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Advisory Announcement

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

The guideline harvest level (GHL) for the 2027 Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery is **28,980 tons** with a forecasted average weight of **144 grams** across all age classes. The GHL is based on a 15% harvest rate of an integrated statistical catch-at-age model (SCAA) forecast of 193,201 tons of mature herring biomass. This forecast is a 5% decrease from the model estimate of the 2026 mature (pre-fishery) herring biomass of 204,001 tons. The department will monitor herring abundance in season and take conservative management actions in the commercial sac roe herring fishery if necessary. A summary of forecasted Sitka Sound herring age-class percentages and weights for 2027 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. The same model structure used for the 2026 forecast was used for this year's recommended model, along with a full suite of standard diagnostic tools to assess model fit. The 2026 forecast model performed well based on the hindcast from the 2027 forecast model. The 2026 mature (pre-fishery) herring biomass forecast was 14% higher than the hindcast estimate of 2026 mature biomass. Given this performance and limited staff time, alternative model structures were not explored for the 2027 forecast

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 35.7 nautical miles (nmi) of unique shoreline with herring spawn in the Sitka Sound area during the spring of 2026, compared to the recent 10-year (2016–2025) average of 72.7 nmi. The total harvest for the sac roe herring fishery in 2026 was 6,400 tons of herring; an additional 193 tons of herring were harvested in test and bait fisheries. The 2026 egg deposition estimate was about 20% less than in 2025, and the sixth highest estimate on record from 1976–2026.

Table 1.–Summary of forecasted Sitka Sound herring age-class percentages for 2027 and weights used to forecast 2027 mature biomass (derived from the 2026 commercial fishery average weights).

Age	2027 Forecasted percent mature (numbers at age)	2027 Forecasted weight at age (g)
3	7%	77
4	20%	102
5	12%	132
6	6%	141
7	25%	162
8+	30%	180

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