



Advisory Announcement

**CONTACT: Tim Sands,
Area Management Biologist
(907) 842-5227**

For Immediate Release: March 20, 2020

2020 TOGIAK HERRING OUTLOOK

The 2020 Togiak District herring biomass is forecast to be 215,826 tons (Figure 1). This forecast is based on an age-structured analysis (ASA) model that has been used for all Togiak herring forecasts produced since 1993. Herring ages 6 and 7 are expected to comprise 70% of the projected biomass, ages 8 and above are expected to make up 25% of the biomass, with the remainder being largely age 4 and 5 herring (Figure 2).

The commercial fishery and spawn timing of Togiak herring are related to several factors including water temperatures at the spawning grounds in the Togiak District and sea surface temperatures in the southeastern Bering Sea. The department uses a sea surface temperature model (SST) based on temperatures near Unalaska to predict the timing of the Togiak herring run. Additionally, the department tracks ice coverage of the Bering Sea throughout February and March to help inform predictions in run timing, as we consider this a useful index for predicting the maturity of herring bound for the Togiak District to spawn. Based on our SST and sea ice models, the 2020 fishery is projecting a first spawn and first harvest to occur in the first week of May.

The Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan (5 AAC 27.865) sets a maximum exploitation rate of 20% for the Togiak District stock. For the 2019 Togiak herring fishery, an exploitation rate of 14% was applied due to poor survey and sampling information from previous years. Aerial survey and catch sampling data obtained in 2019 were sufficient to make a confident biomass estimate, therefore, we will manage to a 20% exploitation rate in 2020. Harvest allocation, in accordance with the management plan will be:

Fishery	Harvest allocation
Spawn-on-kelp	1,500 tons
Dutch Harbor food and bait	2,917 tons
Togiak fishery	38,749 tons
	Purse seine (80%)
	30,999 tons
	Gillnet (20%)
	7,750 tons

Participants are reminded that the Alaska Board of Fisheries met in December 2018 and changed the allocation plan for the Togiak herring fishery. The allocation of the Togiak quota was previously 70% to the purse seine fishery and 30% to the gillnet fishery. The changes, reflected above, now allocate 80% to purse seine and 20% to gillnet. Additionally, participants are reminded that up to 50% of any unharvested gillnet quota may also be reallocated in season to the purse seine fishery. Given the size of the 2020 guideline harvest limit (GHL) and expected effort level for the 2020 fishery, it is likely less than half of the GHL will be taken and unlikely that inseason reallocation of quota will be needed.

TOGIAK FISHERY

The management strategy for the Togiak herring fishery is designed to provide maximum harvest opportunity. In 2020, purse seine and gillnet fisheries will be managed to maximize product quality through long openings, which should allow permit holders to make smaller sets and harvest the highest quality fish. Long openings also allow processors to have flexible control of harvest volume so that holding time between harvest and processing is minimized. A preseason poll indicates that two processors will participate in the 2020 Togiak herring fishery with a total fleet size of three gillnet and seven purse seine vessels. For the last decade, the department has opened the herring fishery as soon as the threshold biomass of 35,000 tons has been documented and we again will use this strategy in 2020. This strategy allows individual companies to maximize their processing capacity and decide what quality fish is suitable for their individual market.

Purse Seine

For at least the last decade, the purse seine fishery has operated as individual processor-controlled fleets. We anticipate that this will be the case in 2020, and therefore, fishing time and area(s) will be maximized allowing for the harvest of market quality herring. This approach should result in fresher, higher quality roe, thereby maximizing product quality and value. The department will not be coordinating any test fishing efforts in 2020. However, the department will work with processors that want to make test sets to monitor roe quality prior to the threshold biomass being documented.

Gillnet

Management of the gillnet fishery will be similar to previous years. Ample fishing time and area will be allowed in an effort to take as much gillnet herring as possible. In 2020, the department will primarily focus the gillnet fleet in the area east of Right Hand Point. The department will consider opening areas west of Right Hand Point to the gillnet fleet if weather conditions are unfavorable in the eastern section. As in past years, the plan is to open the gillnet area to fishing when threshold biomass is documented. Processors and fishermen may organize test fishing to monitor product quality once the area is open to determine when to begin fishing for production. Until it is determined that commercial quality fish are present, participants should test cautiously with a small portion of gear to reduce waste.

ADF&G OPERATIONS 2020

Beginning in mid-April, fishery information will be available by calling the recorded message in Dillingham at (907) 842-5226. Recordings will be updated regularly throughout the season as information becomes available. The department will conduct aerial surveys of the Togiak District beginning in mid-April, depending on weather conditions. The department will monitor marine VHF channel 7 from Dillingham and is available by calling (907) 842-5227. Fishing announcements and regular fishery updates will be communicated directly to each processor, published on the department website, and distributed by fax and email. Harvest will be sampled from Naknek shore-based processing plants. The department will coordinate directly with plant managers as the season progresses to meet our sampling needs.

