

Dear Board of Fish,

January 15, 2018

My name is Holly Marban, and I have been a resident of Sitka since 2010. I thank you for reading my written testimonial in support of herring conservation.

I trust that you understand the extent to which herring conservation is a delicate, multi-faceted issue. Without a doubt, you'll be hearing similar sentiments over the course of this week. Please listen carefully to the deep concern that so many locals are expressing, and please pay close attention to the magnitude of voices wishing for a conservative approach to herring conservation.

Fish are the lifeblood of this community. Conserving herring not only ensures the health of other wild species that feed on this forage fish (which translate to the overall health of the local food supply), but it also respects the Alaska Native culture and the local people, to whom the herring is sacred. To ignore these expressions of concern is to be irresponsible and deeply disrespectful.

Anecdotal evidence tells us that the herring populations are weak compared to what used to be the norm. We cannot be surprised, knowing that tons of herring are fished from our ocean each spring. Please be very conscious of the fact that this is *the last* remaining herring fishery of any substance in Alaska, and that it is all of our responsibility to protect it fiercely. As members of the Board of Fish, it is your obligation to do everything in your power to prevent this herring population from being overfished. We absolutely cannot afford to mismanage this resource in Sitka.

This precious resource feeds whales, seals, and other marine mammals; eagles, gulls, and other birds; and of course larger fish such as salmon, thereby keeping our waters and skies rich with the wildlife that have become almost synonymous with Southeast Alaska. Dare we risk jeopardizing the health of those wild species as well?

Imagine what a decimated herring population in Sitka would do to the life of the king salmon runs that are already thinning. Imagine, too, what that could mean for the health of a community who relies on wild fish as a main source of local, sustainable, and deeply nourishing food. The impact of the herring fishery is powerful and widespread, and because of this, it is crucial that we protect and try to strengthen the health of the herring fishery in Sitka as much as possible.

I urge you to decrease the allowable harvest rate of herring in Sitka to 10%. This reduction in quota will help protect the valuable herring fishery so that we may continue to witness and appreciate this precious resource for centuries to come.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimonial in support of herring conservation. Our community needs your support on this topic as well.

Kind regards,
Holly Marban