



Advisory Announcement
For Immediate Release: May 26, 2022

CONTACT: Jenni Morella
Finfish Area Research Biologist
(907) 424-3212

Prince William Sound Herring Announcement #1

The 2022 preliminary Prince William Sound aerial spawn estimate is 32.7 statute mile-days-of-milt. This is the highest level of spawn recorded since 2014 and 56.5 % above the 10-year average (2012-2021) of 20.9 mile-days-of-milt, however mile-days-of-milt this year was still well below historic levels occurring in the 1980's and 1990's (Figure 1). The first aerial survey was flown on March 21 and the first observed spawn occurred on April 2, two days earlier than the 10-year average date of first spawn. Surveys continued through April 28 and the last spawn was observed on April 27, one day later than the 10-year average date of last spawn. The department was unable to fly surveys due to inclement weather from April 4 - 6 during a portion of the spawning activity at Hell's Hole.

The 2022 preliminary Kayak Island area aerial spawn estimate is 41.1 statute mile-days-of-milt. Historically, Kayak Island has not had regular aerial survey coverage or sampling, and therefore was not included in the development of the minimum spawning biomass threshold for consideration of a commercial fishery. Additionally, Kayak Island herring stocks historically have not been commercially fished.

Age, sex, length (ASL) sampling of 2022 spring herring was conducted in seven locations: Red Head, Cedar Bay, Rocky Bay, Port Chalmers, Port Etches, Boswell Bay and Kayak Island. The age structure of the 2022 spawning herring biomass is dominated by 6-year-old fish and age compositions will be available in fall of 2022 when sample processing is complete. A preliminary 2022 spawning biomass estimate will be calculated by University of Washington (UW), School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, once a subsample of the ASL samples are processed this summer. UW will update the biomass estimate after all ASL samples are processed, likely fall/winter of this year. For historical context, age structure and biomass through 2021 are shown below in figures 2 and 3, respectively.

ADF&G would like to acknowledge and thank community members who aided in the collection of 2022 ASL samples, the University of Washington for the development and operation of the research model, and the funding provided by Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council.

Additional updates on the status of the PWS herring population including any potential management actions and the 2022 spawning biomass and age structure will be announced when new information becomes available.

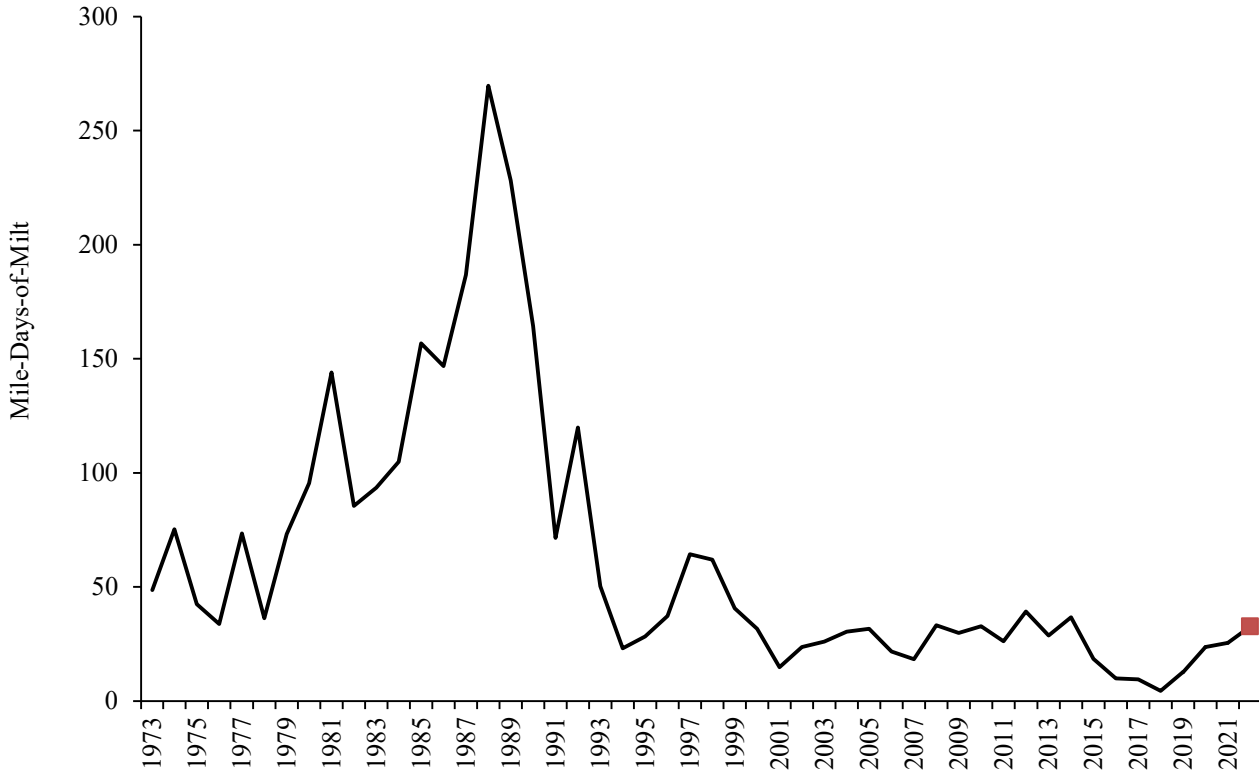


Figure 1. Prince William Sound statute mile-days-of-milt 1973–2022.

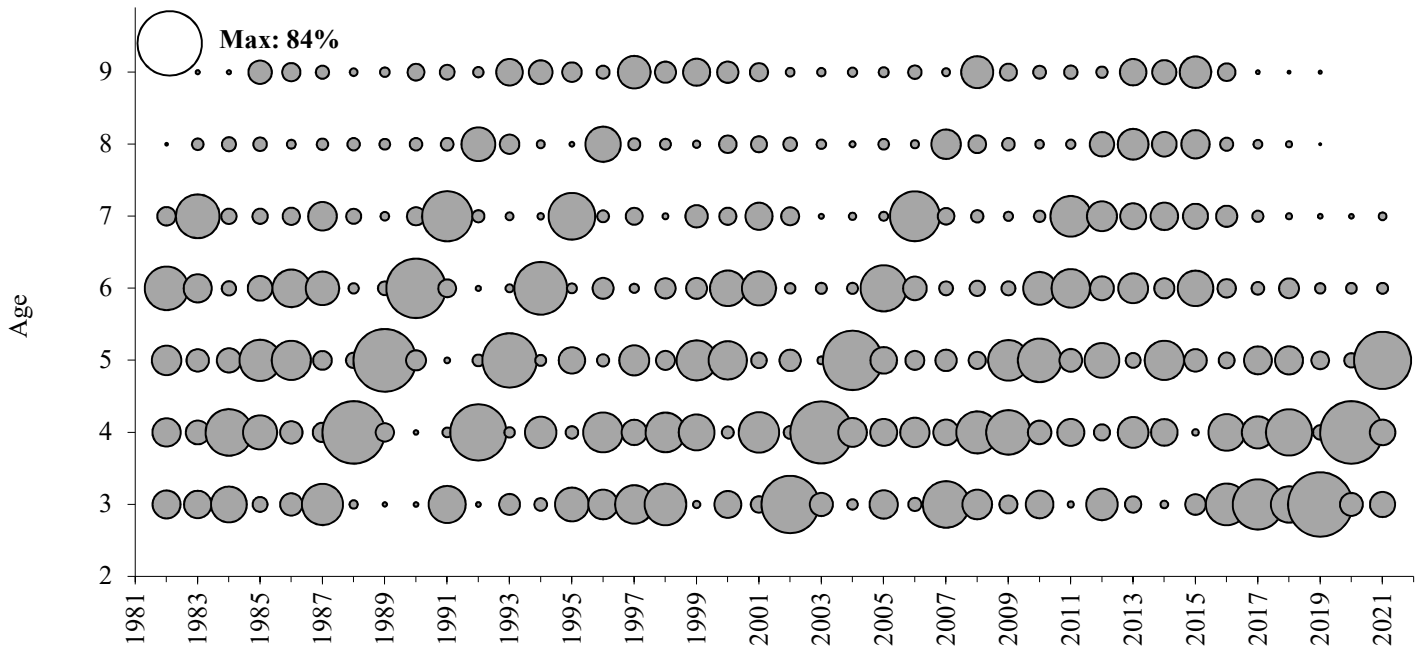


Figure 2. Prince William Sound age structure of spring herring biomass, 1980–2021. Bubble size is proportionate to size of age class.

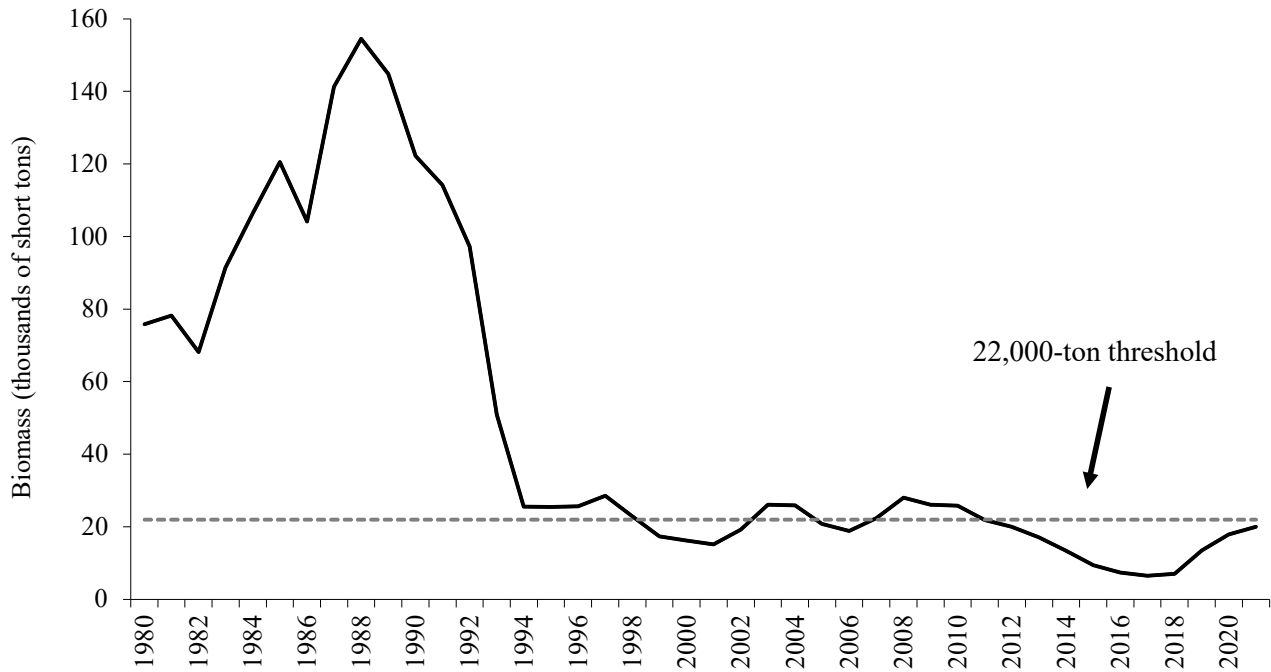


Figure 3. Prince William Sound Bayesian age structured spawning biomass, 1980–2021. The horizontal dashed line represents the minimum spawning biomass threshold of 22,000 tons for consideration of a commercial fishery (5 AAC 27.365).