



**Advisory Announcement**  
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## SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY SUMMARY

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) mapped 91.5 nautical miles (nmi) of herring spawn in 2022 from March 27 through April 28 (Figure 1). This was the fifth largest estimate of herring spawn mileage since 1953 and was higher than both the 10-year (2012–2021) average of 63.0 nmi and the 40-year (1982–2021) average of 60.2 nmi.

Aerial surveys of the Sitka Sound area began on March 8 to document herring activity and spawn and ended on April 28. Major herring spawning began on March 28 when 8.0 nmi of active herring spawn was observed along the Kruzof Island shoreline from Lava Island to Kamenoi Point and on Crow and Middle Islands. Active herring spawn peaked on April 4, when 19.1 nmi of herring spawn was observed. It should be noted the department was unable to conduct aerial surveys on March 18 and April 11 due to inclement weather and the surveys on March 22 and April 3 were reduced in geographic extent for the same reason. The last day of the main spawn event was April 16; however, smaller areas of herring spawn were observed through April 28. Surveys from skiffs were conducted April 8–9, April 14, and April 16 to identify areas of shoreline that received herring spawn not observed during the aerial surveys.

The department conducted a spawn deposition survey to estimate the density and total number of eggs deposited in Sitka Sound and sampled both spawning herring and herring from the commercial harvest for age, sex, and size composition. The spawn deposition dive survey was conducted April 13–16. Observed egg deposition was very high throughout much of the survey area, particularly around Middle/Crow/Kasiana Islands, Halibut Point Road, Siginaka Islands, Hayward Strait, and Kruzof Island. This year, substantially more eggs were observed along the northern and eastern areas of Sitka Sound than along the Kruzof Island shoreline, which is a shift from what has been observed over the past few years. Egg deposition south of Sitka was low to moderate. Herring were sampled (using cast nets) throughout the spawning period to determine age, sex, and size composition of the spawning stock and samples were taken from the commercial harvest across fishery openings. Sampled herring will be analyzed in coming months. Final results from this year's stock assessment and the 2023 forecast will not be available until late 2022 or early 2023.

Herring spawn was observed daily within regulatory commercial closed waters from March 27–April 8 and on April 10. Out of the total 91.5 nmi of mapped herring spawn in Sitka Sound, approximately 23.8 nmi of herring spawn was mapped within the waters closed to commercial fishing. Herring spawn also occurred in several other areas known to be popular subsistence harvest areas including Hayward Strait, Magoun Islands, Promisla Bay, Eastern Bay, and Siginaka Islands. Harvest estimates from the 2022 subsistence fishery will likely be available near the end of 2022.

The preliminary 2022 commercial herring sac roe fishery harvest was approximately 25,500 tons of herring with an average mature roe percentage of 11.9%. This year's harvest was the largest in the history of the sac roe fishery accounting for 56% of the 2022 guideline harvest level of 45,164 tons. The fishery was opened for 15 days between March 26 and April 10 with an average daily harvest of approximately 1,700 tons of herring. The fishery was closed following the April 10 fishing period after active herring spawn was observed in the Windy Passage area of Sitka Sound. The presence of active herring spawning in close proximity to where the fishery was occurring at that time increased the likelihood that future harvest opportunities would not provide for high-quality sac roe and would also increase the likelihood of sets being released due to poor quality herring. Landings were made by 28 of the 47 active permit holders for this fishery.

Early in the morning of March 21, a grounded vessel in Neva Strait spilled an estimated 5,300-gallons of diesel fuel. A known source of the release was the vessel’s 13,000-gallon capacity forward port tank and source control of the leaking diesel fuel was achieved on March 24. Throughout the spill response, ADF&G worked with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to assist with tracking the geographic extent of the spilled fuel and to assess any potential impacts to the subsistence and commercial herring fisheries in Sitka Sound. The maximum extent of sheening observed by ADF&G was as far north as Sinitsin Cove in Salisbury Sound and as far south as Mills Island in Krestof Sound and near the southern entrance of Olga Strait. Because the State of Alaska has a zero-tolerance policy with respect to fuel contamination of seafood, ADF&G managed the commercial sac roe fishery to remain closed in Salisbury Sound, Neva Strait, Olga Strait, and in Krestof Sound north of 57°10.78’ N lat. In addition, the Alaska Departments of Health and Social Services (ADHSS), ADEC, and ADF&G strongly advised against the harvest for consumption of any herring, herring roe, kelp/algae, or shellfish from this area. More information can be found on the ADEC website: <https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/ppr/spill-information/response/2022/01-tug-western-mariner-grounding/>

