



Advisory Announcement
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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 10

Today's aerial survey covered Sitka Sound with an area ranging from Walker Channel to the south, out to St. Lazaria Island and north to Salisbury Sound. Weather during the flight was good with 15-knot winds, overcast skies. No herring or herring spawn were observed. The highest concentrations of herring predators were observed near Vitskari Rocks, Bieli Rock, and west of Middle Island. Numerous whales were seen working the deeper waters east of Vitskari Rocks, near Bieli Rock, and west of Middle Island. Several individual scattered whales and sea lion groups were also observed south of Sitka Sound near Crawfish Inlet.

A boat survey conducted by department vessels located multiple large schools of herring east of Middle Island, west of Bieli Rock, near Inner Point, and by Vitskari Rocks. Industry vessels noted several scattered schools south of Sitka in Eastern Channel and Deep Inlet.

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

- 12:30 p.m., southwest of Bieli Rock, 20-ton set, mature roe – 8%, immature roe – 0.7%, average weight – 102 g, and 37% female.
- 12:55 p.m., Inner Point, 20-ton set, mature roe – 9.3%, immature roe – 0.3%, average weight – 112g, and 38% female.
- 2:25 p.m., Inner Point, 1-ton set, mature roe – 9.4%, average weight – 104 g, and 37% female.
- 3:45 p.m., Fred's Creek, 200-ton set, mature roe – 9.3%, average weight – 109 g, and 37% female.

Herring mortality associated with test sets is likely 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) today's test sets occurred outside the commercial closed waters and core subsistence areas; 2) a large biomass of herring was observed within closed commercial waters; 3) the fish encountered during test fishing in these areas represented a small fraction of the overall biomass within the areas; and 4) the number of test sets was kept to the minimum amount necessary to determine roe quality for a potential commercial opening.

The next aerial survey is scheduled for Friday, March 26, 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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