

PROPOSAL 45

5 AAC 27.865. Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan.

Allow unharvested Togiak District sac roe gillnet allocation to be reallocated to the Dutch Harbor food and bait herring fishery, as follows:

Amend the Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan and Bering Sea Fishery Management Plan to transfer historically unharvested herring from the Togiak District Sac Roe gillnet allocation to the Dutch Harbor Food and Bait allocation in a multi-year tiered transition. Establish a growth limit for this transition by placing a cap on the total Dutch Harbor allocation. The regulation could read as follows:

“In years when the Togiak Sac Roe gillnet fleet harvests 50% or less of their allocation, 10% of the unharvested herring initially allocated to the Togiak gillnet fleet will be transferred in equivalent to the Dutch Harbor Food and Bait fishery, effective during the Dutch Harbor herring season in the same year. This annual transfer provision will continue until the total Dutch Harbor allocation reaches 12%.”

Example Calculation: In 2017, the unharvested Togiak gillnet allocation equaled 5,455 tons of stranded herring. 10% of this is 545.5 tons, or 2.2% of the total available to Togiak and Dutch Harbor fleets combined, after the spawn-on-kelp is deducted. Under the transition provision described, the Dutch Harbor Food and Bait fishery allocation for 2017 would be changed from 7% to 9.2% of the remaining allowable harvest. The 2018 allocation for Dutch Harbor would then start at 9.2%. Should the board choose to address it, the Togiak Sac Roe sector split could shift to reflect a maintained Togiak Sac Roe seine allocation, and a reduced Togiak Sac Roe gillnet allocation.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Lack of effort within the Togiak gillnet fleet has consistently stranded fish that could otherwise be harvested for the benefit of fishery, community and state economies. While the exploitation rate for the Togiak herring resource is set at 20% of the biomass, the 20-year average actual harvest including all sectors has been 17.5%. This equates to an average of 2.5%, or approximately 3,350 tons, of stranded fish in the water every year for the past two decades. The Togiak gillnet fleet specifically harvested at an average rate of 29% below GHF between 2006 and 2015. That is an average of 2,180 tons below GHF. The fleet harvested 80 tons of 8,635 in 2016. In 2017 they harvested 1,428 of 6,883, leaving 5,455 tons of stranded fish.

The Dutch Harbor food and bait fishery, however, is a fully utilized sector of this fishery, providing a high economic value to the region and an important bait resource to local fishermen using pot and longline gear in Western Alaska. A redistribution of historically unharvested herring to an Alaskan fleet prepared to capture its value and maximize it through other Alaskan fleets meets the needs of the Sustained Yield principle established by Section 8 of the Alaska Constitution. A graduated transition plan using a percentage-based adjustment over multiple years allows for a careful transition of a portion of unharvested quota, while respecting the fluctuation of run sizes and the ongoing participation of active user groups.

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