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RC 186

Board of Fisheries
January 15 - 23, 2018
Sitka, Alaska

RE: Support for Proposal 94 & 104; Opposition to Proposals 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 105, & 106

Dear Chairman Jensen and Board of Fish Members:

I have been a commercial fisherman my entire life. In 2013 I bought into the Sitka herring fishery. My family and I have come to rely on the early money from the herring fishery to help kick start my fishing year. I also have two full time deckhands that feed their families on their crew shares working for me. Sitka herring is very important to us all, not just from the amount of money we make, but because of the timing of it. It is the first fishery of the year for us. Drastic unwarranted cuts to the harvest rates could make the fishery unprofitable for us.

The state of Alaska has an excellent track record of science based management. This is evident in the Sitka herring fishery as the biomass has risen from 5000 tons in the 1970s to the present day 55,000 tons. There is no biological reason to reduce the harvest rate. Asking the state to abandon science based management for a more political approach is a dangerous precedent to set for any fishery. Fishermen rely on sustainable and conservative science based fisheries management.

I am opposed to increasing the area closed to fishing (proposals 105 and 106). The reasons stated that subsistence needs can't be met are inaccurate. The department has demonstrated that a 'reasonable opportunity' does exist. Participation by subsistence users has been declining over the past 30 years, but the resource is available if sufficient effort was applied towards the harvesting of herring eggs. Additionally, SHCA has been providing the community with herring roe and has had extra to return to the water most years.



Hughie R. Blake