



Advisory Announcement
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CONTACT: Aaron Dupuis
Sitka Area Management Biologist
aaron.dupuis@alaska.gov
(907) 747-6688

SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 6

Today's aerial survey covered Sitka Sound from Eastern Channel to Krestoff Sound. Weather during the flight was fair to poor with a low cloud ceiling, fog, and rain with 10-knot south winds. No herring or herring spawn were observed. The highest concentrations of herring predators, including whales and sea lions were observed between Vitskari Rocks and St. Lazaria Island. A few sealion rafts were also observed between Inner Point and Bieli Rocks.

A survey conducted by department vessels located numerous herring schools southwest of Bieli Rock, near Lisianski Point, east of Middle Island, and Eastern Channel.

Three successful test sets were conducted today, the results are as follows:

- 9:30 a.m., southwest of Bieli Rock, 30-ton set, mature roe – 7.7%, immature roe – 2.7%, average weight – 101 g, 44% female.
- 10:45 a.m., Lisianski Point, 100-ton set, mature roe – 9.2%, immature roe – 2.7%, average weight – 113 g, 48% female.
- 1:30 p.m., Eastern Channel, 30-ton set, mature roe – 11.9%, immature roe – 11.9%, average weight – 122 g, 52% female.

Herring mortality associated with test sets is typically minimal and there is no evidence that the small number of fish taken has any measurable impact on the subsistence fishery. Nevertheless, to ensure reasonable opportunity for subsistence harvest of herring roe would not be negatively impacted by test setting, prior to authorizing test fishing in these areas the department considered the following: 1) all test setting occurred outside the commercial closed waters and core subsistence areas; 2) numerous schools of herring were observed within closed commercial waters; 3) the fish encountered during test fishing in these areas represented a small fraction of the overall biomass in the area; and 4) the number of test sets was kept to the minimum amount necessary to determine roe quality.

The next aerial survey is scheduled for Monday, March 22 and the next fishery update can be expected to be released after aerial and vessel surveys are completed.

Under Alaska's Health Advisories 1, 2, 3, and 4, commercial fishing is an Essential Business and is part of Alaska's Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Commercial fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities in support of commercial fishing operations follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Advisories. COVID-19 Health Advisories may be found here: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/health-advisories/>.

Advisory Announcement web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

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