



Advisory Announcement
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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 13

Today's aerial herring survey in Sitka Sound had good weather with excellent visibility, 15-knot winds, and clear skies. The survey stretched from Redoubt Bay to Krestof Sound and west to St. Lazaria Island. Herring predators were scattered throughout Sitka Sound, with concentrations including within the closed commercial waters east of Middle Island, along the southern Kruzof Island shoreline, and in Hayward Strait and Krestof Sound. A large school of herring was observed in northern Krestof Sound. No herring spawn was observed during the aerial survey.

Boat surveys conducted by department vessels located a large biomass of herring in the regulatory closed waters extending from Watson Point to Halibut Point. Numerous large schools were observed on sonar at Lisianski Point, Hayward Strait, the Magouns, and Krestof Sound.

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

- 7:30 a.m., Lisianski Point, 50-ton set, mature roe – 10.3%, average weight–114 g, immature roe – 0.3%, and 47% female.
- 8:30 a.m., Hayward Strait, 50-ton set, mature roe – 10.2%, average weight – 110 g, and 50% female.
- 9:15 a.m., Krestof Sound, 75-ton set, mature roe – 11.8%, immature roe – 0.6%, average weight – 108 g, and 49% 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 from Eliason Harbor to Starrigavan Bay; 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.

An opening of the Sitka Sound herring sac roe fishery occurred today from 10:45 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Open waters for this fishery included the area south of 57°10.78' N lat, north of 57°08.47' N lat, and west of 135°23.65' W long, and waters of Krestof Sound north of the latitude of Partof Point at 57°13.69' N lat.

Harvest from the fishery conducted on March 27 was approximately 2,300-tons of herring. Harvest estimates from today's fishery will be included in the next fishery update.

The next aerial survey is scheduled for Monday, March 29, 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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