



**Advisory Announcement**  
*For Immediate Release: March 29, 2022*

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**SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 13**

The aerial survey conducted on March 29 covered Sitka Sound from Goddard and St. Lazaria in the south and north to Salisbury Sound. Weather during the flight ranged from fair to poor with 20-knot winds, overcast skies, and rain. Viewing conditions were difficult at times with turbulence with occasional rain and fog obstructing visibility. Active spawning has slowed along the Kruzof shoreline but expanded slightly to new areas in the regulatory closed waters near Crow Pass. Approximately 1.3 total nautical miles (nmi) of herring spawn was observed today in areas including Hayward Strait, Middle Island, and around Crow Island. Herring predators were widely scattered across Sitka Sound; with most whales concentrated at Hayward Strait while most sealions were at Inner Point.

Department and industry vessels surveying Sitka Sound on March 29 located very large schools of herring in the shallower waters of Hayward Strait. Scattered small schools were observed along the southern shore of Kruzof Island from Kamenoi Point to Fred's Creek. Numerous smaller schools of herring were observed in Crow Pass, around Middle Island and near the Kasiana Islands.

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

Time	Area	Tons	% Mature Roe	% Immature Roe	Avg weight	% Female
09:00	Hayward Strait	50 T	13.33 %	1.68 %	119	56.69 %

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 today 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 29, 2022, from 10:30 a.m. until 1:30 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 28, 2022, was approximately 2,700-tons of herring. Total harvest in the fishery through March 28 is approximately 5,900-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 0.7 nmi of herring spawn was observed today within regulatory closed waters on Crow, Middle, and near Gagarin Islands; 4) today's opening time was reduced relative to the previous two open periods in the same general 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 Wednesday, March 30.

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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<i>ADF&amp;G</i>	225-5195	772-3801		747-6688	465-4250	766-2830	784-3255
<i>AWT</i>	225-5111	772-3983	874-3215	747-3254	465-4000	766-2533	784-3220

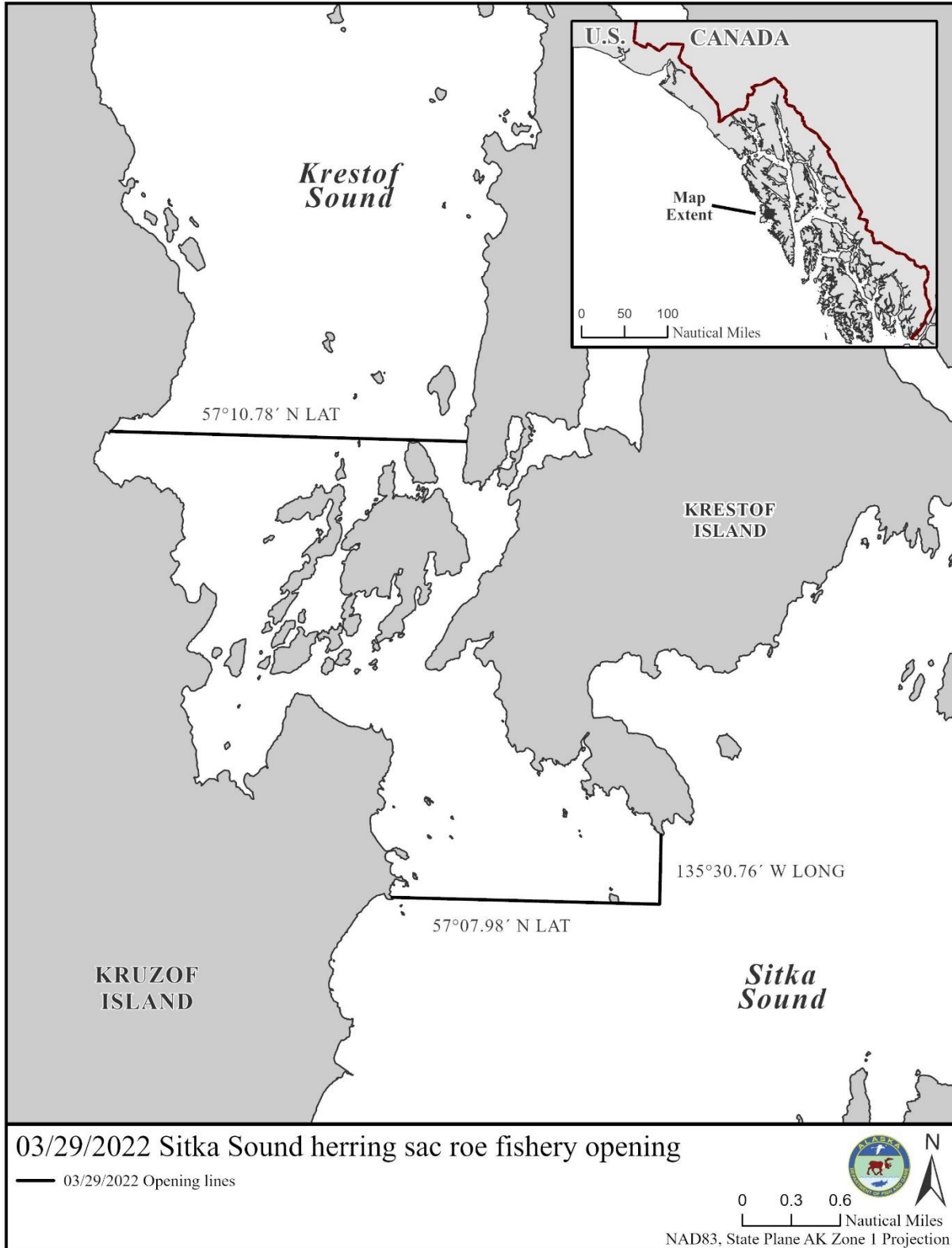


Figure 1.– Map of the area open for the March 29, 2022, Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery.