

Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan

I. Introduction: The Prince William Sound area is comprised of four herring fishing districts, the General, Montague, Northern and Eastern, described in 5 AAC 27.305. Three fisheries occur in one or all of these districts which directly affect the herring stocks of Prince William Sound. These three are the sac-roe, bait/food fishery and the herring spawn on kelp fishery. The purpose of this plan is to provide management strategies that will insure an optimum yield and equitable allocation of the harvestable resource for all user groups.

II. Management Strategies:

1. Herring Sac-Roe Fishery: Purse seines and gill nets are legal gear for this fishery. Management strategies are dictated by gear, each having designated areas, seasons and guideline harvest levels.
  - a. Purse seine fishery: This fishery opens in the Montague, Northern and Eastern districts on April 1 and is closed by Emergency Order. The total guideline harvest level for these three districts is 5,000 tons, however, the total allowable catch will be governed on a 10 to 20 percent exploitation rate of the available resource.
  - b. Gill net fishery: The gill net fishery will be restricted to the Northern district. The season opening will be announced by Emergency Order when samples obtained from the purse seine fishery indicate that the roe percentage is of marketable quantity. In order to prevent unnecessary gear conflicts, the gill net fishery will generally follow the closure of the purse seine fishery. A guideline harvest level for the gillnet fishery has been set at 10 percent of the available harvest for the district, with a maximum harvest not to exceed 250 metric tons.
2. Herring Bait/Food Fishery: The fishing season for the bait or food fishery will open on September 15 and extend through January 31. Only the General district will be open to fishing for herring during this time period. The two month closure between the winter fishery and the spring sac-roe fishery is needed to provide adequate protection for herring that may return early to spawn.

Legal gear for this fishery includes purse seines, gill nets and trawls. The total guideline harvest level for the General district is 1,400 tons. Once this harvest level is obtained the fishery will be closed by Emergency Order.

3. Herring Spawn on Kelp Fishery: This fishery will be managed under two separate programs, the natural kelp fishery and the

herring pound fishery.

- a. Natural kelp fishery: The entire Sound is open to this fishery except where special closed areas are established. Pre-season surveys will be conducted to determine recruitment of kelp beds harvested during the past season, and also to investigate the overall condition of the kelp beds in traditional keeping areas. Overharvested and poorly rejuvenated kelp beds will be identified prior to the season, closed and marked accordingly.

The spawn on kelp season will be opened by Emergency Order following the spawning of herring. A guideline harvest level of 200 tons has been established and a closure will be announced by Emergency Order once this level is obtained. The harvest method now in use, diving and hand cutting the kelp fronds four inches above the stem, appears to be maintaining the kelp stands in a healthy condition.

- b. Herring pound fishery: Herring pound operators must obtain a permit issued by the Commissioner. Application for such a permit must be made prior to March 1 of the calendar year the permit is to be used. Only one pound per permit will be permitted per applicant. Herring pounds will be restricted to a portion of Landlocked Bay, as described in 5 AAC 27.380.

A guideline harvest level of 16 tons of herring spawn on kelp will be permitted. These 16 tons will be divided equally among those persons fishing permits issued by the Commissioner. An attempt will be made to regulate the total amount of herring being pounded by all permit holders, to a maximum of 200 tons.

By condition of the permit herring must be released after spawning and pounds must stay in place until the herring eggs attached to the pound structure have hatched. The Department will monitor all pounds during the pounding period to maintain compliance with the permits issued; record herring dead loss, control the harvest within limits of the established harvest level and maintain surveillance of the native kelp beds harvested for the pounds. Kelp harvested for introduction into the pounds will not be taken from the natural spawning or keeping areas and the seining of herring for introduction into pounds will not be allowed in historic keeping areas. Harvesting of herring for introduction to the pounds will be opened by Emergency Order.

III. Future Management Plans: As new information becomes available, through management and research, modifications to this plan will be prepared and presented to the Board for consideration as an amendment to the present plan.