



Advisory Announcement

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 12

The aerial survey conducted on March 28 covered from Windy Passage to Salisbury Sound. Weather during the flight was good with 10-knot winds and overcast skies. Viewing conditions were good to excellent. A number of herring schools were seen in areas by Mud Bay, Magoun Islands, Jamestown Bay, and Crescent Bay (Sitka Harbor). Approximately 8 nautical miles (nmi) of herring spawn was observed, including the areas along the Kruzof Shoreline from Kamenoi Point to around Shoals Point, Lava Island, north Middle Island, and Crow Pass. Herring predators were widely scattered across Sitka Sound. Most whales were concentrated at Hayward Strait and Siganaka Islands.

Department and industry vessels surveying Sitka Sound on March 28 located very large schools of herring in the shallower waters of Hayward Strait and the Magoun Islands. South of Sitka several schools of herring were observed between Aleutkina Bay and Cape Burunof.

One successful test set was conducted today, the results are as follows:

Time	Area	Tons	% Mature Roe	% Immature Roe	Avg weight	% Female
8:56	Hayward Str	100 T	11.5 %	3.37 %	125	51.2 %

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 area evaluated yesterday was 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 on March 28, 2022, from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., as stated in field announcement on VHF channel 10. Open waters for this fishery included the area south of 57°10.78' N lat, north of 57°07.98' N lat, and west of 135°30.76' W long (Figure 1). Harvest estimates from this fishery will be included on the next fishery update. Harvest from the fishery that occurred on March 27, 2022, was approximately 2,700-tons of herring.

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) while some spawn was observed within the open area, there were no observed subsistence branch sets in the water on the adjacent shoreline; 3) approximately 1.3 nmi of herring spawn was observed yesterday within regulatory closed waters on Crow, Middle, and near Gagarin Island.

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. Yesterday'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 Tuesday, March 29.

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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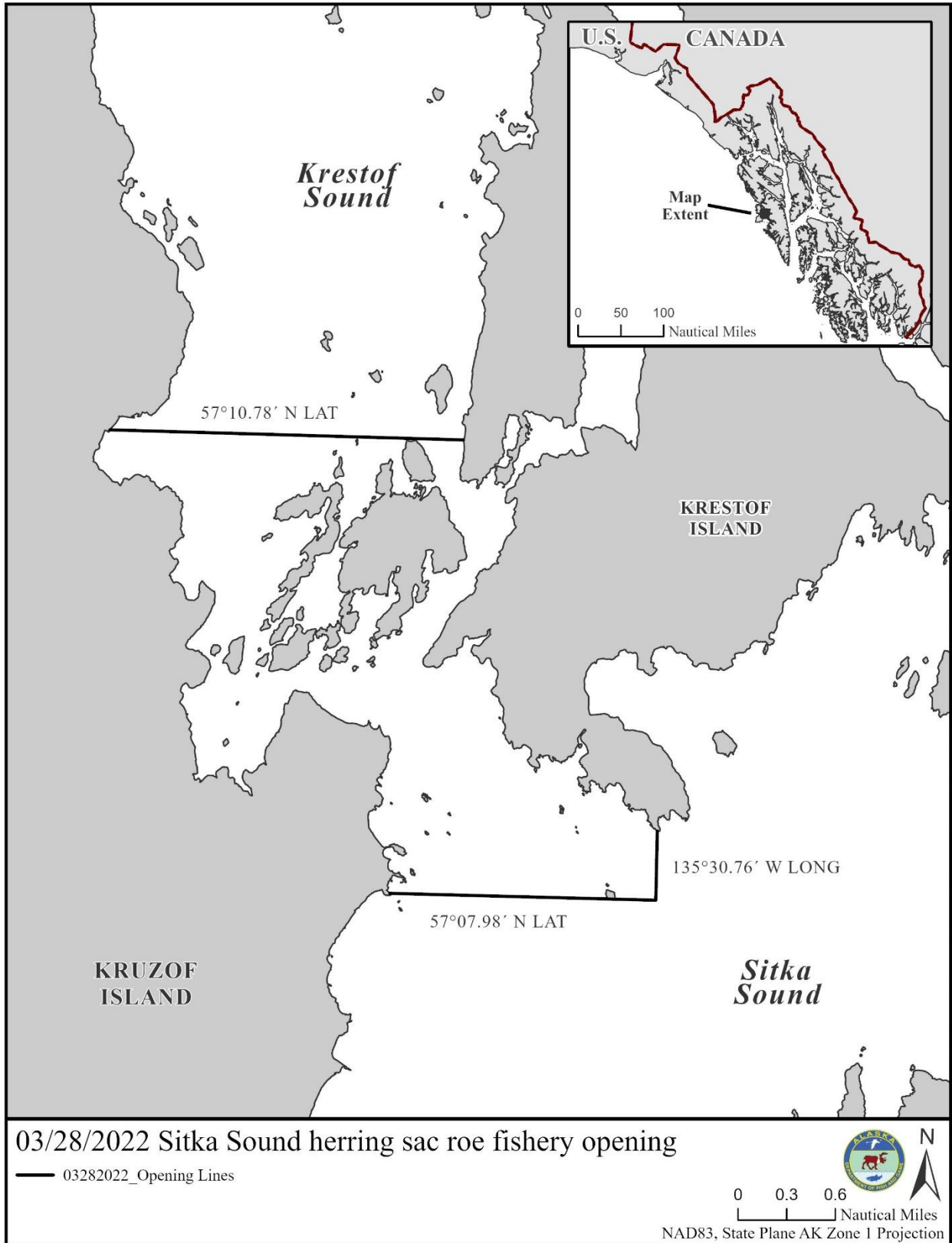


Figure 1.— Map of the area open for the March 28, 2022, Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery.