



Advisory Announcement
For Immediate Release: March 31, 2022

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 15

The aerial survey conducted on March 31 covered Sitka Sound from Windy Passage to Salisbury Sound. Weather during the flight was adequate with 5-knot winds, overcast skies, rain, and snow. Viewing conditions were mostly good with occasional snow, rain, or fog obstructing views. There was approximately 11.9 nautical miles (nmi) of herring spawn observed today. Active spawning areas include Hayward Strait, eastern Kruzof shoreline, Middle Island, near Crow Pass, Eastern Bay, and Promisla Bay (Figure 1). The cumulative herring spawn mileage to date is 15.6 nmi. Herring predators were scattered across Sitka Sound. Most whales were concentrated at Hayward Strait and Hotsprings Bay, while most sealions were in the Magoun Islands.

Department and industry vessels surveying Sitka Sound on March 31 located very large schools of herring in the shallower waters of Hayward Strait and southern Krestof Sound. Scattered schools of herring were observed on the Kruzof Island shore from Fred's Creek to Kamenoi Point and in Eastern and Promisla Bays; most of the fish observed in these locations were in shallow water near the beaches. Numerous schools of herring were also 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 | Rob Point (Hayward Str.) | 150 T | 9.2 % | - | 123 | 45.7 % |

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 31, 2022, from 10:30 a.m. until 4:30 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 and north of 57°09.20' N lat (Figure 2).

Harvest estimates from today's fishery will be included on the next fishery update. Harvest from the fishery that occurred on March 30, 2022, was approximately 1,700-tons of herring. Total harvest in the fishery through March 30 is approximately 9,000-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) the lines chosen by the department today intentionally excluded waters with identified subsistence roe-on-branch sets in active herring spawn; 3) approximately 2.3 nmi of herring spawn was observed today within regulatory closed waters on Crow, Middle, and near Gagarin Islands.

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 Friday, April 1.

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&G</i> | 225-5195 | 772-3801 | | 747-6688 | 465-4250 | 766-2830 | 784-3255 |
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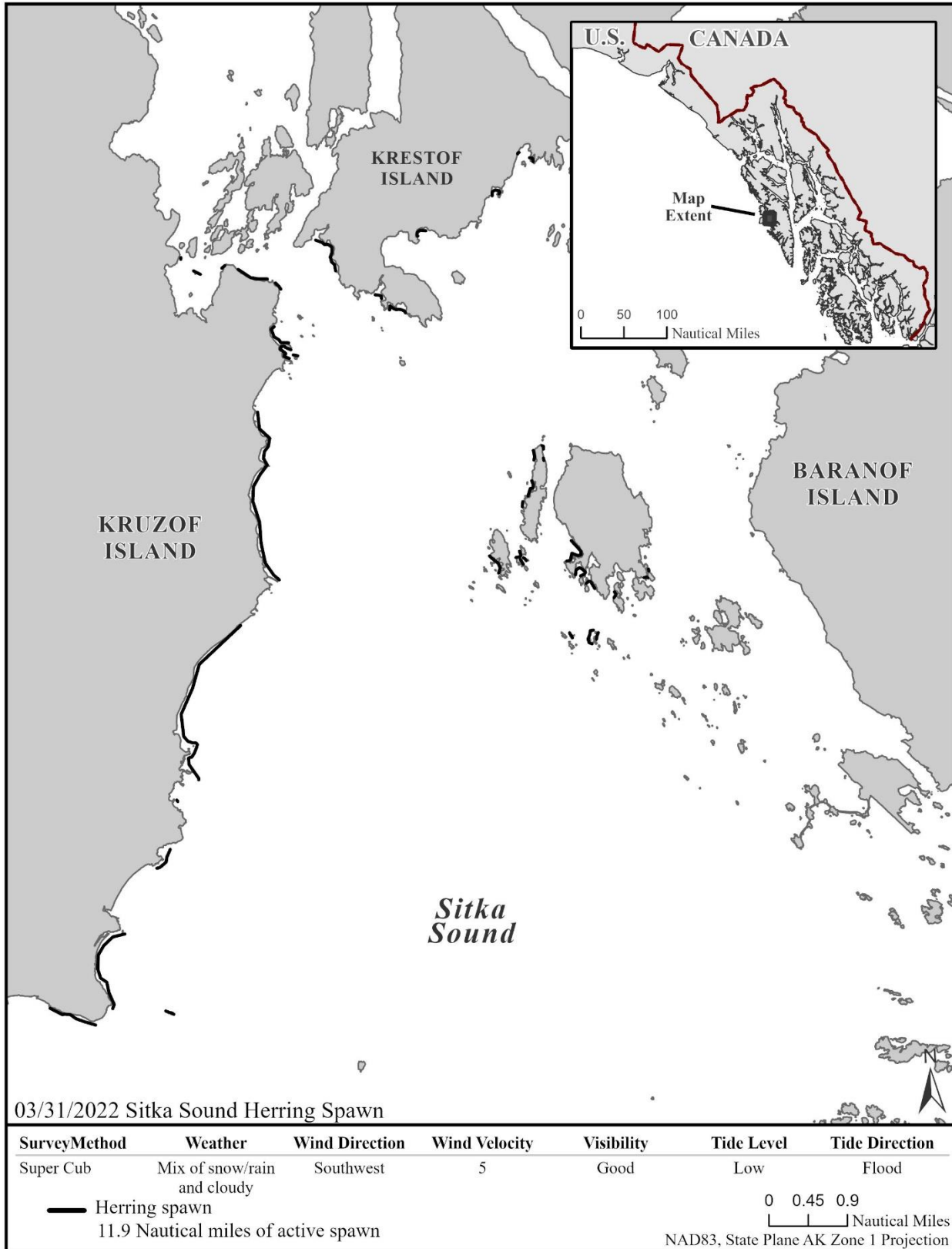


