

RC24



From: Sitka Fish & Game Advisory Committee

Subject: Eradication of *Didemnum vexillum* (D vex) tunicate in Whiting Harbor and anywhere else in Sitka Sound, Alaska

In June, 2010, the invasive tunicate *Didemnum vexillum* (D vex) was found in Sitka Sound's Whiting Harbor and has since continued to spread. On October 22, 2011, a portion of an oyster farming facility in Whiting Harbor infested with D vex tore loose in a storm and drifted into Sitka Sound, broke up on the rocks in the Western Channel area, and sank. This disaster was located within the core herring spawn area near Sitka..

In autumn, 2012, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game completed a survey of Whiting Harbor to determine the dispersion and character of the D vex invasion and to select tactics for eradicating it.

The ADF&G has been allocated \$500,000 under HB89 expressly for the purpose of removing D vex in Alaska. We would like to know the status of the campaign to eradicate D vex, the timetable of eradication efforts, proposed restrictions on boat movement through affected waters, and an assessment of how imminent wider spread of the tunicate appears to be.

As an advisory group charged with monitoring fish and game issues for the Sitka area we would like to see a coordinated Federal/State/Municipal agency effort to implement a plan to eradicate all residual populations of the *Didemnum vexillum* tunicate in Whiting Harbor and anywhere else it may be found in Sitka Sound. This invasive species is a malignant threat to Sitka's marine environment and if not eradicated will have drastic economic, social, cultural, and esthetic impact on all Sitkans.

Prior to the 2013 sac roe fishery we ask that ADF& G to take steps to ensure no herring seiners put out their nets in any nearby area potentially containing debris which could be harboring D vex. We also ask that Whiting Harbor be cordoned off and signs posted asking vessels to stay out to prevent further spread of the D vex.

Thank you for your continued action. We feel time is of the essence in responding to this issue.

Sincerely,

Floyd Tomkins, chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Floyd Tomkins".