



Advisory Announcement

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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY SUMMARY

This announcement is a summary of observations and activities of the 2026 Sitka Sound herring sac roe fishery. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) conducts aerial, vessel, and spawn deposition surveys to track herring activity and determine the extent and density of herring spawn for the Sitka Sound area. Numerous samples of herring were collected from active spawning areas and from commercial harvests for age, sex, and size composition analysis.

Aerial surveys were conducted by ADF&G from March 14 to April 17 and from April 24 to April 27. Herring spawn was first observed in Sitka Sound on March 30. The primary herring spawning event for 2026 began on April 2 when 14.0 nautical miles (nmi) of active herring spawn was observed throughout Sitka Sound. Spawning peaked on April 3 when 18.2 nmi of active herring spawn was documented. The last day of the primary spawn event was April 5; however, smaller areas of herring spawn were observed daily through April 10 and from April 24 to April 27. Surveys from skiffs were conducted from April 7 through April 9 to identify additional areas of herring spawn not observed during the aerial surveys. In total, ADF&G mapped 35.7 nmi of shoreline with herring spawn in 2026 (Figure 1) which is less than both the 10-year (2016–2025) average of 72.7 nmi and the 40-year (1985–2025) average of 63.1 nmi.

From April 11 to April 13, a spawn deposition survey was conducted to estimate the total number of eggs deposited in the Sitka Sound spawning area. ADF&G scientific divers surveyed 65 transects placed throughout the extent of the spawn observed through April 10. Preliminary results indicate that overall herring egg deposition was high with the mean egg density approximately double that seen in 2025. Egg deposition was particularly high between Shoals Point and Kamanoi Point on Kruzof Island, from Eliason Harbor to Halibut Point, southern Middle Island, Kasiana Island, and other nearby islands.

To estimate age composition for the Sitka Sound herring population, both spawning herring and commercially harvested fish were sampled. Spawning herring were sampled using cast nets throughout the spawning area and period, with a total of 26 samples collected. Herring sampled from commercial vessel sets were collected during fishery openings, with 13 samples collected. The herring samples will be analyzed in the coming months at the ADF&G Mark, Tag, and Age Laboratory and the final stock assessment results will be available with the 2027 forecast, late this year or early 2027.

Herring spawn was observed daily from March 30 to April 5 within the area closed to commercial fishing by regulation (commonly referred to as the “core subsistence area”). Of the 35.7 nmi of mapped herring spawn in Sitka Sound, approximately 14.4 nmi of herring spawn was mapped within this area (Figure 1). Herring spawn also occurred in several other areas known to be commonly used for subsistence fishing, including Hayward Strait, Magoun Islands, Promisla Bay, Eastern Bay, and Siginaka Islands. Harvest estimates from the 2026 subsistence fishery should be available near the end of 2026.

The 2026 commercial herring sac roe fishery harvest was approximately 6,400-tons of herring with an average mature roe percentage of 12.3%. This year’s harvest accounted for 18% of the 2026 guideline harvest level of 35,015 tons. The fishery was open for 13 days between March 27 and April 10. No harvest was reported after April 2. From March 27 to April 2 the average daily harvest was approximately 914 tons of herring. The fishery was closed for the season at 7:00 p.m. on April 10. Test sets (10 total) were conducted between March 20 and March 29.

The daily herring spawn locations and photographs from 2026 will continue to be made available through the interactive herring survey map on the ADF&G website. The "Southeast Alaska Herring Surveys" map allows users to view all the data collected for each herring aerial survey throughout the 2026 season. The interactive maps are located on the department website at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.herring#maps> or scan:



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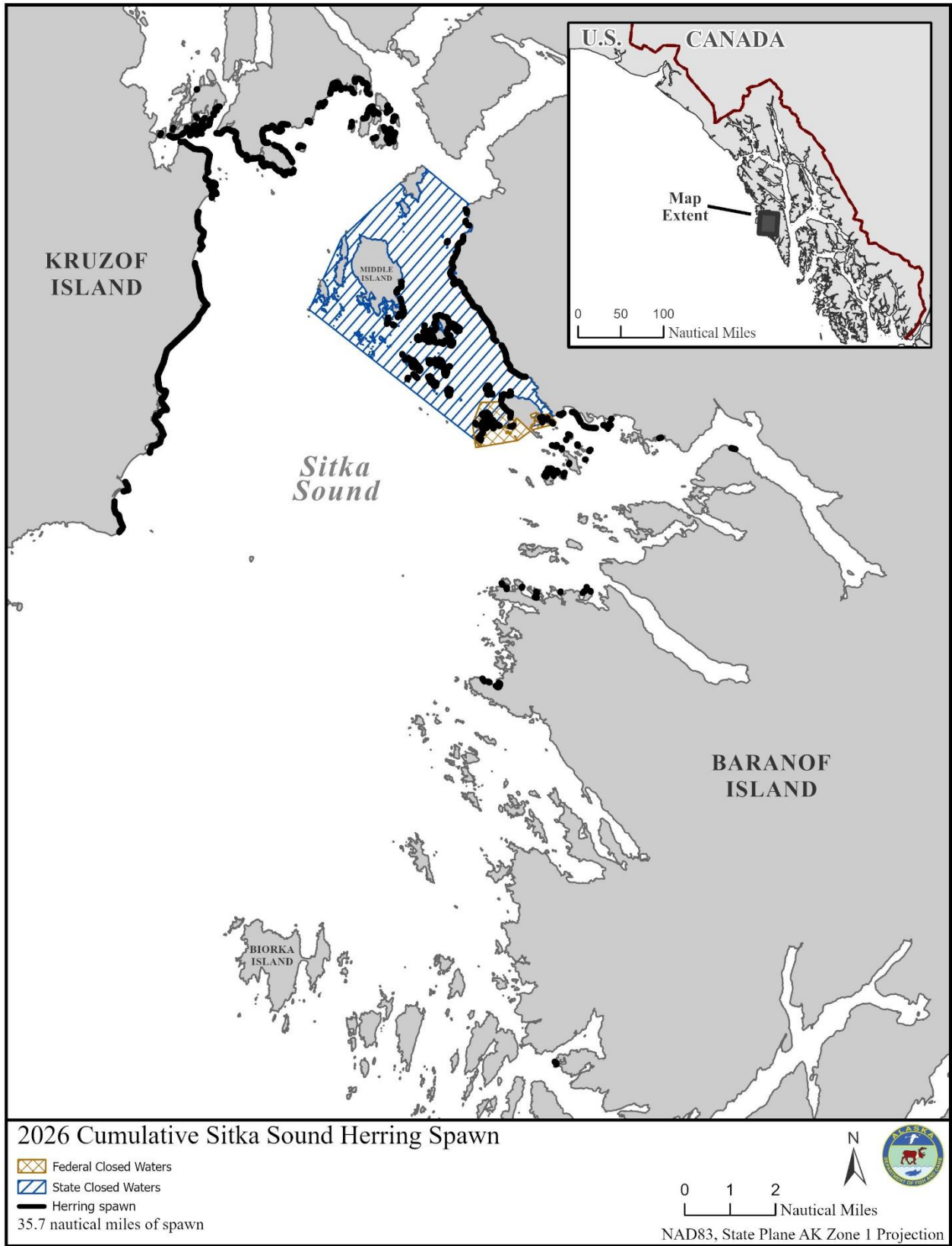


Figure 1. Cumulative Sitka Sound shoreline with observed herring spawn in 2026.