

PROPOSAL 166

5 AAC 27.1XX. New Section.

Create an open pound herring spawn on kelp fishery in Sitka Sound, as follows:

An experimental open pound herring spawn on kelp fishery was conducted in Sitka Sound in 1998 and 1999. This project identified open pounds as a viable alternative to the sac roe fishery and produced published studies, data, and video which demonstrate the positive results of this alternative harvest method. The time is overdue to make a positive change in the Sitka herring fishery. Allowing existing G01A permit holders the option of using open pound roe on kelp instead of seining for sac roe would increase the value of the fishery and promote conservation of the resource. Fishermen and Permit Holders, Processors, Subsistence users, and the community of Sitka would all see an increase in benefit from the Sitka herring resource by allowing existing permit holders a choice between sac roe seining and utilizing open pound roe on kelp.

Please allow existing G01A permit holders the alternative harvest method of open pound roe on kelp contingent on later action by CFEC.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Fisheries for forage species such as herring are seeing increased scrutiny and market conditions for traditional sac roe product have never been worse. It is more important than ever to make changes to the fishery which promote conservation and increase the value of the extracted resource. In short, allowing open pound spawn on kelp as an alternative harvest method would increase the value of the Sitka Sound herring fishery while removing less fish from the biomass which are two things fishery managers should strive for.

The Board of Fisheries (BOF) has written two letters to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) asking the CFEC to take the Sitka Area (GO1A) limited entry administrative area out of the Northern Pound (L21A) limited entry administrative area. CFEC has taken no action on either request. This inaction has stopped the BOF from deliberating and deciding on this proposal which would allow those with GO1A permits the alternative of using open pounds to harvest their Sitka Sound herring stock. The Board needs to let CFEC know if they favor this proposal so CFEC would be compelled to make the necessary complementary regulatory changes. Without the Board demonstrating support for this proposal CFEC will not act.

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