

January 17, 2018

Dear Board of Fish,

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Ralph Brady. I was born and raised in Sitka and I'm 64 years old.

Echoing what many people have said, having grown up here in the late 50s and 60s, one of the things my mom told me as a 8 year old, was go get some herring for dinner. I said mom, I don't have a fishing pole. She said you don't need one, and handed me a bucket. To my amazement, I went down to the harbor, dipped the bucket and had herring. You don't see that anymore.

When I started setting branches in the 70s, you would have your favorite spots to pick between and you would set branches and the spawn would be there. Now that has really changed. Now there is really only one place that is thriving with spawn. And then you're competing with the whole town and you have to literally camp out to protect your branches.

At one point you could do it without a boat, you could go out at low tide and set a branch. Now you need a boat. One year I spent over \$400 on gas looking for herring spawn. It took a lot of time and running around, and the return we got wasn't much.

The fisheries, if you watched it in the 70s before many of you were born, they would have one day sac roe openings of 15 minutes at a time because they couldn't keep track of how many herring they were catching. Now there are times when they're open for weeks.

Traditionally, they say prove it. Put it in writing. Our culture is oral. When we were taught as young boys, we were taught by our fathers and grandfathers to only take what you need. If you don't need it, put it back. If the fishery takes a look at their own tracking, they'll see in their own records that the herring have declined. Because we're oral, we don't have it written down until the last 15-20 years - but even that period shows the decline.

Short of a moratorium, the fishery needs to be more conservative. If they don't conserve, we're going to lose it. Not just subsistence users, but the whole town, including the fishermen, the businesses. The seals, whales, eagles, halibut, blackcod and the salmon will all lose it. Then what are we going to do? We won't have anything to fish. What's our town going to do then? That's a question for them - all the people testifying against conservation - what are we going to do?

I recall one year in the early 70s when I went fishing for humpies with a local seiner. He asked me what I thought about the herring fishery. I told him, well, it's fun to watch, as I didn't know what he was getting at. He responded "Well, we don't support the fisheries - if you look at the people who have permits, there's only one from Sitka. That should tell you a lot. If we don't stop, we're not going to have anything." Even in the 70's there was support from commercial fisherman that this fishery needed to change or go away. This man is no longer with us, but he was right. If we had made different choices back then we wouldn't be in this position now.

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