



Advisory Announcement
For Immediate Release: April 2, 2022

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 17

The aerial survey conducted on April 2 covered Sitka Sound from Shoals Point to Hayward Strait. Viewing conditions were difficult at times with 40-knot winds causing heavy turbulence and white caps. There was approximately 15.1 nautical miles (nmi) of herring spawn observed today. Active spawning areas include Hayward Strait, Magoun Islands, Promisla Bay, Eastern Bay, Crow Island, Chaichei and Kasiana Islands, (Figure 1). The cumulative herring spawn mileage to date is 31.1 nmi. Herring predators were difficult to spot today due to viewing conditions. Gray whales were seen along the Kruzof shoreline and humpback whales were in Hayward Strait.

Department and industry vessels surveying Sitka Sound on April 2 located very large schools of herring in the shallower waters of southern Krestof Sound and northern Hayward Strait. Numerous schools of herring were also observed along the Sitka road system from Watson Point to Old Sitka Rocks.

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

Time	Area	Tons	% Mature Roe	% Immature Roe	Avg weight	% Female
09:30	S. Krestof Sound	75 T	10.95 %	0%	129	50.0 %

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 April 2, 2022, from 11:00 a.m. until 5:30 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°08.95' N lat (Figure 2). Additionally, the waters within the Magoun Islands north of a line from a point at 57°09.63' N lat, 135°34.01' W long to a point at 57°09.63' N lat, 135°34.24' W long and the waters within 200-yards from shoreline at mean high tide between a point on the Kruzof Island shoreline at 57°09.20' N lat, 135°34.75' W long and Point Brown at 57°08.95' N lat, 135°33.83' W long, were closed to commercial fishing because subsistence roe-on-branch sets were identified by the department in that area of herring spawn.

Harvest estimates from today's fishery will be included on the next fishery update. Harvest from the fishery that occurred on April 1, 2022, was approximately 1,400-tons of herring. Total harvest in the fishery through March 31 is approximately 12,500-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 consistently 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 and near active herring spawn; 3) approximately 6.4 nmi of herring spawn was observed today throughout regulatory closed waters (Figure 1).

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. 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, April 3.

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>AWT</i>	225-5111	772-3983	874-3215	747-3254	465-4000	766-2533	784-3220

