

PROPOSAL 178

5 AAC 27.150. Waters closed to herring fishing in Southeastern Alaska Area.

Expand waters closed to commercial sac roe herring fishery to include the majority of waters herring having historically spawned in and the fishery has historically occurred.

To accomplish this, we recommend that section 27.150 be revised as follows:

27.150: Herring may not be taken in (7) District 13 (A), in the waters enclosed by a line extending from a point on the Baranof Island shore at the O'Connell Bridge at 57° 02.87' N. lat., 135° 20.33' W. long., to the northernmost point of Aleutski Island at 57° 02.74' N. lat., 135° 20.46' W. long., to the westernmost point of Makhnati Island at 57° 02.40' N. lat., 135° 23.48' W. long., to Bieli Rocks at 57° 05.42' N. lat., 135° 29.98' W. long., to the northwestern point of Crow Island at 57° 06.96' N. lat., 135° 28.57' W. long., to the westernmost point of Big Gavanski Island at 57° 08.11' N. lat., 135° 26.13' W. long., to the northernmost point of Big Gavanski Island at 57° 08.49' N. lat., 135° 25.21' W. long., to the Baranof Island shore at Harbor Point at 57° 07.59' N. lat., 135° 23.37' W. long. (B) **In the months of February, March, and April, North of the latitude of Goddard Hot Springs, Sitka Sound is designated a herring reserve area for spawning herring.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Under the authority of 16.05.251(a)(1), Sitka Sound should be considered a herring reserve area during the months of herring pre-spawning aggregation and spawning.

Sitka Sound is home to the largest spawning population of Pacific herring in Southeast Alaska and is a critical site for the subsistence harvest of herringroe on hemlock branches and kelp. Herring are also valuable to the Southeast Alaska marine ecosystem as a food source for salmon, halibut, whales, sea lions, birds, and other species; these dependent species are also economically important through direct exploitation or ecosystem benefits including eco-tourism. Successful herring spawning in Sitka is necessary to maintain the health of all fisheries in Sitka Sound and Southeast Alaska more broadly; successful and undisturbed herring spawning in Sitka is necessary to ensure a consistent (i.e. met every year) reasonable opportunity for subsistence of herring roe. Commercial herring fisheries that target aggregating pre-spawn and spawning herring exploit the population at their time of greatest population-scale vulnerability and may have broad-reaching and as of yet unquantified negative impacts on the Southeast Alaska marine ecosystem. Locally, commercial herring fisheries that coincide with herring spawning disrupt spawning patterns and interfere with traditional corridors affecting subsistence harvest. . Declaring Sitka Sound a herring reserve area during the months of herring aggregation and spawn will ensure successful undisturbed spawning to maintain healthy fisheries across the region and ensure reasonable opportunity for subsistence harvest.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. We developed the proposal in consultation with a small group of subsistence herring egg harvesters and community elders and were informed by prior conversations with many others.

This proposal was informed by the establishment of the Herring Revitalization Committee.

PROPOSED BY: Herring Protectors

(EF-F24-171)
