

PROPOSAL 176

5 AAC 27.160. Quotas and guidelines harvest levels for Southeastern Alaska Area.

Reduce the maximum harvest rate from 20 percent to 10 percent for the Sitka Sound herring sac roe fishery.

We recommend a harvest rate cap of 10%.

(g) The guideline harvest level for the herring sac roe fishery in Sections 13-A and 13-B shall be established by the department and will be a harvest rate percentage that is [NOT LESS THAN 12 PERCENT,] not more than **10** [20] percent., AND WITHIN THAT RANGE SHALL BE DETERMINED BY THE FOLLOWING FORMULA:

$$\text{HARVEST RATE PERCENTAGE} = 2 + 8 [\text{SPAWNING BIOMASS (IN TONS)}] / 20,000]$$

The fishery will not be conducted if the spawning biomass is less than 25,000 tons

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Herring are a forage fish and keystone species. Alaskan fisheries and tourism businesses rely directly on animals that feed heavily on herring. Pacific herring are critical for the north Pacific ecosystem. For example, gray whales recently experienced an Unusual Mortality Event linked to malnutrition and have been coming to Sitka Sound in increasing numbers in recent years, likely preying heavily on Sitka herring. Marine heat waves have seen disruptions in energy transfer from forage fishes in the Gulf of Alaska to upper trophic levels (von Biela et al. 2019; Arimitsu et al. 2021). Robust forage fish populations are critical to withstand climate change impacts and other ecosystem perturbations. Reducing the maximum allowable harvest rate on herring will help ensure forage fish populations are able to support ecosystem needs.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.

PROPOSED BY: Sitka Tribe of Alaska

(HQ-F24-040)
