

Sponsors: Bean/Wein

Discussion/Direction

Sac Roe Moratorium



City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street • Sitka, Alaska 99835

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Hunter and Assembly Members
Keith Brady, Municipal Administrator

From: Aaron Bean and Dr. Wein

Date: April 19, 2018

Subject: Sac Roe fishing moratorium

Pacific herring continue to be the only forage fish commercially harvested in the State of Alaska and- are not listed on the Forage Fish Management Plan 5 AAC 39.212 (FFMP) As I mentioned, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) manages herring stocks under single species maximum sustained yield model. It is my opinion, These management strategies use arbitrary biomass and threshold calculations which coincide with excessive harvest rates that ultimately put stocks at risk of over exploitation.

The name of the model the state uses to calculate the herring biomass is called the Age Structured Analysis model (ASA). As evidenced by this seasons subsistence and commercial harvest, the ASA model has failed, and as a result the resource is suffering. For this reason, the assembly should consider placing a moratorium on the commercial sac roe fishing until the state adds herring to the forage fish management plan, and abandons the ASA model and adopts a ecosystem based management tool, which does not include a maximum sustained yield principle.

If you can find time, copy and paste the following link into your browser:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/RIR.1J.2015.02.pdf>

You'll note on page 17 that Lynn Canal, Seymour Canal, Hobart Bay, West Behm Canal and Revilla Channel have all been shut down because they aren't meeting threshold requirements for commercial fishing. These sac roe fisheries have been closed for decades- they closed Lynn Canal in 1981- and the stock has rebounded less than 10%. Out of the seven seining sac roe fisheries, Sitka is the last one that still meets threshold requirements (20 tons) for commercial fishing.

This tells me that herring are a fragile species, which depend on huge numbers to survive. Herring are not only an ecological keystone prey species for finfish populations (salmon, halibut, etc.), marine mammals, and marine and terrestrial birds but they are also a cultural keystone species that has been and continues to be used as a subsistence food source. In fact the state takes annual surveys and the best harvest ever recorded was 209,000 pounds. In contrast the 2012 commercial quota for Sitka Sounds herring was 56,000,000 pounds. The state continues to fall short of their quotas because the herring aren't there to catch. .

I haven't talked to any subsistence harvesters who had any success this year, and I have not heard back from Sitka Tribe about how much they were able to harvest, but by the looks of the aerial survey data things aren't good. .

As I have already mentioned Sitka is the one remaining commercial herring seining fishery in Southeast Alaska -out of 7- and if things go unchanged Sitka will join the ranks of the rest of the 'closed' fisheries. Because ADF&G has failed to accurately forecast the spawning biomass of herring in the Sitka Sound area the subsistence fishery has suffered greatly for years now, and things are only getting worse. ADF&G's current forecasting model is not working. Please support this conditional moratorium.