

Sitka Sound Subsistence Herring Egg Harvest In-Season Monitoring and Post Season Surveys

In 2019 STA filed a lawsuit against the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) over impacts to the subsistence harvest of herring eggs caused by its management of the Sitka Sound sac roe fishery. STA prevailed on the first two segments of its lawsuit with the court ruling that ADF&G failed to document its implementation of 5 AAC 27.195, which requires managers to (a) distribute the commercial fishery over space and time to allow for a reasonable opportunity for subsistence needs to be met, and (b) consider the quantity and quality of the subsistence harvest when making those decisions.

To aid ADF&G in implementing the court's ruling STA plans to conduct in-season subsistence harvest monitoring (set location and the quantity and quality of the harvest). This information will be collected daily basis and passed over to the ADF&G managers for consideration in the management of the sac roe fishery in a manner that provides a reasonable opportunity for subsistence harvesters to meet their needs.

To encourage participation in the in-season monitoring program and the post-season surveys, STA will be offering cash incentives to subsistence herring egg harvesters. Harvesters who (1) enroll in the in-season monitoring program with STA prior to the start of the subsistence herring egg season, (2) participate in the in-season monitoring program, and (3) attempt to harvest herring eggs and complete the post-season survey will be entered into a drawing for a \$200, \$100, and \$50 cash prizes.

Enrolling in the In-Season Monitoring Program

Individuals intending to harvest subsistence herring eggs in 2021 are encouraged to enroll in the in-season monitoring program. Enrollment is a critical component of the in-season monitoring program and aids in identifying harvesters for the post-season survey.

To enroll in the program, harvesters can contact the In-Season Subsistence Harvest Manager Jeff Feldpausch at (907)747-7469 or email jeff.feldpausch@sitkatriben-sns.gov and provide your contact information (name, phone number and email address). This personal information is confidential and will not be shared.

In-Season Reporting

In-season reporting is new to the management of the subsistence harvest but is key to ensuring a reasonable opportunity exists for subsistence harvesters to meet their needs. Harvesters have three options for reporting on their in-season harvest data: (1) Contact the In-Season Manager at (907)747-7469 (leave a voice message if contact is not made) or (907)738-9990 (leave a voice message or text if contact is not made) or (3) fill out and submit the harvest report form located at inyurl.com/herringeggs.

STA requests that harvesters provide the location of their sets. The location of subsistence herring egg sets is an important piece of information for commercial fisheries managers to consider when managing the sac roe fishery. STA is recommending ADF&G manage the sac roe fishery away from actively fishing subsistence sets.

STA also requests that harvesters report the amount of the spawn deposited on their sets daily. This information can include the thickness of the eggs on the sets and/or the estimated number of days under current spawning conditions before the sets would be ready to harvest. ADF&G is required to consider the quantity and quality of the of the subsistence harvest when making management decisions for the commercial fishery. Quantity and quality data is normally collected in the post-season survey. Still, STA is hopeful that in-season collection of this data will provide ADF&G managers with information to manage the sac roe fishery in a manner that provides a reasonable opportunity for subsistence harvesters to meet their needs.

Timely reporting is critical to the success of the in-season monitoring program. Delays in reporting will lead to data gaps that could impact subsistence harvesters' opportunities to meet their needs.

Post Season Survey

Since 2003 the Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) has been working with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's (ADF&G) Division of Subsistence (DoS) to conduct a subsistence herring egg harvester survey. The survey collects quantitative and qualitative data to track harvesting and sharing trends, the volume and quality of the harvest, and determine if subsistence needs were met. Approximately 2 weeks after the end of spawning (mid to late April), STA staff will be conducting in-person interviews with harvesters.

Suggested links for updated fishery information and daily spawn maps.

ADF&G Releases, Notices, & News

This link (<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=newsreleases.main>) will take you to the ADF&G webpage for announcements and news releases. Once at the site follow the instructions below to subscribe to the announcements for the Sitka Sound sac roe fishery.

Select the “Commercial, Subsistence & Personal Use Fishing” icon. A new page will appear titled “Commercial Fishery Announcements”. Fill in out the search form as follows:

Management Area = Southeast/Yakutat

District = Southeast

Species = Herring

Gear = Seine

Fishery Type = All Activities

Effective Year = 2021

Then select the “Subscribe” button. You will now receive updates for the Sitka Sound sac roe fishery.

ADF&G Spawn Maps

This link will take you to the ADF&G interactive spawn map. The map is updated daily with the latest herring predator and spawn observations from aerial surveys.

(<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.herring#maps>)