

Martina Kurzer, PO Box 6484, Sitka, AK 99835 mkurzer@gci.net

Alaska Board of Fisheries Meeting in Sitka, January 11-23, 2018
Public Testimony January 15 and 16

Honorable Board members,

My name is Martina Kurzer, and I am speaking to support proposals 99, 105, and 106, and oppose proposals 94 and 104.

I have lived in Sitka for over 22 years. Before that, I lived on the North Sea coast of Germany, where herring has been a food staple at least since the middle ages. Herring used to be salted and shipped to the hinterlands in barrels. It was poor peoples' food. Now it is consumed fried, pickled, smoked, or brined as a Dutch version called Matjes.

I remember when North Sea herring stocks collapsed in the mid 1970s, and herring became an expensive delicacy. The North Sea herring stocks recovered, but the coastal fishing industry in Northern Germany almost disappeared.

When I came to Sitka, I learned about the herring fishery here. I was shocked that only the roe, about 12 per cent of the female fish, is utilized. Everything that is male and not eggs is ground up and sold as fish food, for instance to our hatcheries and, ironically, to salmon farms.

Considering that herring stocks disappeared in many areas of Southeast Alaska, and that Sitka is the last stronghold with huge benefit to traditional native lifestyles, but even more to the health of the entire food chain, I find it irresponsible to totally rely on scientific models that might not reflect reality. I am witnessing conflicts between commercial interests and indigenous harvesters who have been watching stocks and their developments for decades, if not centuries.

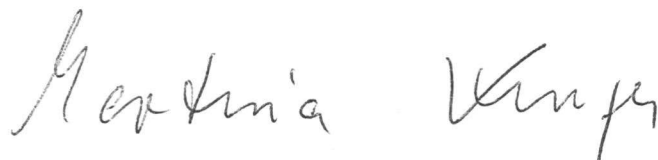
Don't reject concerns by elders and stories of miles of spawn in waters but with little egg content. Testimony and concerns by native fishermen, I call them citizen scientists, need to be taken seriously.

I understand that everyone with commercial interest is reluctant to give up quota or harvest areas. I have not heard any recent reference to diminishing Japanese markets. Sac roe lovers there are aging out, which results in a shrinking market and lower prices. Producers can only compensate by increasing their output. So there is conflict.

It is unreasonable and morally irresponsible to threaten the last significant herring stock in Southeast Alaska for pleasing a vanishing market with a delicacy that produces huge wanton waste. This is a fishery that threatens the first fresh food source after the winter, a traditional lifestyle, the identity of native people, and the survival of marine species that are the engines of our local economy.

Please consider these facts when you make your decision. As a German, I am used to very direct language when communicating. I apologize if I offended anyone, because this was not my intention.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martina Kurzer".