



Advisory Announcement

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2022 Togiak Herring Season Summary

The following is a summary of the 2022 Togiak herring fishery in the Togiak District, Bristol Bay. Herring are commercially harvested for sac roe using gillnet and purse seine gear when they migrate into the district to spawn, typically during the months of April and May. In July, a food and bait fishery also occurs near Dutch Harbor; this fishery is primarily composed of the Togiak herring stock, and the allocation is based on the forecasted biomass of Togiak herring. The Dutch Harbor fishery is summarized separately. All data included in this summary are preliminary.

STOCK ASSESSMENT

Biomass Estimation

Department staff conducted the first Togiak District aerial survey of the season on April 23, 2022. No fish were observed during this survey, however a local pilot reported observing herring on the evening of April 25. Schools of herring were first observed by department staff on April 26. Survey conditions were excellent for the April 26 and 27 surveys but were poor for all subsequent surveys.

COMMERCIAL FISHERY

Togiak District herring fisheries are managed in accordance with the *Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan* (5 AAC 27.865), which specifies a maximum allowable exploitation rate of 20% and allocates the harvestable surplus among all the fisheries harvesting Togiak herring stocks. The 2022 preseason biomass forecast was 357,536 tons with an exploitation rate of 20% (71,507 tons). The projected harvest guideline for each fishery was as follows: 1,500 tons of herring equivalent (350,000 lbs. of product) for the spawn-on-kelp fishery, 4,900 tons for the Dutch Harbor food and bait fishery, and the remaining 65,107 tons allocated to the sac roe fishery. The management plan further specifies that the department will manage the sac roe fishery so that 80% of the harvest is taken by purse seine (52,086 tons in 2022) and 20% of the harvest is taken by gillnet (13,021 tons in 2022).

The *Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan* and other regulations direct the department to conduct an orderly, manageable fishery and strive for the highest level of product value while minimizing waste. For at least the past decade, the seine fleet has been comprised of processor-organized cooperatives. During the 2022 season, management staff allowed long-duration purse seine openings across a large area of the district and let processors limit harvest for their individual fleets based on processing capacity.

Department staff took a poll of processing companies prior to the 2022 season to assess processing capacity and to inquire about additional concerns or issues. The poll indicated two companies intended to participate in the 2022 Togiak herring fishery. One company indicated they might buy both gillnet and purse seine fish. A second company intended to only buy purse seine fish. With less than three processors participating in the fishery harvest information will be confidential.

Purse Seine

The Togiak purse seine fishery opened until further notice at 8:00 a.m. on April 27, with harvest beginning that evening. Eight purse seine vessels participated in the Togiak herring fishery in 2022. All harvest for the fishery is confidential due to less than three processors participating in the fishery. Weather was good for most of the season and did not appear to prevent fishing for any significant amount of time. The fishery continued until fishermen ended participation on May 15 with the fishery officially closing on May 16 at 10:00 a.m.

Gillnet

Although plans were in place for gillnet participation during the 2022 Togiak herring fishery, the effort never materialized, and the gillnet fishery never opened.

EXVESSEL VALUE / EXPLOITATION

Preliminary indications are that price will be between \$100 and \$150 per ton. Specific harvest numbers are confidential but the total harvest was less than 25% of the 52,086 ton purse seine guideline harvest level.

AGE COMPOSITION

The scale samples the department collected for aging have not been processed at this time. Despite the very limited harvest and sampling effort, preliminary data suggests the department will be able to characterize the age composition of the spawning biomass in 2022.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The department would like to thank Silver Bay Seafoods and OBI Seafoods for providing herring samples from their 2022 commercial harvest. The biological data collected in our herring sampling program as well as our aerial survey estimates are the basis for the sustainable management of this stock.