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Advisory Announcement

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2025 SOUTHEAST ALASKA HERRING SUMMARY

The department monitors herring stocks in Southeast Alaska that historically have been important to subsistence, personal use, and/or commercial fisheries. Basic stock assessment includes conducting aerial surveys to document herring spawn, but when warranted may include more extensive stock assessment including collecting herring samples for age, weight, and length (AWL) analysis, conducting spawn/egg deposition surveys to determine the spawning biomass, and developing biomass forecasts. The following is a summary of 2025 herring aerial surveys, spawn observations, spawn deposition surveys, and fisheries results. In 2025, large spawning events for the coastal stocks (Craig and Sitka) persisted and increases from the previous year of documented spawn mileage for some inside stocks (Revilla Channel and Seymour Canal) were observed. Cumulative herring spawn refers to the nautical miles of unique shoreline where herring spawn was observed over the season.

Revilla Channel (Section 1-F) – Aerial surveys were conducted from March 17 through March 29, with herring spawn first observed on March 24 on the De Long Islands near the mainland shore. Spawning began in Revilla Channel in the Cat and Dog Island area on March 26 with peak daily spawn occurring on March 27 with 6.6 nautical miles (nmi). Spawn was observed on Cat, Dog, Double, Duke, and Village Islands with the most intense spawn occurring on Cat and Double Islands. An additional 1.0 nmi was documented south of Kah Shakes Cove on April 1 using satellite imagery. Cumulative herring spawn in state waters was 8.4 nmi, above the recent 10-year (2015–2024) average of 7.6 nmi. Herring samples were obtained for AWL analysis, and a spawn deposition survey was conducted. The last commercial fishery occurred in 1998.

West Behm (Sections 1-E/F) – Due to budgetary constraints, minimal aerial surveys were conducted in West Behm Canal in 2025. Communication with residents and an aerial survey documented 0.2 nmi of spawn in West Behm Canal. Spawn was reported on April 5 and documented on April 7 in Vallenar Bay. No skiff surveys were conducted in 2025, and no additional spawn was observed using satellite imagery. The last commercial fishery occurred in 2011.

Craig (District 3) – Aerial surveys were conducted from March 21 through April 6, with poor weather conditions preventing aerial surveys after April 6. Herring spawn was first observed March 24 on southwest Fish Egg Island. The spawn event progressed slowly this year and was concentrated around Fish Egg Island and lower Wadleigh and the Alberto Islands. The protracted spawning event occurred over 14 days with consistent daily spawn ranging from 1.0 nmi to 4.7 nmi. Fish Egg Island had 13 days of observed spawn this season. An additional 0.7 nmi of herring spawn was documented during a skiff survey prior to conducting the dive deposition survey. The cumulative herring spawn of 16.1 nmi was below the recent 10-year average of 27.3 nmi, however, the spawn event lasted 14 days compared to the average 7 to 8 day spawn event typical in Craig in recent years, with multiple days of spawn occurring over the same shoreline. Herring spawn occurred around Abbess, Alberto, Balandra, Ballena, Fish Egg, and Wadleigh Islands. Herring samples were obtained for AWL analysis and a spawn deposition survey was completed on April 10–11. The biomass forecast and GHL for the 2025/26 season will be available in the fall.

The 2024/25 Craig/Klawock herring guideline harvest level (GHL) was 6,036 tons of herring based on a forecasted mature biomass of 30,182 tons and a 20% harvest rate. The GHL is allocated between the winter food and bait fishery (60%) and the spawn-on-kelp fishery (40% plus any remaining winter food and bait GHL). The 2024/25 Craig winter food and bait fishery GHL was 3,622 tons, while the initial spawn-on-kelp GHL was 2,414 tons. The winter food and bait fishery opened by regulation on October 1 and closed February 28 with a confidential harvest. The unharvested portion of the winter bait

GHL added to the spawn-on-kelp pound fishery resulted in a significantly higher GHL. The spawn-on-kelp fishery opens by regulation on March 17 and herring were first introduced to pound structures on March 27. There was a total of 67 pound structures actively fished, with 123 permits landing 192.2 tons of spawn-on-kelp product. All herring pound structures had herring introduced during the 2025 season. Final exvessel value will be available in the fall.

Ernest Sound (District 7) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 4 through April 18 and skiff surveys occurred on April 7 and April 16. Herring spawn was documented on approximately 2.5 nmi of unique shoreline in the vicinity of Vixen Inlet, which is below the recent 10-year average of 3.5 nmi and below the 1969–2024 average of 5.5 nmi. Due to poor weather conditions no samples were collected for AWL analysis and, due to below average spawn mileage, a spawn deposition survey was not conducted. The last commercial fishery occurred in 2014.

Hobart Bay/Port Houghton (District 10) – Due to budgetary constraints, aerial surveys were not conducted in Hobart Bay and Port Houghton in 2025. On May 7, herring schools were observed on the north shore of Hobart Bay. No other herring activity was reported in 2025. The last commercial fishery occurred in 2010.