The daily herring spawn locations and photographs from 2022 will continue to be made available through the interactive herring survey map on the ADF&G website. The "Southeast Alaska 2022 Herring Surveys" map allows users to view all the data collected for each herring aerial and skiff survey throughout the 2022 season. The interactive maps are located on the department website at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.herring#maps> or scan:



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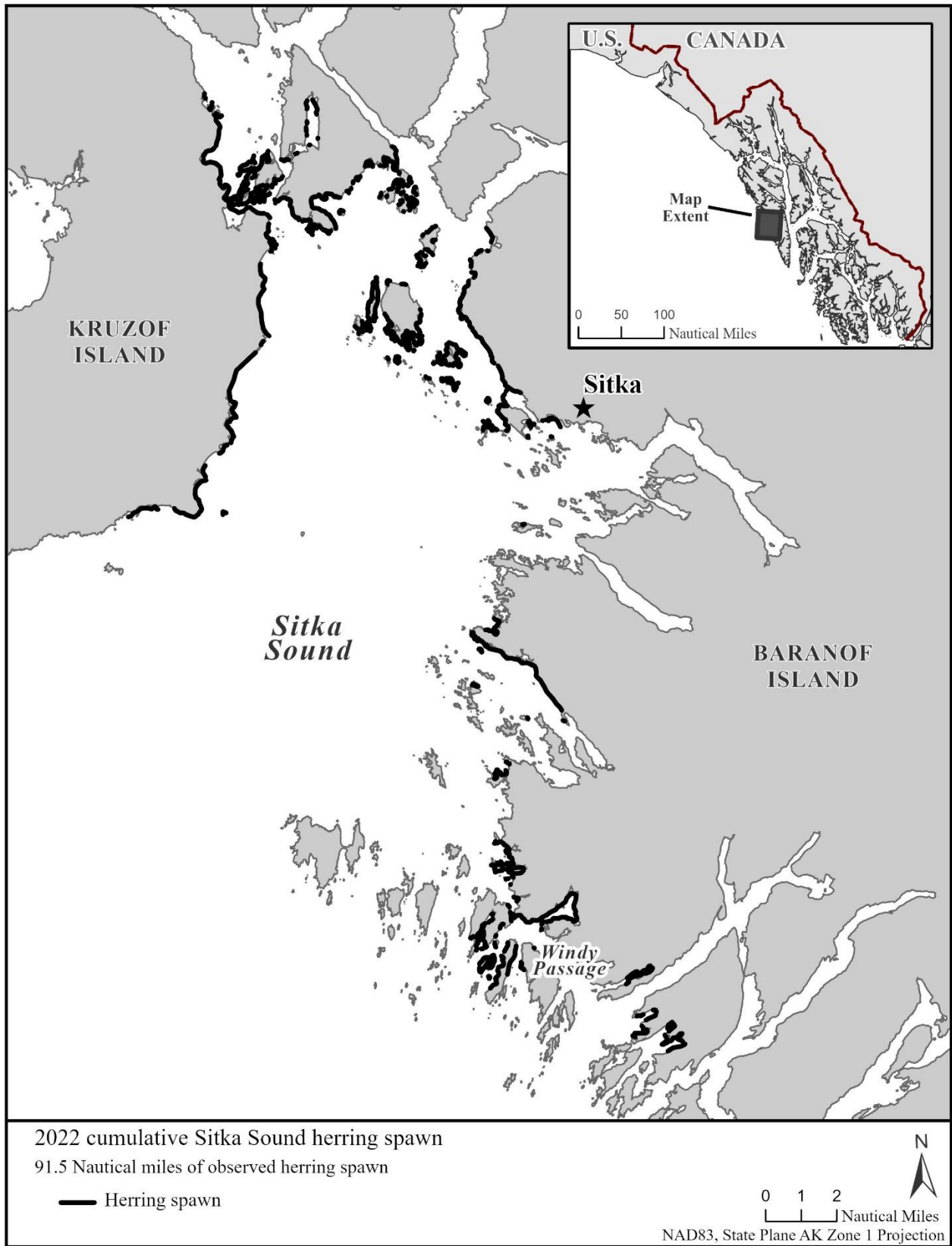


Figure 1. Cumulative Sitka Sound shoreline with observed herring spawn in 2022.