



Advisory Announcement

For Immediate Release: April 25, 2024

CONTACT: Aaron Dupuis
Sitka Area Management Biologist
aaron.dupuis@alaska.gov
(907) 747-6688

SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERIES SUMMARY

This announcement is a summary of the 2024 Sitka Sound sac roe herring fisheries and observations of the Sitka Sound herring stock. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) conducts aerial, vessel, and spawn deposition surveys to track herring activity and determine the extent and density of herring spawn for the Sitka Sound area.

Aerial surveys were conducted by ADF&G from March 15 until April 16. Herring spawn was first observed in Sitka Sound on March 23. The primary herring spawning event for 2024 began on March 26 when 8.6 nautical miles (nmi) of active herring spawn was observed on Kasiana, Apple, Crow, and Gagarin Islands, Halibut Point, and Fred's Creek. Spawning peaked on March 29 when 26.2 nmi of active herring spawn was documented. The last day of the primary spawn event was April 3; however, smaller areas of herring spawn were observed through April 11. Surveys from skiffs were conducted April 8 and 9 to identify additional areas of herring spawn not observed during the aerial surveys. In total, ADF&G mapped 85.1 nmi of shoreline with herring spawn in 2024 (Figure 1) which is higher than both the 10-year (2014–2023) average of 68.9 nmi and the 40-year (1984–2023) average of 61.9 nmi.

Herring spawn was observed daily from March 23 to March 30 within the area closed to commercial fishing by regulation (commonly referred to as the “core subsistence area”). Of the total 85.1 nmi of mapped herring spawn in Sitka Sound, approximately 27.7 nmi of herring spawn was mapped within this area. Herring spawn also occurred in several other areas known to be commonly used for subsistence fishing, including Hayward Strait, Magoun Islands, Promisla Bay, Eastern Bay, and Signinaka Islands. Harvest estimates from the 2024 subsistence fishery should be available late this year.

From April 9 to April 13 a spawn deposition survey was conducted to estimate the total number of eggs deposited in the Sitka Sound spawning area. ADF&G scientific divers surveyed 85 transects placed throughout the extent of the spawn observed during aerial and vessel surveys from March 23 to April 8. Preliminary results indicate that overall herring egg deposition was relatively high, particularly along shorelines of Halibut Point Road, Middle Island, Kasiana Island, and other nearby islands, Hayward Strait, Promisla Bay, and sections of Kruzof Island. Egg deposition south of Sitka was relatively low.

The 2024 commercial herring sac roe fishery harvest was approximately 12,700-tons of herring with an average mature roe percentage of 11.6%. This year's harvest accounted for 15% of the 2024 guideline harvest level of 81,246 tons. The fishery was open for 14 days from March 22 to the season's closure at 6:00 p.m. on April 5. The average daily harvest was approximately 1,100 tons of herring. Test sets (14 total) were conducted between March 18 and March 26.

To estimate age composition and size for the Sitka Sound herring population, both spawning herring and commercially harvested fish were sampled. Spawning herring were sampled using cast nets throughout the spawning area and period, with a total of 41 samples collected. Herring samples from commercial vessel sets were collected during fishery openings, with 25 samples collected. The herring samples will be analyzed in the coming months at the ADF&G Mark, Tag, and Age Laboratory and the final stock assessment results will be available with the 2025 forecast, later this year.

The daily herring spawn locations and photographs from 2024 will continue to be made available through the interactive herring survey map on the ADF&G website. The "Southeast Alaska 2024 Herring Surveys" map allows users to view all the data collected for each herring aerial survey throughout the 2024 season. The interactive maps are located on the department website 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>.