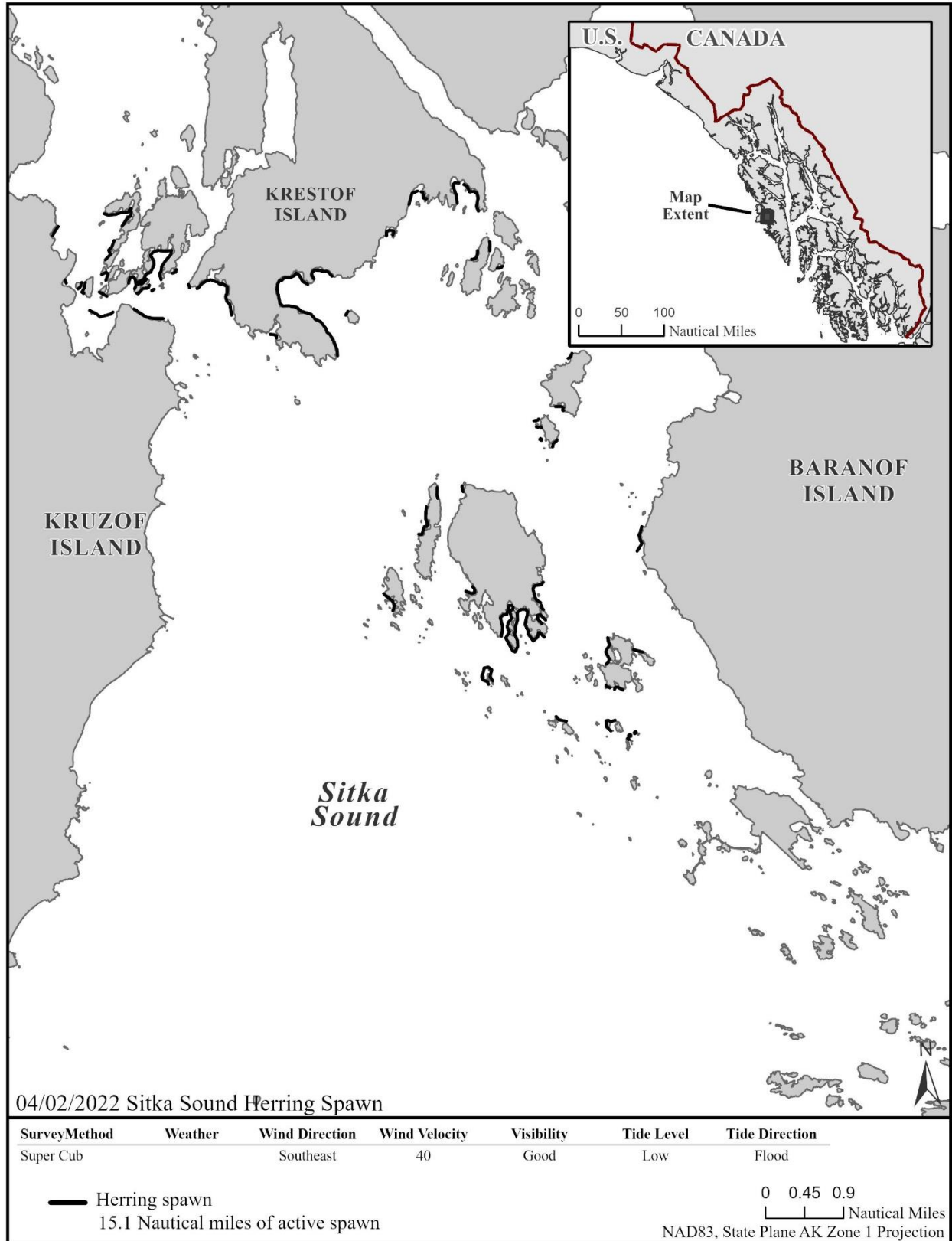


Figure 1.– Map of the active spawning areas in Sitka Sound during the aerial survey on April 2, 2022.

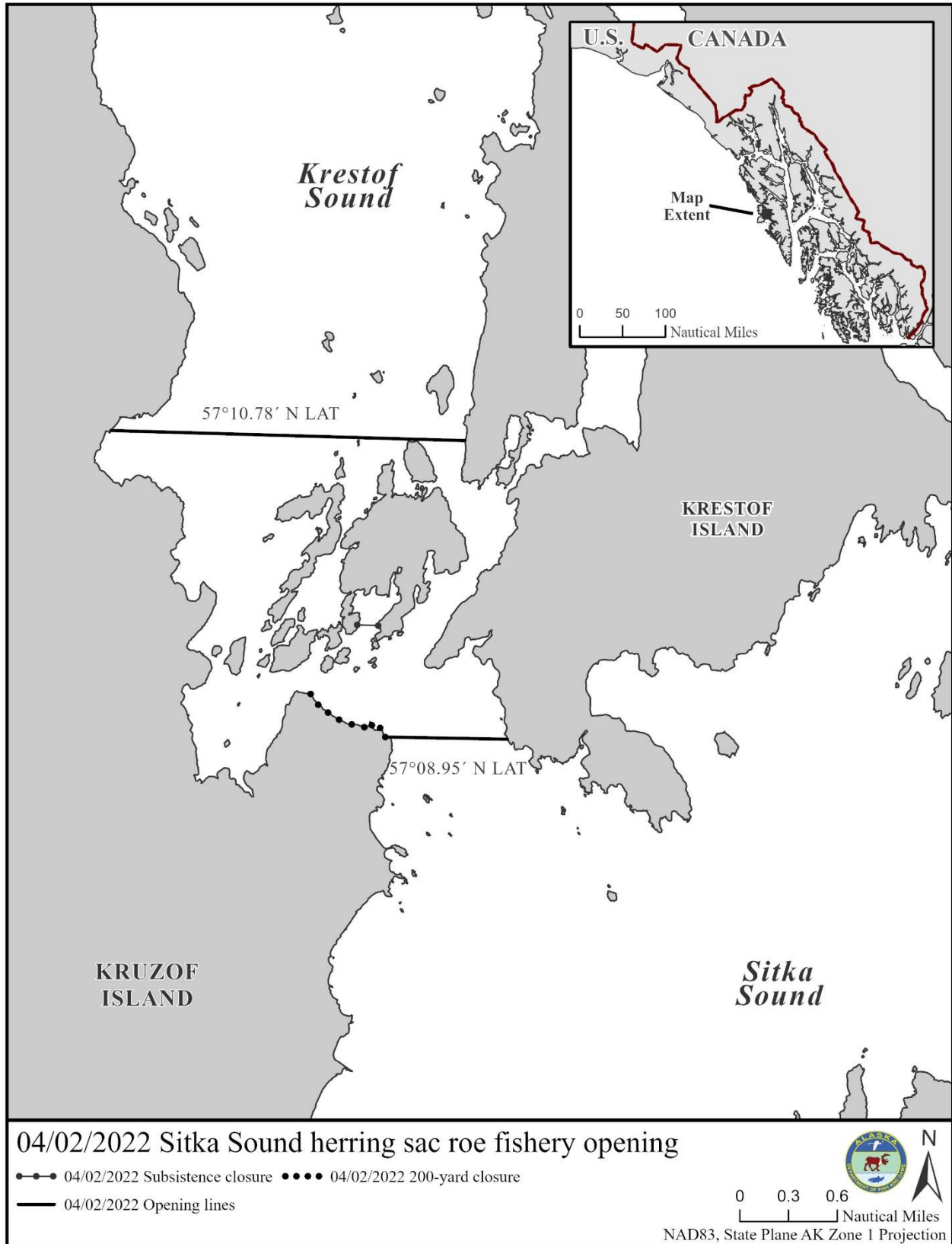


Figure 2.— Map of the area open for the April 2, 2022, Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery.