



Advisory Announcement

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Prince William Sound Herring Announcement #3

The Prince William Sound herring food and bait fishery will open in November with a Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) of 500 tons. Permit holders who want to participate in the food and bait fishery must register with the Cordova ADFG office by 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 6.

The PWS herring food and bait fishery will open with a GHL of 500 tons in November. The Prince William Sound 2024 spawning biomass estimate of 35,485 short tons (Figure 1) is above the minimum spawning biomass threshold of 22,000 tons in the PWS herring management plan. When the biomass is between 22,000 tons and 42,500 tons the department may establish an exploitation rate from zero to twenty percent. The University of Washington, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences calculated a preliminary estimate of 35,485 short tons for the 2024 PWS spawning biomass. The weighted age composition for the 2024 PWS spawning biomass is 10% age-3, 37% age-4, 31% age-5, 6% age-6, 5% age-7, 10% age-8, and <1% age-9+ (Figures 2 and 3). This is the 4th year that the biomass has been above the threshold. The multiple years of above-threshold biomass estimates and signs of improving recruitment, with recruit-age fish proportions likely to offset older age class mortality, support opening this small-scale fishery. With the spring 2024 herring spawning biomass above the 22,000-ton minimum threshold, a GHL has been established to allocate harvest to the food and bait, spring sac roe, and spawn-on-kelp fisheries. The Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan describes the management year for herring as July 1 through June 30. The preliminary GHLs are established before the food and bait season in the fall and are based on the final spawning biomass estimates from the previous spring, cohort analysis, and projected recruitment. A preliminary GHL was established using a conservative exploitation rate of 10% for the stock. This is the first time the food and bait fishery has been open since 1998.

The final guideline harvest level of herring for this management year is 3,549 tons and is allocated as follows:

Gear Type	Percent Allocated	Tons of Herring
Purse seine sac roe fishery:	58%	2,062
Gillnet sac roe fishery:	3%	121
Food and bait fishery:	16%	578
Spawn-on-kelp not in pounds:	8%	284
Spawn-on-kelp in pounds:	14%	504

As a reminder, vessels used to take herring in any other management area between July 1 and February 28 may not be used to take herring in Management Area E during that period.

Processors must register with the Cordova ADF&G office if they plan to buy food and bait herring.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game would like to acknowledge and thank community members who aided in the collection of 2024 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 to conduct this assessment.

The next scheduled announcement will be 12:00 pm, Friday, November 8.

