



Advisory Announcement
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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) mapped 102.3 nautical miles (nmi) of herring spawn in 2021 from April 4 through April 19 (Figure 1). This was one of the highest estimates of herring spawn mileage on record and was higher than the 20-year (2011–2020) average of 60.6 nmi and the 40-year (1981–2020) average of 59.1 nmi.

Aerial surveys of the Sitka Sound area began on March 9 to document herring activity and spawn and ended on April 17. After several days of spot spawn observations, major herring spawning began on April 4 when 6.5 nmi of active herring spawn was observed along the Kruzof Island shoreline, near Kresta Point, and on Crow and Gagarin Islands. Active herring spawn peaked on April 7, when 28.3 nmi of herring spawn was observed. It should be noted the department was unable to conduct aerial surveys on April 8 and 13 due to inclement weather. The last day active spawn was observed was April 17. Surveys from skiffs were conducted April 14–16 and April 19 to identify areas of shoreline that received herring spawn not observed during the aerial surveys.

The department successfully conducted spawn deposition surveys and sampled herring for age and size composition. Spawn deposition dive surveys were conducted April 17–21. Observed egg deposition was very high throughout the survey area. Preliminary results indicated the spawn deposition along the Kruzof Island shoreline was again exceptional due to high egg density coupled with a wide spawning area. Herring were sampled throughout the spawning period to determine age and size composition of the spawning stock and will be analyzed in coming months. Final results from this year's stock assessment and the 2022 forecast will not be available until late 2021.

Herring spawn was observed within regulatory closed waters April 4–7 and April 9–11. While the aerial survey on April 8 was cancelled due to poor weather, anecdotal observations and reports from community members suggested that herring spawn occurred within regulatory closed waters on this date as well. Out of the total 102.3 nmi of mapped herring spawn in Sitka Sound, approximately 29.0 nmi of herring spawn was mapped within the regulatory closed waters. Herring spawn also occurred in several other areas known to be popular subsistence harvest areas including Hayward Strait, Magoun Islands, Promisla and Eastern Bays, Siginaka Islands, Samsing Cove, and Aleutkina Bay. Harvest estimates from the 2021 subsistence fishery will likely be made available near the end of 2021.

The commercial herring sac roe fishery total harvest was approximately 15,600 tons of herring with an average mature roe percentage of 11.5%. This year's harvest was the fourth largest in the fishery since 1970 but was well short of the 2021 guideline harvest level of 33,304 tons, as expected. The fishery was opened for 14 consecutive days from March 27 to April 9 with an average daily harvest of approximately 1,200 tons of herring. The fishery was closed following the April 9 fishing period after industry representatives indicated that all buying operations would cease. Landings were made by 18 of the 47 active permit holders for this fishery.

In 2020, 58.5 nmi of herring spawn was mapped; peak spawn occurred on April 2 and the last spawn was observed on April 18. The estimate of the 2020 mature biomass from the 2021-forecast model was 250,468 tons of herring and was dominated by age-4 herring. The extremely high proportion of age-3 herring observed in 2019 and the resulting increase in spawning biomass seen in Sitka Sound, Craig, Prince William Sound, and Kodiak indicated a highly successful 2016 brood year across

the Gulf of Alaska. Preliminary results from the 2021 spawning season continue to confirm the strength of the 2016-year class.

The daily herring spawn locations and photographs from 2021 will continue to be made available through the interactive herring survey map on the ADF&G website. The "Southeast Alaska 2021 Herring Surveys" map allows users to view all the data collected for each herring aerial and skiff survey throughout the 2021 season. Daily survey data on the website map have not been edited and are for general reference purposes only. The interactive maps are located on the department website at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.herring#maps>.

