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SITKA SOUND HERRING FISHERY UPDATE # 3

Today’s aerial survey covered Sitka Sound from Cape Burunof to Krestof Sound and St. Lazaria Island. No herring schools or spawn were observed today. Herring predators were seen throughout the surveyed area; however, predator activity was focused along the Kruzof Island shoreline from Shoals Point to St. Lazaria Island. The largest concentrations of humpback whales were located near St. Lazaria Island. Sea lions were concentrated on points and rock piles between Sitka Point and the Magoun Islands. In general, predator locations shifted significantly westward along the Kruzof Island shoreline relative to the previous aerial survey.

Department and industry vessels surveyed along the Kruzof Island shoreline from Sitka Point to Krestof Sound. Scattered smaller schools of herring were observed between Hayward Strait and Shoals Point and very large schools of herring were seen between Shoals Point and Sitka Point.

Two test sets were attempted today in the vicinity of Shoals Point but were unsuccessful. Herring mortality associated with test sets is likely minimal and there is no evidence that the small number of fish taken has any measurable impact on the subsistence fishery. Nevertheless, to ensure reasonable opportunity for subsistence harvest of herring roe would not be negatively impacted by test setting, prior to authorizing test fishing in this area the department considered the following: 1) the area near Shoals Point is outside the commercial closed waters and core subsistence areas; and 2) the fish encountered during test fishing represented a small fraction of the overall biomass in these areas.

The next aerial survey and fishery update are scheduled for Thursday, March 21.

All aerial herring survey data can be reviewed online, including spawn lines and photos, in an interactive map application found at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.herring#maps> or scan:



Advisory Announcement web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

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