<i>Office</i>	<i>Ketchikan</i>	<i>Petersburg</i>	<i>Wrangell</i>	<i>Sitka</i>	<i>Juneau</i>	<i>Haines</i>	<i>Yakutat</i>
<i>ADF&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

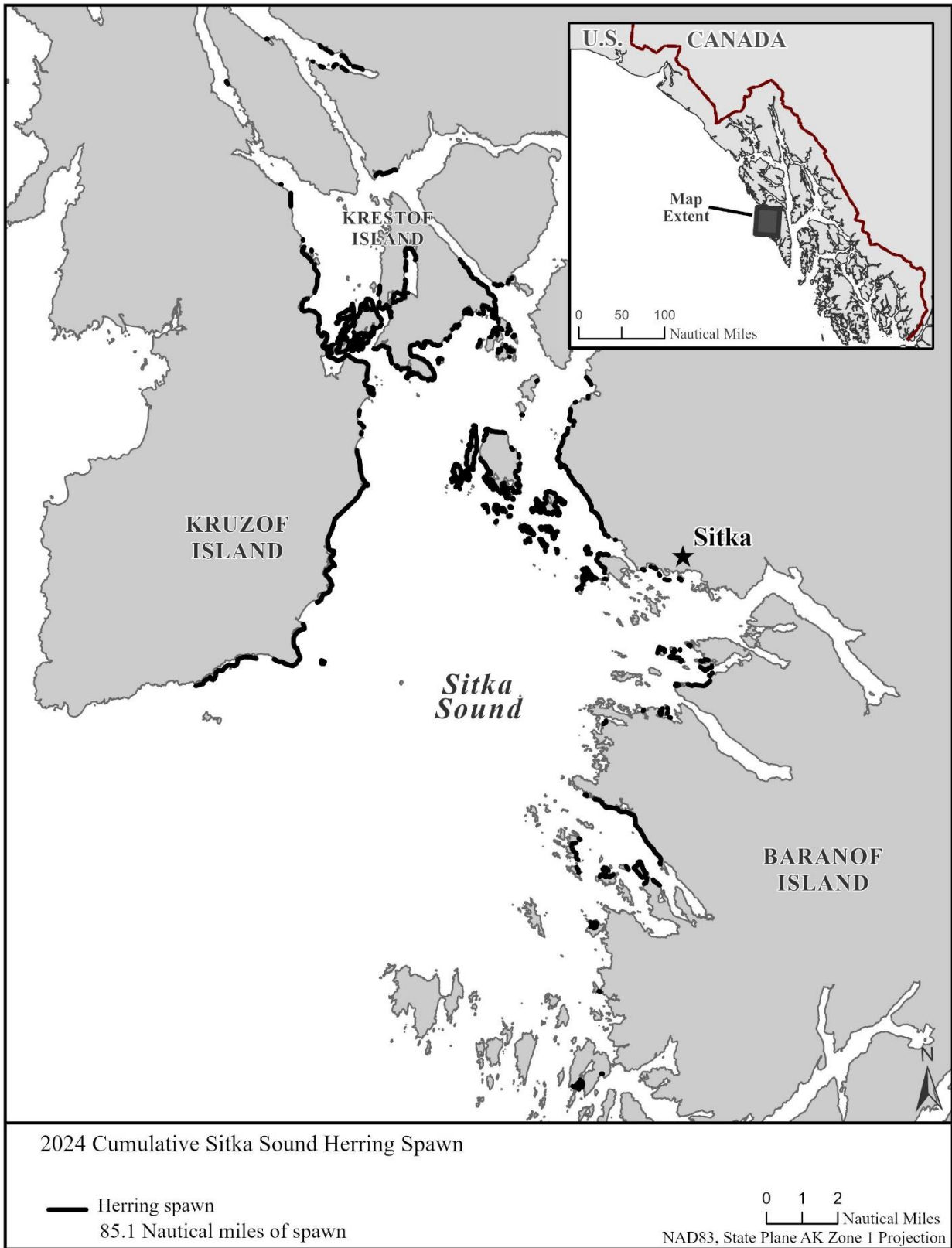


Figure 1. Cumulative Sitka Sound shoreline with observed herring spawn in 2024.