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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<i>ADF&G</i>	225-5195	772-3801		747-6688	465-4250	766-2830	784-3255
<i>AWT</i>	225-5111	772-3983	874-3215	747-3254	465-4000	766-2533	784-3220

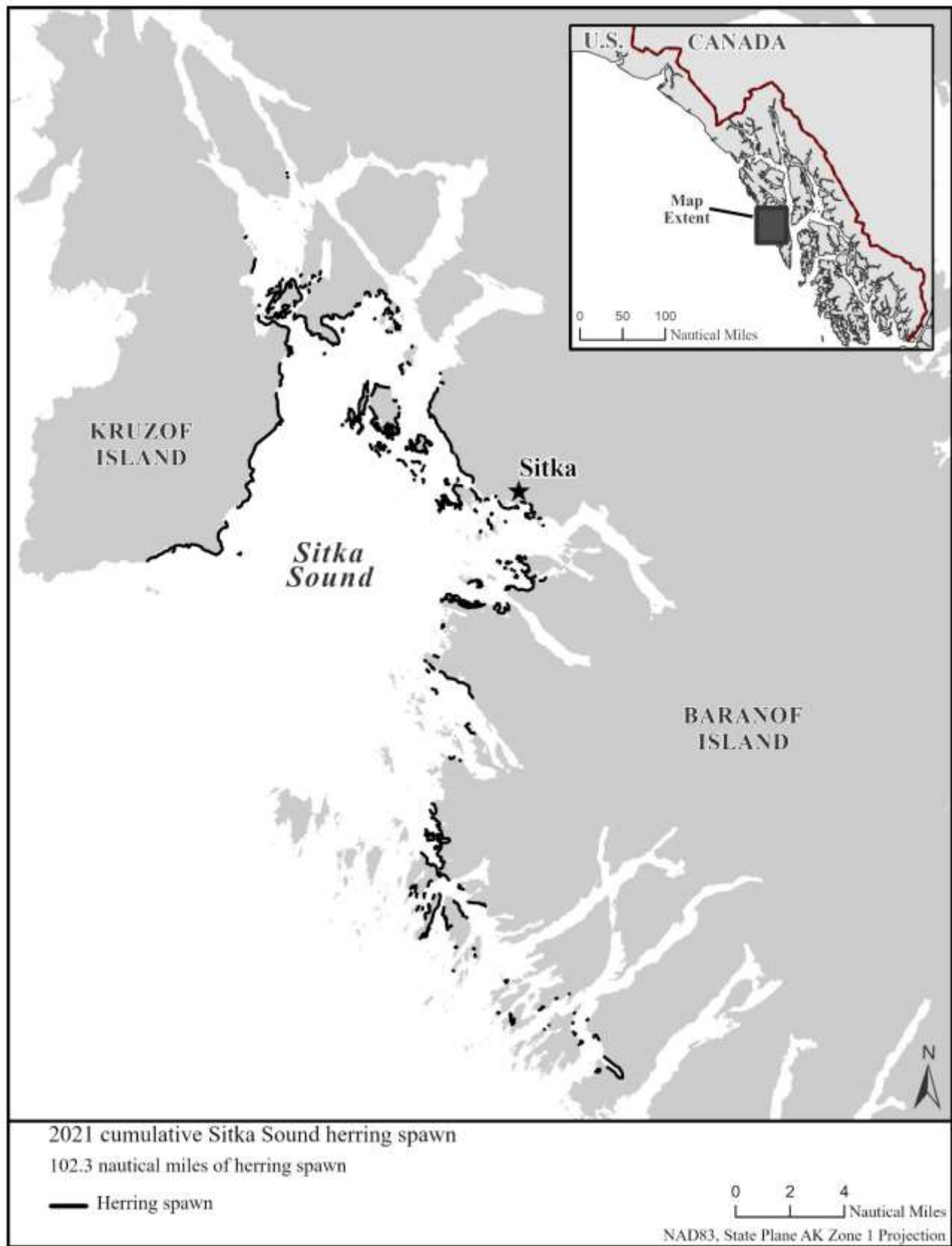


Figure 1. Cumulative Sitka Sound shoreline with observed herring spawn in 2021.