

My name is Wade Martin and I have been harvesting herring eggs in Sitka Sound for over 45 years. I've seen many changes.

The Commercial sector hosting the Sitka Herring Conservation Alliance has more to do with the 'conservation' of their special interest than of the species and subsistence harvest. Giving out herring eggs to tribal citizens is an insult. My daughter and I have caught their people red-handed stealing our trees and these men come off of the F/V Katlian. They don't care about the quality of the branches, or how they get them. They care about the poundage that they can 'giveaway' to support their commercial interests. There is no replacement for harvesting herring eggs by hand.

There are also mortality issues. I think that the test sets for the sac-roe fishery kill many fish unnecessarily. I see huge quantities of these herring floating dead on the surface with so many more sinking to the bottom. These fish are killed for no reason.

I have also managed and marketed seafood for eight years. By limiting the amount they harvest, the sac-roe fishery can drive up the price per ton and leave more herring in the water. Currently, the harvest is needlessly wasteful.

Each year, it is getting harder and harder for me to get any return of herring eggs on branches. Directly and indirectly I estimate that 100-150 people from across Alaska depend on me to harvest eggs for them because Sitka is the final herring stronghold of this culturally important food.

When I was a kid, I remember going down to First and Second Narrows and we would get herring eggs at Dorothy Narrows, Pirates Cove, Jamestown Bay, Samsing Cove, Sandy Bay, Halibut Point Road, Kasiana Island, Katlian Bay, Siginaka Island, Big and Small Gravanski, Hayward Strait, Nakwasina Sound, Saint John the Baptist Bay, Marine Cove, Sukoi Inlet, Rodger Point, Vixen Islands, even Silver Bay. Today, the only places were I can reliably harvest are Middle Island. And they say that because we don't have scientific data that this is hearsay. To us, the people who harvest these eggs annually, this is factual. We have no reason to lie about this.

I will close by saying that I really feel we are on the brink of a total collapse of the herring stock. Without the herring we will have a catastrophic event that nobody in Sitka has seen before. Everything here depends on herring. I hope that I am not speaking on deaf ears, I hope that it is not too late.

Wade (Marty) Martin