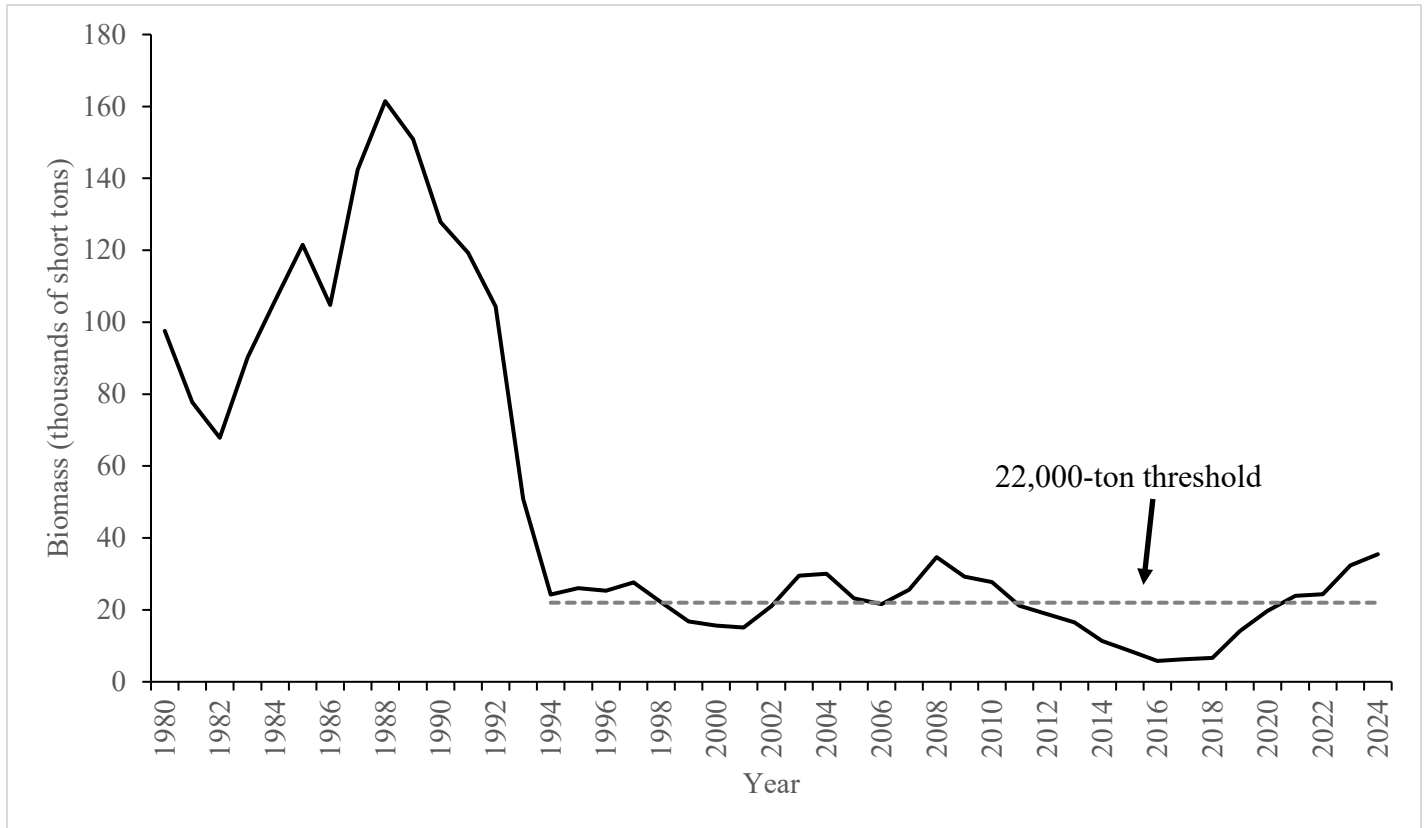


Figure 1. Prince William Sound Bayesian age structured spawning biomass, 1980–2024. The horizontal dashed line represents the minimum spawning biomass threshold of 22,000 tons for consideration of a commercial fishery (5 AAC 27.365).