Visit <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main> to subscribe to herring updates and announcements. Harvest and fishery opening information will also be available at the Division of Commercial Fisheries website at:

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.herring_announcements

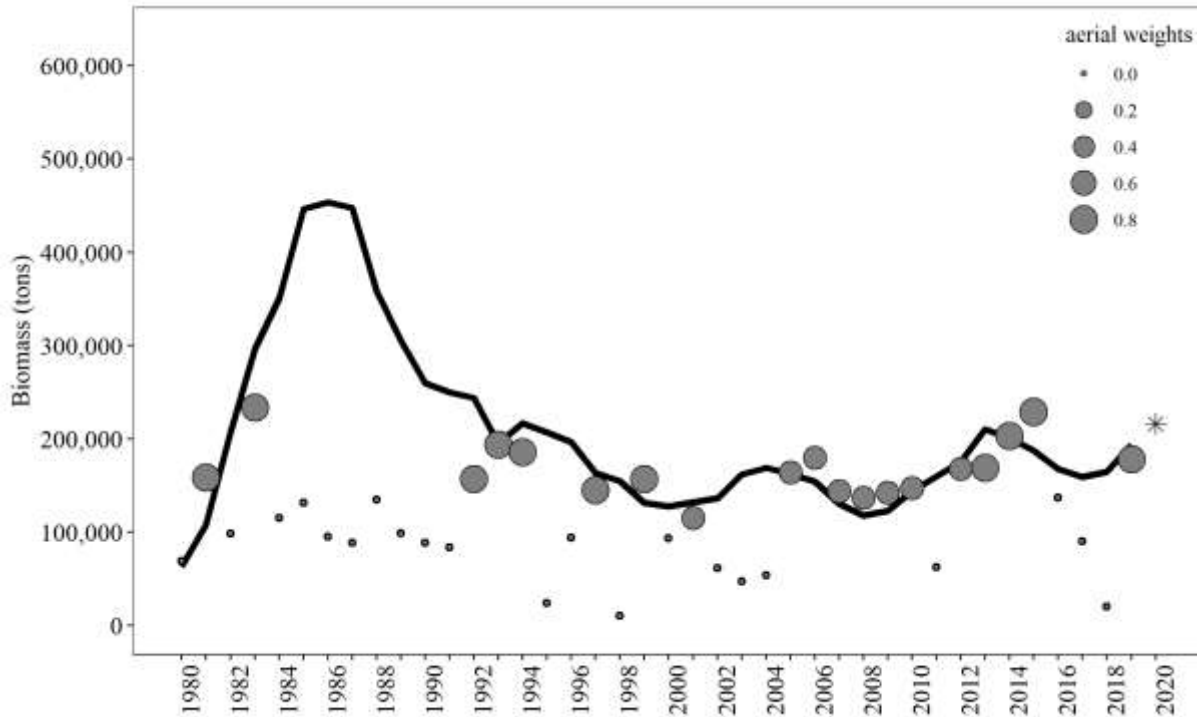


Figure 1.—Model-estimated mature biomass (black line). Annual abundance estimates with confidence weighting (black dots) ranging from 0 (very low confidence) to 1 (full confidence). The estimated mature biomass forecast for 2020 is indicated by a black star.

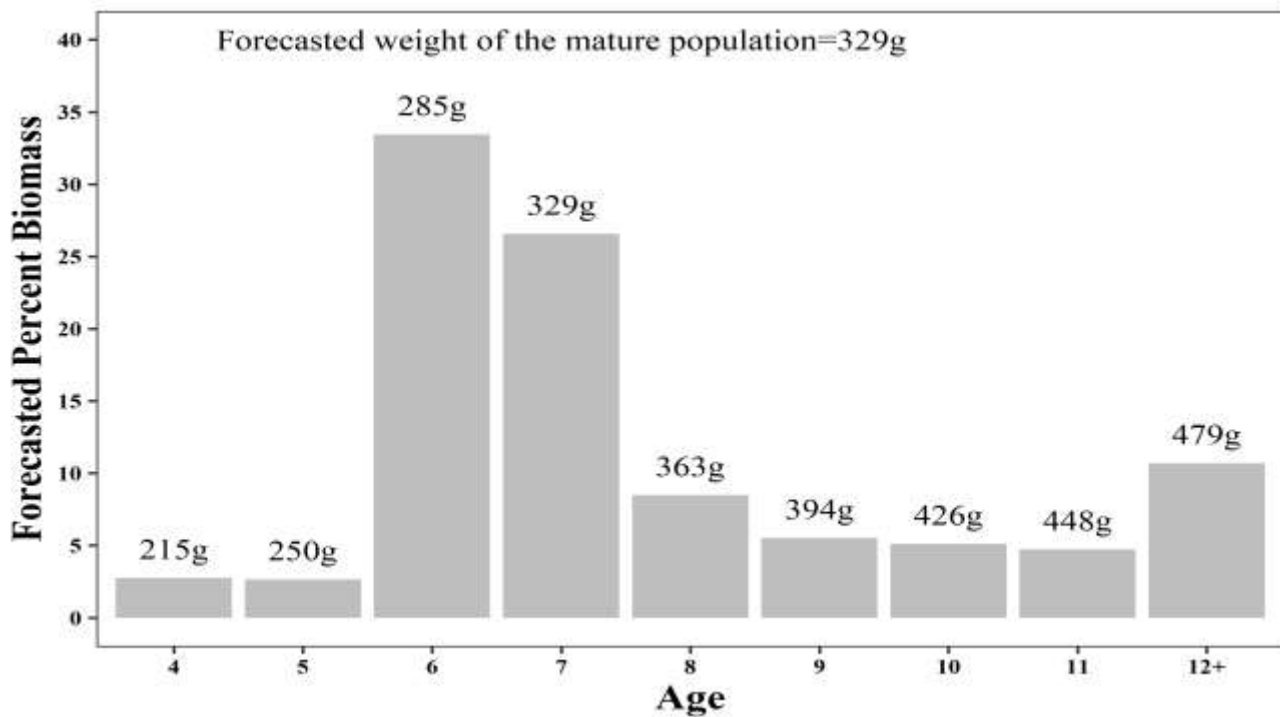


Figure 2.—Forecasted percent mature biomass by age with average weight (grams) for each age class. The average weight across all age classes of the forecasted 2020 mature biomass is estimated to be 329g.