Figure 1.— Map of the active spawning areas in Sitka Sound during the aerial survey on March 31, 2022.

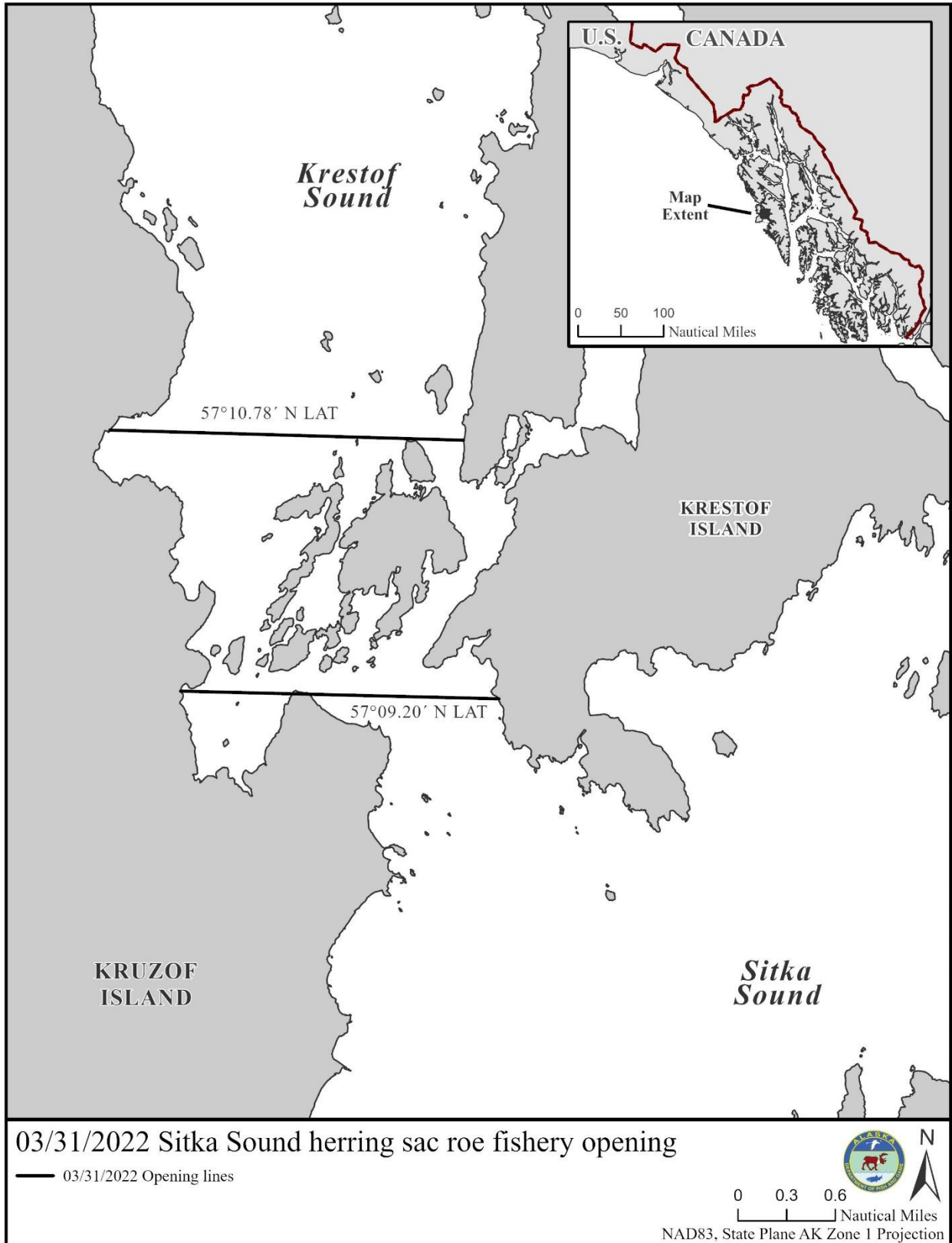


Figure 2.— Map of the area open for the March 31, 2022, Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery.