



Advisory Announcement
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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 4

Today's aerial survey covered Sitka Sound from Povorotni Point to Shoals Point and Hayward Strait. No herring schools or spawn were observed. Weather conditions were fair with scattered snow showers and moderate winds. Herring predators were observed throughout the surveyed area. The largest concentrations of humpback whales were observed near the Chaichei Islands and northwest of Bieli Rock. The locations and numbers of humpback whales observed marked a distinct change relative to previous surveys. Larger groups of sea lions were observed near Bieli Rock as well. Predator numbers and locations observed during today's flight are typical for surveys conducted during this time of year. There was no aerial survey conducted on March 21 due to poor weather.

Department and industry vessels surveyed Sitka Sound today from Watson Point to Hayward Strait. Very large schools of herring were observed west of the Chaichei Islands, northwest of Bieli Rock, and from Starrigavan Bay to Lisianski Point.

One successful test set was conducted this afternoon; the results are as follows:

Time	Area	Tons	% Mature Roe	% Immature Roe	Avg weight	% Female
14:00	NW Bieli Rock	75	5.7%	5.3%	135g	47%

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) the area near Bieli Rock is outside the commercial closed waters and core subsistence areas; and 2) the fish encountered during test fishing represented a small fraction of the overall biomass in this area.

The next aerial survey and fishery update are scheduled for Monday, March 23.

All aerial herring survey data can be reviewed online, including spawn lines and photos, in an interactive map application found at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.herring#maps> or scan:



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

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