



Advisory Announcement
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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 9

Today's aerial survey covered from Salisbury Sound to Eastern Channel and Shoals Point in Sitka Sound. Weather during the flight was fair with 15-knot winds from the south and overcast skies with mixed snow and rain. Viewing conditions were difficult at times due to a low ceiling and precipitation. No herring spawn was observed. Herring predators were scattered throughout Sitka Sound with whales mostly concentrated along the Kruzof Island shoreline from Shoals Point to Hayward Strait. A large concentration of sealions were observed off Inner Point.

Department and industry vessels surveying Sitka Sound located very large schools of herring in the shallower waters of southern Kruzof and Krestof Islands from Shoal's Point to Eastern Bay. Numerous schools were also located between Watson Point and Middle Island and near Crow Island. Later in the day an industry vessel observed multiple large schools of herring moving south around Makhnati Island.

Five successful test sets were conducted today, the results are as follows:

- 8:56 a.m., South Siganaka Islands, 60-ton set, mature roe – 7.7%, immature roe – 2.8%, average weight – 115 g, and 46.9% female.
- 11:02 a.m., Promisla Bay, 75-ton set, mature roe – 9.83%, immature roe – 1.7%, average weight – 119 g, and 52% female.
- 11:31 p.m., Brent's Beach, 50-ton set, mature roe – 9.8%, immature roe – 1.1%, average weight – 122 g, and 57% female.
- 11:45 p.m., Mountain Point, 150-ton set, mature roe – 10.9%, immature roe – 1.1%, average weight – 132 g and 49% female.
- 15:30 p.m., Mountain Point, 50-ton set, mature roe – 9.3%, immature roe – 1.5%, average weight – 121 g and 49% female.

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 this area the department considered the following: 1) test setting in the areas evaluated today are well outside the commercial closed waters and core subsistence areas; and 2) the fish encountered during test fishing in this area would represent a small fraction of the overall biomass in the area.

The department continues to work with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in response to the grounding of the vessel in Neva Strait. This includes tracking the geographic extent of the spilled fuel and assessing any potential impacts to the subsistence and commercial herring fisheries in Sitka Sound. Today's aerial survey showed the diesel sheen extended from Neva Strait to Salisbury Sound. No apparent sheen was observed south of Whitestone Point in Neva Strait. Multiple aerial surveys conducted throughout the day showed that Krestof Sound, Olga Strait, Nakwasina Sound, Siginaka Islands, and Hayward Strait appeared clear of any sheen today. Because the State of Alaska has a zero-tolerance policy with respect to fuel contamination of seafood, the department will not open a commercial fishery or conduct test fishing in areas where there is a risk of fuel contamination of gear, vessels, or harvested fish. More information can be

found on the DEC website: <https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/ppr/spill-information/response/2022/01-tug-western-mariner-grounding/>

The next aerial survey and fishery update are scheduled for Saturday, March 26.

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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