



Advisory Announcement

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 15

Today's aerial herring survey of Sitka Sound had 20-knot winds, overcast skies with rain showers and poor to fair visibility. The survey covered an area from Eastern Channel to the Magoun Islands and west to Shoals Point. Herring predators were observed around Hayward Strait, Inner Point, and Lisianski Point. A large group of sea lions were seen off Inner Point. Whales continue to be seen in Hayward Strait and Lisianski Point. Large schools of herring were observed from the air around Eastern Channel, Lisianski Point, and around the Magoun Islands. A small amount of herring spawn was observed by Brent's Beach.

Boat surveys conducted by department vessels located numerous large schools of herring extending from Sandy Beach to Starrigavan Bay, from Lisianski Point to Dog Point, in Hayward Strait, and near Deep Inlet. A large biomass of herring was observed from Crescent Harbor to Thimbleberry Bay.

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

- 7:47 a.m., Hayward Strait, 20-ton set, mature roe – 10.3%, immature roe – 0.3%, average weight–105 g, and 49% female.
- 12:30 p.m., Indian River, 200-ton set, mature roe – 11.2%, average weight–112 g, and 50% female.
- 12:30 p.m., Deep Inlet, 75-ton set, mature roe – 12.2%, immature roe – 0%, average weight–127 g, and 52% 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 regulatory closed waters and core subsistence areas; 2) a large biomass of herring was observed within regulatory closed waters from Sandy Beach to beyond the closed waters 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 9:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. Open area for this fishery included the waters of Hayward Strait south of 57°09.40' N lat and north of 57°08.40' N lat, and the waters south of 57°10.78' N lat, north of 57°08.40' N lat, west of 135°23.41' W long, and east of 135°26.18' W long.

Harvest from the fishery conducted on March 29 was approximately 1,500-tons of herring. The estimated cumulative harvest through March 29 is 5,000-tons of herring. Harvest estimates from today's fishery will be included in the next fishery update.

The next aerial survey is scheduled for Wednesday, March 31, 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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