salmon farms. Common sense would dictate that these herring are more valuable feeding endangered wild Alaskan salmon than supporting the threat of farmed salmon.

My son Shawaan is a descendant and child of the Kiksadi, the clan in Sitka who has had a relationship with the herring for thousands of years and who took great pride in managing it before the State of Alaska took over management. Since his birth in 1997 he quickly took to this traditional food and needs it in his life every year since then; it's his tie to his father's people and history. Not only is this a testament to his direct tie, but whole populations in Kake, the region, state, and outside of Alaska depend upon herring and herring eggs from Sitka since every place else has been poorly mismanaged and fished out. Please consider conserving the biomass in Sitka before it's too late and nothing is left.

For these reasons, based on traditional knowledge that stretches back thousands of years longer than ADF&G's limited data, based on decades of testimony from Sitkans of every race, I urge the board to support Proposal 99, to cap the sac-roe fishery at 10% of biomass.

Gunalcheesh,

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