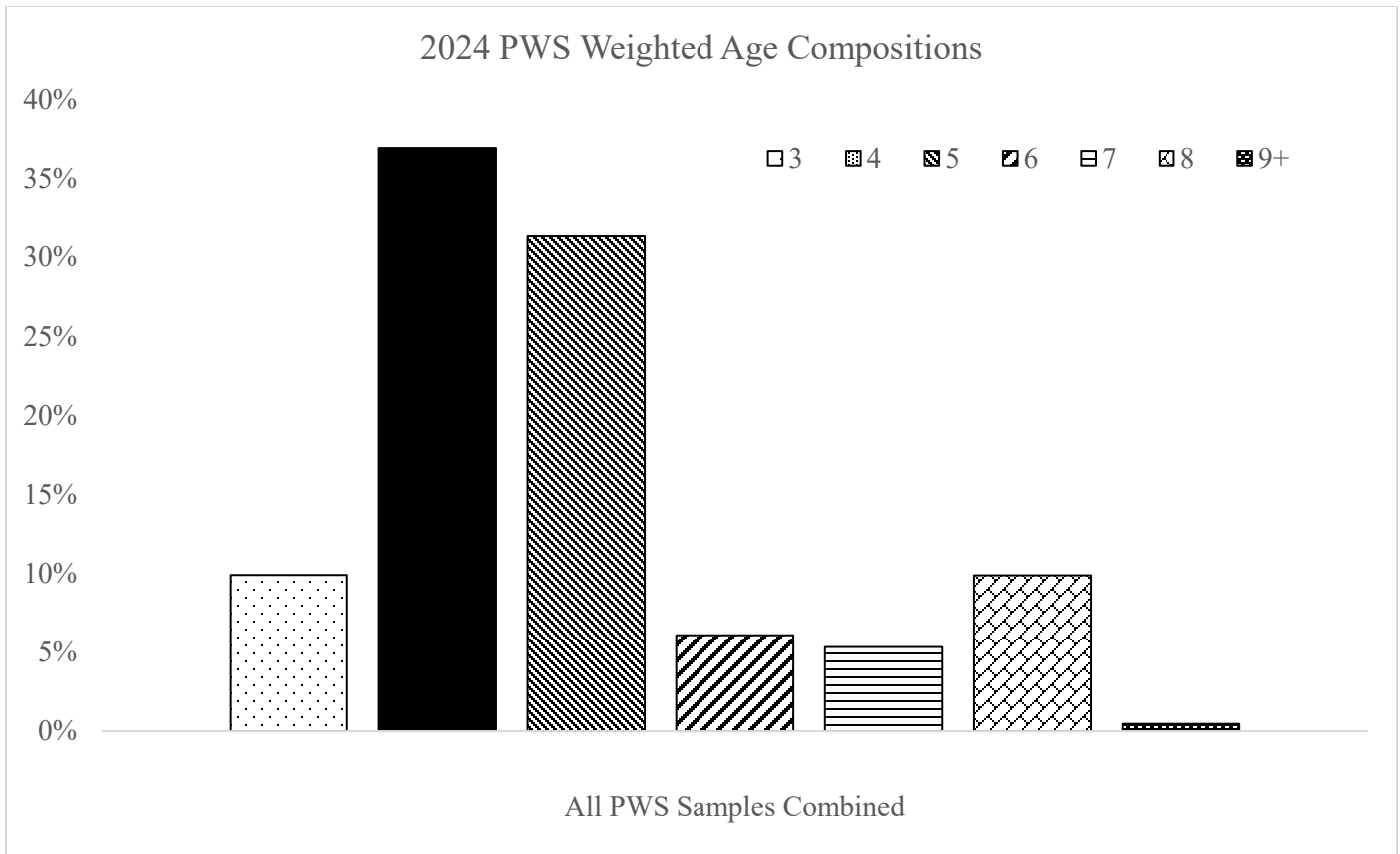


Figure 2. 2024 Prince William Sound age structure of spring herring biomass.

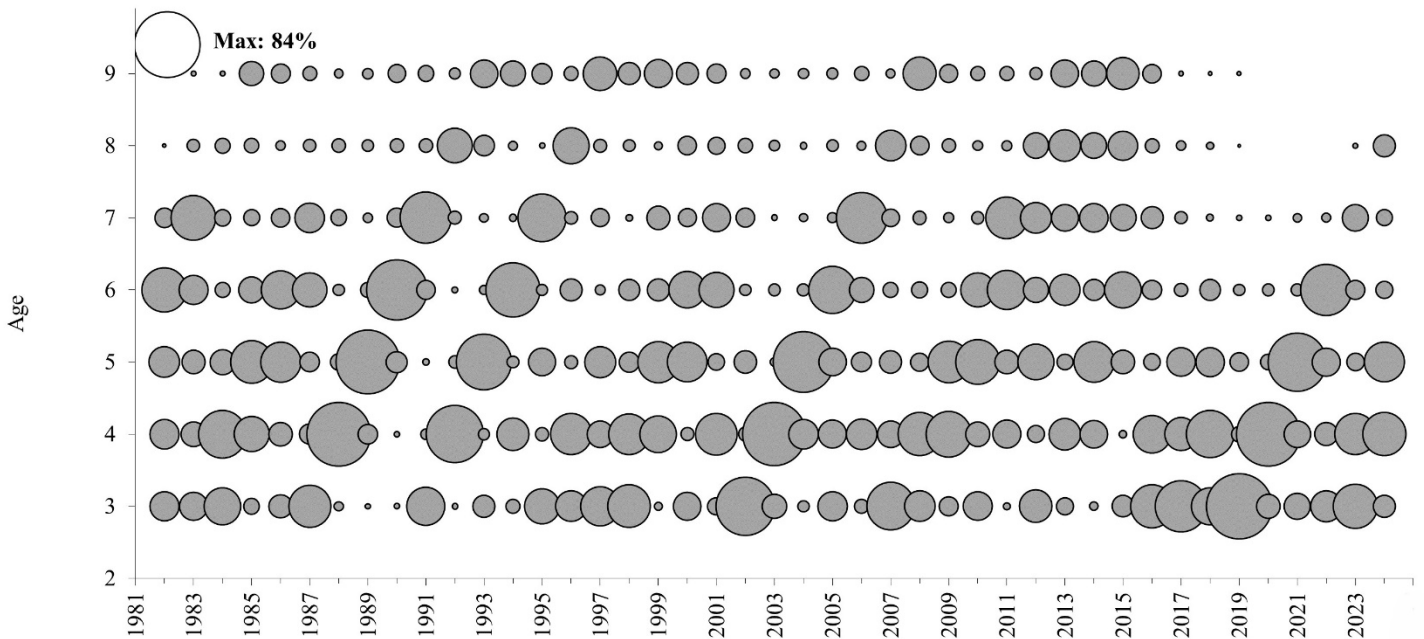


Figure 3. Prince William Sound age structure of spring herring biomass, 1980–2024. Bubble size is proportionate to size of age class.