

Clyde Curry
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Chair John Jensen and Board of Fish members,

My name is Clyde Curry, and I was there before the Sitka herring sac roe fishery got started. I started fishing in Alaska in 1963. I grew up fishing on Lummi Island in Puget Sound at my family reef net operation. My brother and I began gillnetting salmon when I was 12, and by the time I was 16 we had bought a boat and headed to Alaska. In 1966, we purchased our first salmon seine boat, the Puget, and fished it together in Southeast Alaska. I bought my own salmon seiner, the Louie G in 1968. In 1970, I married a local Petersburg fisherwoman and we began building a business and starting a fishing family.

My first experience with herring was on the tender Howkan around 1970 in Sitka, at that time it was a bait fishery. The season was just open, so people could fish whenever they wanted- guys were too impatient to wait for the roe to ripen up, so it all went to bait for halibut. I went on the Howkan to Prince William, the fishery up there was just getting started. I took my own seiner the Louie G to Sitka around 1972 or 1973 to fish herring in Sitka. After that, I also started fishing herring in Auke Bay, Seymour, Behm Canal and other areas. I fished herring in Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau, Prince William Sound, Resurrection Bay, and Togiak. All those fisheries were managed differently than Sitka.

Sitka herring started as a small group of about five of us, and grew really fast after that. I was one of the initial issuants when the sac roe fishery went limited entry. When I first started going to Sitka before limited entry, I saw no effort to harvest roe on branches. When the sac roe fishery started there were many Alaska native permit holders. I can remember 9 off the top of my head. The native permit holders used to harvest branches to bring back to communities. That doesn't happen as much anymore.

I've watched the Sitka herring fishery go through ups and downs. There was NOT as much fish when we started the fishery as there is now. ADF&G managers can also tell you that I didn't always agree with the way they were managing the fishery. But that doesn't change the facts, that they keep the fish coming back. From the early 1970's to the early 1990's the biomass was small, nothing like it is today. After the Sitka pulp mill closed in 1993, I watched as herring really started to take off. Herring also got a lot bigger after the pulp mill closed. They were able to grow larger and live longer. Just look at the yearly graphs from the beginning of the fishery, and you'll see the huge increase in the size of herring and population after the pulp mill closed.

You're going to be asked to make changes to this fishery. Don't do it. We have already made big changes. It's never enough. Compromises made only take away from the fishery. The Tribe has already taken area away and they want more. They won't stop until the fishery is closed down.

Thank you, Clyde Curry - Initial issuant of a Southeast Alaska sac roe permit