



Advisory Announcement
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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 14

Today's aerial herring survey in Sitka Sound had 15-knot winds, overcast skies with snow and rain showers, and poor visibility. The survey covered Eastern Channel to Krestof Sound and west to Low Island. Most of the herring predators were concentrated around Hayward Strait and Krestof Sound, including groups of whales and sea lions. Large schools of herring were observed in the Magoun Islands and smaller schools were observed in Krestof Sound. No herring spawn was observed.

Boat surveys conducted by department vessels located a large biomass of herring in the regulatory closed waters extending from Eliason Harbor to Starrigavan Bay. Numerous large schools were observed from Lisianski Point to Dog Point, in Hayward Strait, and in the Magoun Islands.

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

- 7:50 a.m., Lisianski Point, 20-ton set, mature roe – 12.3%, average weight–120 g, and 56% female.
- 8:11 a.m., Hayward Strait, 100-ton set, mature roe – 11.7%, average weight – 118 g, and 54% 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 9:45 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Open waters for this fishery included the area south of 57°10.78' N lat, north of 57°08.40' N lat, and west of 135°23.41' W long.

Harvest from the fishery conducted on March 28 was approximately 1,250-tons of herring. Cumulative estimated harvest through March 28 is 3,500-tons of herring. Harvest estimates from today's fishery will be included in the next fishery update.

The next aerial survey is scheduled for Tuesday, March 30, 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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