

SUPPORT: PROPOSALS 98, 99, 105, 106
OPPOSE: PROPOSALS 94, 104

I was born and raised here in Sitka, Alaska and commercial and subsistence fishing have been a part of my life as long as I can remember. My father worked at Sitka Sound Seafoods for my entire childhood, and I followed in his footsteps before finding my calling on a troll tender serving Southern Baranof communities. I rely, like so many others in Southeast, on subsistence resources for sustenance and to save money while dealing with the high costs of living in Alaska.

The health and continued prosperity of our economy and our ecosystems depends on the health of our herring populations. The sustainability of our commercial fisheries depends on the herring as the basis of the food chain. The sustainability of our tourism industry depends on the presence of wildlife and recreational fishing opportunities, which the herring support. The sustainability of a traditional, subsistence-based way of life depends on the presence of herring, as herring eggs were listed as the second most widely consumed traditional food in the 2016 Tribal Needs Assessment conducted by the Sitka Tribe of Alaska and the McDowell Group.

The ecological, economic, and cultural significance of herring as a staple food source for everything - from salmon, to seagulls, to whales, to the Native peoples all over Alaska - cannot be understated. At a time when we should be supporting the development of resilient communities and local food security to face climate change, why do we insist on selling our herring roe to countries overseas? The economic boon that the sale of these herring provides to a limited number of seiners and processors does not go unrecognized. However, herring roe also help reduce the economic burden of grocery shopping for thousands of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimpsian, as well as the people all throughout the state. Furthermore, this traditional food provides innumerable benefits in the form of physical, spiritual, and cultural healing for our local Native people. Thus, I stand in solidarity with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska and the conservative measures they are proposing to further safeguard this essential resource and way of life.

The Board of Fish has a responsibility to respect and protect the legal right of all Alaskans to engage in the subsistence harvest of herring roe. You are also entrusted with protecting the future of herring stocks. In the face of the uncertain effects of increasingly severe climate change, I strongly urge the board to adopt the conservative management approaches espoused in proposals 98, 99. Furthermore, to protect the subsistence rights of Sitkans and the people they provide for statewide, I urge the board to reject proposals 94 and 104, and support proposals 105 and 106.

Thank you for listening to my testimony and taking into account the community's concerns during this process.

Sincerely,
Katie Riley