



**Advisory Announcement**  
**For Immediate Release: December 22, 2023**

**CONTACT: Aaron Dupuis**  
**Sitka Area Management Biologist**  
**(907) 747-6688**

## SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

The guideline harvest level (GHL) for the 2024 Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery is **81,246 tons** with a forecasted average weight of **120 grams** across all age classes. The GHL is based on a 20% harvest rate of an age-structured analysis (ASA) forecast of 406,228 tons of mature herring biomass. This forecast is a 39% increase from the model estimate of the 2023 mature pre-fishery herring biomass of 292,669 tons and is greater than any prior forecast or estimate of spawning biomass for Sitka Sound herring. The magnitude of the 2024 forecast is largely the result of the 2023 model estimated pre-fishery herring biomass, which was much larger than the forecast and influenced in part by the unforeseen size of the 2020-year class, and the forecasted abundance of age-4 fish (2020-year class) and age-8+ fish (2016-year class). First observed as age-3 fish in 2023, the 2020-year class is the second largest ever estimated.

To forecast biomass, the department uses an ASA model with a long time series of egg abundance and age composition data from department surveys and herring samples obtained from active spawning and the commercial sac roe fishery. Herring egg abundance is estimated using aerial, vessel, and SCUBA diving surveys. Shorelines with herring spawn are mapped and followed by dive surveys to estimate egg density and width of egg deposition. The department mapped 83.8 nautical miles (nmi) of unique shoreline with herring spawn in the Sitka Sound area during the spring of 2023, compared to the recent 10-year (2013–2022) average of 66.8 nmi. The total harvest for the sac roe herring fishery in 2023 was approximately 10,200 tons of herring; an additional 253 tons of herring were harvested in test and bait fisheries. The 2023 egg deposition estimate was substantially higher than in 2022 and was the fourth highest on record since the department began egg deposition surveys. About 78% of the surveyed egg deposition occurred on the Kruzof Island shore, south of Hayward Strait. The remaining 22% of the egg deposition was spread throughout the northern, eastern, and southern parts of Sitka Sound, including areas around Salisbury Sound, Magoun Islands, Middle Island, Halibut Point Road, and the Goddard Springs area.

Table 1.— Summary of forecasted Sitka Sound herring age-class percentages and weights for 2024 and post-fishery age-class percentages from 2023. Percentages shown may not equal 100 due to rounding numbers.

Age	2024 Forecasted percent mature (numbers at age)	2024 Forecasted weight at age (g)	2023 Model-estimated percent post-fishery mature (numbers at age)
3	2%	71	39%
4	64%	103	7%
5	4%	121	9%
6	5%	141	1%
7	1%	153	39%
8+	24%	165	6%

Advisory Announcement web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

Office	Ketchikan	Petersburg	Wrangell	Sitka	Juneau	Haines	Yakutat
ADF&G	225-5195	772-3801		747-6688	465-4250	766-2830	784-3255
AWT	225-5111	772-3983	874-3215	747-3254	465-4000	766-2533	784-3220