



## **Advisory Announcement**

***For Immediate Release: March 26, 2022***

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### **SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 10**

Today's aerial survey covered from Crawfish Inlet to Salisbury Sound. Weather during the flight was fair with 5-knot winds and clear skies. Visibility was hindered at times with occasional fog, sun glare, or shadows but overall viewing conditions were good. No herring spawn was observed. A noticeable shift of herring predators was seen as they have moved further south than what has been seen in recent days. Whales and sealions were mostly concentrated along the southern shoreline of Kruzof Island and south to Goddard and Dorothy Narrows.

Department and industry vessels surveying Sitka Sound located very large schools of herring in the shallower waters of southern Kruzof Island from Shoal's Point to Kamenoi Point. An industry vessel observed numerous schools south of Sitka in the deeper waters of Eastern Channel and from Aleutkina Bay to Cape Burunof.

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

- 8:30 a.m., Mountain Point, 40-ton set, mature roe – 7.3%, immature roe – 2.7%, average weight – 101 g and 49% female.
- 8:52 a.m., Inner Point, 150-ton set, mature roe – 11.3%, immature roe – 1.1%, average weight – 126 g and 54% 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.

An opening of the Sitka Sound herring sac roe fishery occurred today from 11:00 a.m. until 12:15 p.m., March 26, 2022, as announced by field announcement on VHF channel 10. Open waters for this fishery included the area south of 57°06.91' N lat, north of 57°00.84' N lat, and west of 135°31.25' W long (Figure 1). Harvest estimates from today's fishery will be included on the next fishery update.

The department has determined that the opening described above would not harm a reasonable opportunity for participants in the subsistence fishery to harvest the amount of roe necessary for subsistence uses. When making this determination, the department considered: 1) vessel surveys conducted by the department beginning on March 22 indicated that there is a very large biomass of herring within Sitka Sound and numerous large schools of herring have been observed within the regulatory closed waters; 2) there was no herring spawn nor subsistence branch sets observed in the water on the adjacent shoreline of the open 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 found spotty, light diesel sheen extending from Olga Strait, Neva Strait, and Salisbury Sound. 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 Sunday, March 27.

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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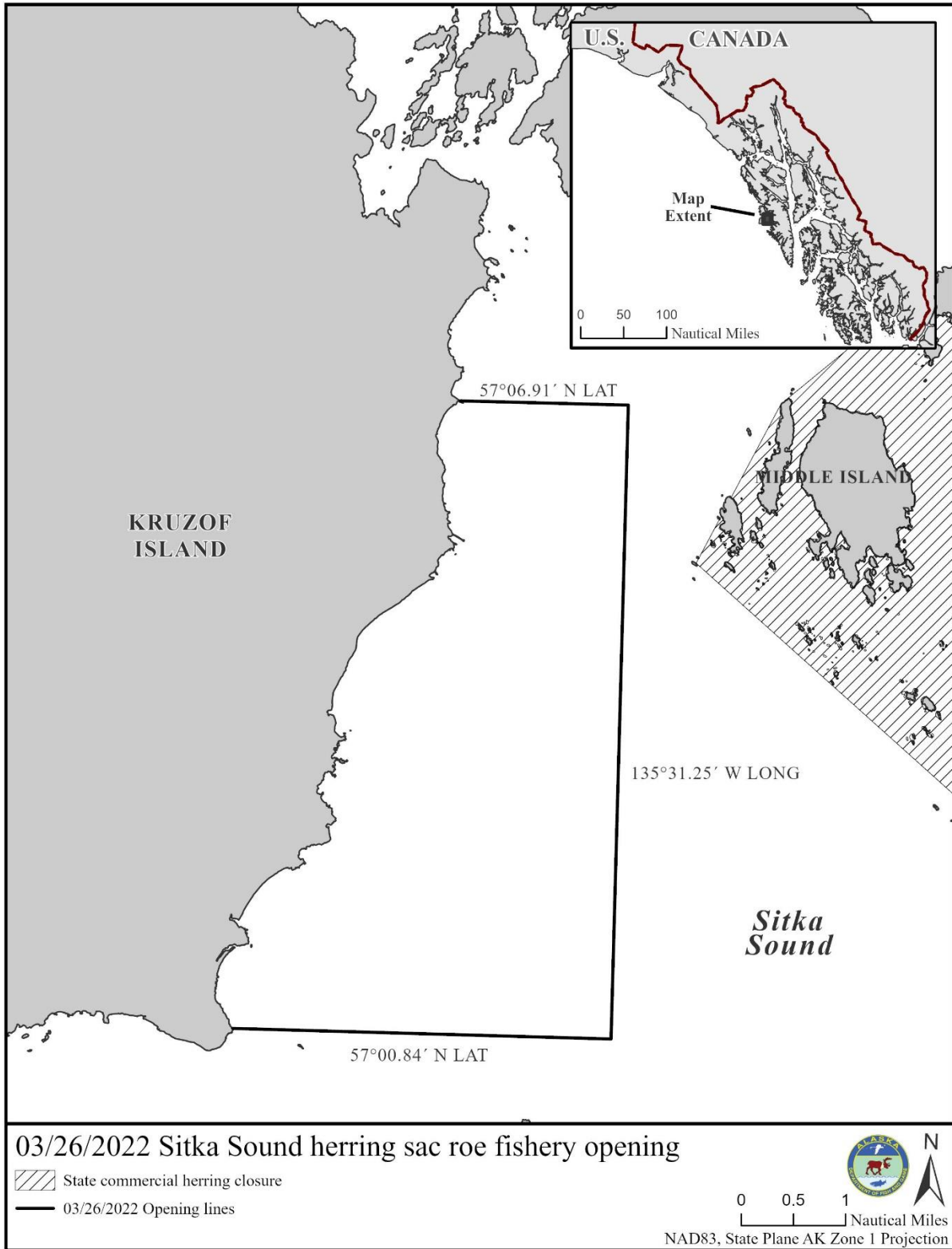


Figure 1.– Map of the area open for the March 26, 2022, Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery.