



Advisory Announcement
For Immediate Release: December 19, 2025

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

The guideline harvest level (GHL) for the 2026 Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery is **35,015 tons** with a forecasted average weight of **156 grams** across all age classes. During the 2025 Southeast and Yakutat Finfish and Shellfish meeting in Ketchikan, the Board of Fisheries adopted regulations that reduced the maximum harvest rate for the herring sac roe fishery in Sections 13-A and 13-B from 20% to 15% (5 AAC 27.160 [g]) and raised the threshold for the fishery from 25,000 tons to 26,000 tons. The GHL is based on a 15% harvest rate of an integrated statistical catch-at-age model (SCAA) forecast of 233,433 tons of mature herring biomass. This forecast is a 6% decrease from the model estimate of the 2025 mature pre-fishery herring biomass of 247,081 tons. There is greater uncertainty in the 2026 forecast compared to past forecasts due to the variability in the trajectory of the Sitka herring population as seen in equally probable forecast models. While this uncertainty does not warrant a reduction in the current GHL, the department will manage the commercial sac roe herring fishery based on inseason observations of herring run strength and take conservative action if necessary. A summary of forecasted Sitka Sound herring age-class percentages and weights for 2026 and post-fishery age-class percentages from 2025 can be found in Table 1 below.

To forecast biomass, the department uses a SCAA 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 89.5 nautical miles (nmi) of unique shoreline with herring spawn in the Sitka Sound area during the spring of 2025, compared to the recent 10-year (2015–2024) average of 72.6 nmi. The total harvest for the sac roe herring fishery in 2025 was 6,198 tons of herring; an additional 266 tons of herring were harvested in test and bait fisheries. The 2025 egg deposition estimate was about 26% greater than in 2024, and the fifth highest on record since the department began egg deposition surveys.

Table 1.– Summary of forecasted Sitka Sound herring age-class percentages and weights for 2026 and post-fishery age-class percentages from 2025, based on the 2026 forecast integrated statistical catch-at-age model.

| Age | 2026 Forecasted percent mature (numbers at age) | 2026 Forecasted weight at age (g) | 2025 Model-estimated percent post-fishery mature (numbers at age) |
|-----|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| 3 | 5% | 77 | 9% |
| 4 | 18% | 116 | 9% |
| 5 | 8% | 131 | 39% |
| 6 | 33% | 158 | 4% |
| 7 | 4% | 174 | 6% |
| 8+ | 32% | 190 | 33% |

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