Seymour Canal (Section 11-D, District 10) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 11 through May 16. On May 4, 0.3 nmi of active spawn was observed along the Big Bend shoreline and the main spawning event was observed from May 12–14 with 3.0 nmi of spawn observed between Twin Islands and Point Hugh on the southwest shoreline of the Glass Peninsula and 3.4 nmi of spawn observed between Point Gambier and the Big Bend. The cumulative herring spawn was 6.7 nmi which is approximately double the recent 10-year average and 85% of the 1971-2024 average. The timing of the observed initial spawn this season is like the recent (May 8) and long-term (May 2) averages. No samples of spawning herring were obtained for AWL analysis, and a spawn deposition survey was not conducted. The last commercial fishery occurred in 2014.

Tenakee Inlet (Sections 12-A and 13-C) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 11 through May 4. Active herring spawn was first observed on April 21 at Peninsular Point and continued through April 30 with heaviest spawning occurring on the Catherine Island shoreline and more minor events north of Peninsular Point but not extending as far north as Basket Bay. The cumulative herring spawn was 5.8 nmi which is approximately double the recent 10-year average and 85% of the 1975 –2024 average. The cumulative spawn mileage observed was less than the previous two seasons and continues the trend seen in the last 5 years of most spawning occurring outside of Tenakee Inlet. Observed initial spawn timing this season is slightly earlier than the recent (April 30) and long-term (April 27) averages. No samples of spawning herring were obtained for AWL analysis, and a spawn deposition survey was not conducted. The last commercial fishery occurred in in 2014.

Sitka Sound (Sections 13-A/B) – Aerial surveys were conducted from March 12 until April 6. Herring spawn was first observed on March 22. The primary herring spawning event began on March 27 when 18.3 nmi of active herring spawn was observed from Watson Point to Halibut Point, from the Causeway to Middle Island, and from Hayward Strait to Eastern Bay. Spawning peaked on March 30 when 31.9 nmi of active herring spawn was documented. The last day of the primary spawn event was April 1; however, smaller areas of herring spawn were observed through April 3. Surveys from skiffs were conducted April 3 and 4 to identify additional areas of herring spawn not observed during the aerial surveys. A cumulative herring spawn of 89.5 nmi was documented which is higher than both the recent 10-year average of 72.4 nmi and the 1985–2024 average of 62.4 nmi. In contrast to recent years, there was little spawn observed on Kruzof Island this season.

Herring spawn was observed daily from March 22 to March 31 within the area closed to commercial fishing by regulation (commonly referred to as the "core subsistence area"). Of the 89.5 nmi of cumulative herring spawn, approximately 29.4 nmi of herring spawn was mapped within this area. Herring spawn also occurred in several other areas known to be commonly used for subsistence fishing, including Hayward Strait, Magoun Islands, Promisla Bay, Eastern Bay, and Siginaka Islands. Harvest estimates from the 2025 subsistence fishery should be available near the end of 2025.

The 2025 commercial herring sac roe fishery harvest was approximately 6,200-tons of herring with an average mature roe percentage of 12.3%. This year's harvest accounted for 17% of the 2025 guideline harvest level of 36,720 tons. The fishery was opened for 13 days between March 23 and April 4. The average daily herring harvest was 630 tons and the fishery was closed for the season at 8:00 p.m. on April 4. For more detailed information on the 2025 Sitka Sound herring stock and fishery, see the *Sitka Sound Herring Fishery Summary* announcement from April 18, 2025.

Hoonah Sound (Section 13-C) – One aerial survey was conducted on April 3 and no herring or herring spawn was observed. No herring spawn has been documented in Hoonah Sound since 2015 and the 2006–2015 average miles of spawn is 9.0 nmi. The commercial spawn-on-kelp fishery last took place in 2012.

Lynn Canal (Sections 11-A and 15-B/C) – Due to budgetary constraints, only one aerial survey was conducted in Central/South Lynn Canal in 2025. Active herring spawn was observed and reported on May 6 and 7 with a cumulative total of 0.7 nmi occurring south of Point Sherman. Commercial fisheries last occurred in 1982, and the commercial sac roe herring fishery was repealed by the Board of Fisheries in 2018.

Additional herring spawn events were documented in 2025 with the use of satellite imagery, air-taxi pilots transiting an area and relayed to ADF&G, or by the ADF&G in other areas throughout Southeast Alaska. Other herring spawn events observed or reported around the region as a minimum included: 1.6 nmi near Dall Head on Gravina Island; 1.7 nmi in Kasaan Bay; 0.4 nmi in Lincoln Channel, 1.8 nmi in Sea Otter Sound; 0.2 nmi in Kendrick Bay; 0.5 nmi in Chaik Bay and 2.6 nmi in northern Stephens Passage.

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