

PROPOSAL 173

5 AAC 27.160. Quotas and guideline harvest levels for Southeastern Alaska Area.

Eliminate provisions to establish a guideline harvest level for the Sitka Sound herring sac roe herring fishery under 27.160.

To accomplish this, we recommend revision of 5 AAC 27.160 as follows:

Under the authority of 16.05.251(a)(2.6) and 16.05.258(b)(3) and consistent with 5 AAC 01.716 (a)(11)(D)(ii) herring aggregating nearshore in preparation for spawning and spawning herring should be considered fully-utilized for subsistence purposes.

[.(G) THE GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL FOR THE HERRING SAC ROE FISHERY IN SECTIONS 13-A AND 13-B SHALL BE ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT AND WILL BE A HARVEST RATE PERCENTAGE THAT IS NOT LESS THAN 12 PERCENT, NOT MORE THAN 20 PERCENT, AND WITHIN THAT RANGE SHALL BE DETERMINED BY THE FOLLOWING FORMULA:

HARVEST RATE PERCENTAGE = $2 + 8 \text{ [SPAWNING BIOMASS (IN TONS)] / 20,000}$

THE FISHERY WILL NOT BE CONDUCTED IF THE SPAWNING BIOMASS IS LESS THAN 25,000 TONS.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Sitka Sound is home to the largest spawning population of Pacific herring in Southeast Alaska and is a critical site for the subsistence harvest of herring roe on hemlock branches and kelp. Herring are also valuable to the Southeast Alaska marine ecosystem as a food source for salmon, halibut, whales, sea lions, birds, and other species; these dependent species are also economically important through direct exploitation or ecosystem benefits including eco-tourism. Successful herring spawning in Sitka is necessary to maintain the health of all fisheries in Sitka Sound and Southeast Alaska more broadly; successful and undisturbed herring spawning in Sitka is necessary to ensure a consistent (i.e. met every year) reasonable opportunity for subsistence of herring roe.

The commercial sac roe fishery in Sitka disrupts spawning patterns and interferes with traditional corridors affecting subsistence harvest. Lingít people have managed a herring/roe fishery in Sitka Sound since time immemorial. It is part of the Lingít way of life and is vital to our culture and traditions. The seine fishery interferes with this many-thousand-year-old subsistence fishery and way of life. A living subsistence fishery of ancient provenance and based on reciprocity and deep knowledge and respect for life must take priority over the perpetuation of sac roe fishing. This is also in alignment with the Department's mandate to prioritize subsistence needs.

Under the authority of 16.05.251(a)(2.6), pre-spawn and spawning herring should be designated as subsistence fish and utilized only for subsistence purposes. The traditional subsistence harvest of roe on hemlock branches and kelp, historically practiced in communities across Southeast Alaska, relies on minimal disturbance to pre-spawn and spawning herring. That condition cannot be met by a seine fishery targeting the oldest, most fecund roe-bearing herring in the days immediately preceding the subsistence harvest.

Alaska waters will be more alive with wild abundance for the benefit of all by leaving spawning aggregations undisturbed by commercial pressure.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. We developed the proposal in consultation with a small group of harvesters and elders and informed by prior conversation with many others.

This proposal was informed by the establishment of the Herring Revitalization Committee.

PROPOSED BY: Herring Protectors

(EF-F24-170)
