



Advisory Announcement

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2026 SOUTHEAST ALASKA HERRING SUMMARY

The department monitors herring stocks in Southeast Alaska that historically supported important subsistence, personal use, and/or commercial fisheries. Basic stock assessment consists of conducting aerial surveys to document herring spawn, but when warranted more extensive stock assessments are utilized 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 2026 herring stock assessment and fisheries results. In 2026, large spawning events for the coastal stocks (Craig and Sitka) persisted and Revilla Channel was the only inside stock surveyed with a notable increase of spawn mileage. 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 20 through April 6, with herring spawn first observed on March 29 on Cat and Dog Islands. Peak daily spawn occurred on April 1 and April 2, with both days documenting 7.9 nautical miles (nmi) of spawn. Spawn was observed on Cat, Dog, Double, Duck, Duke, and Village Islands with the most intense spawn occurring on Cat and Double Islands. No spawn was observed along the mainland shore during the 2026 season. Cumulative herring spawn in state waters was 12.3 nmi, well above the recent 10-year (2016–2025) average of 7.3 nmi. Herring samples were obtained for AWL analysis. Due to vessel availability, no spawn deposition survey was conducted in Revilla Channel. 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 2026. Communication with residents, aerial surveys, and beach surveys documented 6.3 nmi of spawn in West Behm Canal. Spawn was documented on April 8 through April 10. Spawn was observed on Coast Guard Beach, Indian Point, Rosa Reef, Raymond Cove, South Point Higgins Beach, and the Ketchikan road system north of Knudson Cove. No skiff surveys were conducted in 2026, 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 20 through April 9. Herring spawn was first observed on March 25 on southwest Fish Egg Island. Like the previous year, spawning initially remained concentrated around Fish Egg Island during the initial 8 days. The overall spawning event occurred over 16 days, with consistent daily spawn ranging from 3.5 to 5.5 nmi. The peak daily total of 9.2 nmi was recorded on April 2. Fish Egg Island had 9 days of observed spawn this season. The cumulative herring spawn of 21.2 nmi was below the recent 10-year average of 27.7 nmi; however, the spawn event lasted 16 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, Ballena, Clam, Cole, Fish Egg, Prince of Wales, and Wadleigh Islands. Herring samples were obtained for AWL analysis, and a spawn deposition survey was completed on April 8 and 9. The biomass forecast and GHL for the 2026/27 season will be released in the fall.

The 2025/26 Craig/Klawock herring guideline harvest level (GHL) was 7,095 tons of herring based on a forecasted mature biomass of 47,302 tons and a 15% 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 2025/26 Craig winter food and bait fishery GHL was 4,257 tons, while the initial spawn-on-kelp GHL was 2,838 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 and the maximum kelp allocation. The spawn-on-kelp fishery opens by regulation on March 17, and herring were first introduced to pound structures on March

31. There were a total of 69 pound structures actively fished, with 124 permits landing 152.0 tons of spawn-on-kelp product. Final exvessel value will be available in the fall.

Ernest Sound (District 7) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 6 through April 24, and skiff surveys occurred on April 15 and April 22. Herring spawn was documented on approximately 4.0 nmi in the vicinity of Vixen Inlet. Although 4.0 nmi is above the recent 10-year average of 3.2 nmi, it is below the 1991–2025 average of 5.9 nmi. Additionally, observations from a skiff survey concluded that the overall density of herring eggs was light and did not warrant a spawn deposition dive survey. 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 and no herring activity was reported in 2026. The last commercial fishery occurred in 2010.

Seymour Canal (Section 11-D, District 10) – Aerial surveys were conducted from April 15 through May 12. The only active spawn was observed on May 8, with 1.8 nmi occurring in small sections at Point Gambier and along both sides of the Glass Peninsula near Point Hugh. No further spawn was observed through the remainder of the survey period. The cumulative herring spawn was below of the recent 10-year average of 3.7 nmi, and 25% of the 1992–2025 average. Spawn timing was average. 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 15 through May 12. The first and most extensive active spawn was observed on April 28, occurring from White Rock south to Point Hayes along the Chichagof Island shoreline. Active spawning continued along Peninsular Point, White Rock, and north of Basket Bay on April 29. Another minor spawn was observed north of Basket Bay on May 8. The cumulative herring spawn length was 2.9 nmi, which was below the recent 10-year average of 3.7 nmi, and 66% of the 2003–2025 average. The cumulative spawn mileage was lower than that observed during the previous three seasons and continued the six-year trend of most spawning occurring outside of Tenakee Inlet. Observed spawn timing was average. Herring samples were obtained for AWL analysis, but a deposition survey was not conducted. The last commercial fishery occurred in 2014.

Sitka Sound (Sections 13-A/B) – Aerial surveys were conducted from March 14 until April 17 and from April 24 to April 27. Herring spawn was first observed on March 30. The primary herring spawning event began on April 2 when 14.0 nmi of active herring spawn was observed throughout Sitka Sound. Spawning peaked on April 3 when 18.2 nmi of active herring spawn was documented. The last day of the primary spawn event was April 5; however, smaller areas of herring spawn were observed daily through April 10 and from April 24 to April 27. Surveys from skiffs were conducted from April 7 through April 9 to identify additional areas of herring spawn not observed during the aerial surveys. In total, ADF&G mapped 35.7 nmi of shoreline with herring spawn in 2026 which is less than both the 10-year (2016–2025) average of 72.7 nmi and the 40-year (1986–2025) average of 63.2 nmi.

Herring spawn was observed daily from March 30 to April 5 within the area closed to commercial fishing by regulation (commonly referred to as the “core subsistence area”). Of the 35.7 nmi of mapped herring spawn in Sitka Sound, approximately 14.4 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 2026 subsistence fishery should be available near the end of 2026.

The 2026 commercial herring sac roe fishery harvest was approximately 6,400-tons of herring with an average mature roe percentage of 12.3%. This year’s harvest accounted for 18% of the 2026 guideline harvest level of 35,015 tons. The fishery was opened for 13 days between March 27 and April 10, but no harvest was reported after April 2. From March 27 to April 2 the average daily harvest was approximately 914 tons of herring. The fishery was closed for the season at 7:00 p.m. on April 10. Test sets (10 total) were conducted between March 20 and March 29.

Hoonah Sound (Section 13-C) – No aerial surveys were conducted in 2026. 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, aerial surveys were not conducted in Lynn Canal and no herring activity was reported in 2026. 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 2026 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 included: Kasaan Bay, Sea Otter Sound, East Behm Canal, northern Stephens Passage, Chilkat Inlet, and Yakutat Bay.

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