



## **Advisory Announcement**

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### **SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 16**

Today's aerial survey of Sitka Sound was delayed until the afternoon due to foul weather and covered Sitka Sound from Eastern Channel, West Crawfish Inlet, and north to Middle Island. Visibility was poor with passing showers and 20-knot winds. Large schools of herring were seen in Leesoffskaia Bay and near Magic Island. No herring spawn was observed. Herring predators, including whales and sea lions, were widely distributed throughout Sitka Sound; however, numerous sea lions and whales were observed in Windy Passage.

Boat surveys conducted by department vessels located several large schools of herring within the regulatory closed waters extending from Sandy Beach to Old Sitka Rocks and near Whiting Harbor. Large schools of herring were also observed south of town from Crescent Harbor to Thimbleberry Bay and in Deep Inlet.

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

- 8:00 a.m., Indian River, 20-ton set, mature roe – 11.6%, average weight–116 g, and 55% female.
- 8:30 a.m., Aleutkina Bay, 20-ton set, mature roe – 10.2%, average weight–113 g, and 46% 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) vessel surveys conducted by the department indicated that there were numerous large schools of herring in the regulatory closed waters extending from Sandy Beach to Old Sitka Rocks and near Whiting Harbor; 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 6:30 p.m. Open areas for this fishery included the waters south of 57°02.88' N lat, north of 57°01.95' N lat, west of 135°16.61' W long, and east of 135°20.21' W long, and the waters south of 57°00.81' N lat and east of 135°21.93' W long.

Harvest from the fishery conducted on March 30 was approximately 900-tons of herring. The estimated cumulative harvest through March 30 is approximately 5,900-tons of herring. Harvest estimates from today's fishery will be included in the next fishery update.

The next aerial survey is scheduled for Thursday, April 1, and the next fishery update will 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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