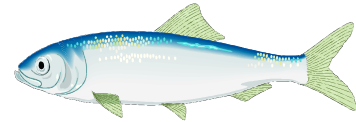


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**  
**DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES**  
**NEWS RELEASE**



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**2018 Togiak Herring Season Summary**

The following is a summary of the 2018 herring sac roe and spawn-on-kelp fisheries in the Togiak District, Bristol Bay. Herring are harvested for sac roe using gillnets and purse seines, while herring spawn on wild kelp is harvested by hand. In July, a food and bait fishery occurs near Dutch Harbor primarily on the Togiak herring stock with the allocation based on the forecasted biomass of Togiak herring. The Dutch Harbor fishery is summarized separately. All data in this summary are preliminary.

**STOCK ASSESSMENT**

**Biomass Estimation**

Togiak District aerial surveys began April 13, 2018. Department staff observed fish in the district for the first time on April 21. Fish had previously been reported on the grounds on April 19. Poor weather conditions persisted throughout the herring season and made aerial surveys difficult. Although some herring were observed staff were unable to complete a survey that documented peak biomass. Some spawn was documented on surveys before and during the commercial fishery. The best survey conditions occurred on May 16, after commercial fishing was closed, and while conditions were still poor staff documented the most herring spawn of the 2018 season.

**COMMERCIAL FISHERY**

Togiak District herring fisheries are managed in accordance with the *Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan* (5 AAC 27.865), which specifies a maximum allowable exploitation rate of 20% and allocates the harvestable surplus among all the fisheries harvesting the Togiak herring stock. The 2018 preseason biomass forecast was 136,756 tons. The projected harvest guideline for each fishery was as follows: 1,500 tons of herring equivalent or 350,000 lbs. of product for the spawn-on-kelp fishery, 1,810 tons for the Dutch Harbor food and bait fishery, and the remaining 24,042 tons for the sac roe fishery. The management plan further specifies that the

department will manage the sac roe fishery so that 70% of the harvest is taken by purse seine (16,829 tons in 2018) and 30% of the harvest is taken by gillnet (7,212 tons in 2018).

The *Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan* and other regulations direct the department to conduct an orderly, manageable fishery and strive for the highest level of product quality with a minimum of waste. In recent years, the seine fleet has been comprised of processor-organized cooperatives. During the 2018 season management staff allowed long duration seine openings across a large area of the district and let processors limit harvest for their individual fleets based on processing capacity.

Department staff polled processing companies prior to the 2018 season to assess processing capacity and to inquire about additional concerns or issues. The poll indicated that four companies intended to participate in the 2018 Togiak herring fishery. One company indicated they planned to buy both gillnet and purse seine fish and three companies planned to buy only purse seine fish. The processing capacity for 2018 was estimated to be 1,950 tons per day.

### **Purse Seine**

The Togiak purse seine fishery opened at 6:00 a.m. on April 22 until further notice. The harvest was 1,334 tons from April 22 through April 25. Poor weather, turbid water, and cold-water temperatures combined to make fishing conditions poor and the availability of commercial quality fish low. A break in the weather late on April 25 allowed conditions to improve and 3,838 tons of herring were harvested on April 26. The weather continued to complicate fishing efforts on and off for the remainder of the season. Fishing was good on April 28 with 2,703 tons harvested but the April 29 was poor again with only 730 tons taken. The harvest through April 29 was 9,300 tons. Harvest on April 30 was 1,630 tons and then 3,790 tons on May 1. At this point managers polled processors and determined that there was enough capacity available to harvest the remaining quota on May 2. Weather was also cooperating with fair conditions. Based on this, managers announced that the purse seine fishery would close at 8:00 p.m. May 2. This would allow for the available capacity to be filled and was expected to allow for the remaining quota to be harvested. Allowing the fishery to stay open longer would allow additional capacity to become available and risk exceeding the quota. The harvest on May 2 was 1,770 tons, bringing the cumulative harvest to 16,490 tons of the 16,829-ton quota. This represented 98% of the quota and there was no need to reopen the fishery. Purse seine participation was documented at 20 vessels, up from 19 in 2017.

### **Gillnet**

The Togiak herring gillnet fishery opened at 6:00 a.m. April 22 until further notice. The first gillnet harvest was reported April 26; all harvest information is confidential due to there only being one processor and one fisherman that participated in the fishery. The last gillnet harvest was reported on May 16. Weather was a significant factor throughout the fishery with many days unfishable due to wind and water conditions.

### **Spawn on Kelp**

No companies registered to buy herring spawn-on-kelp in 2018, therefore there were no openings and no commercial harvest.

## **EXVESSEL VALUE**

The projected exvessel value of the 2018 Togiak herring fishery is approximately \$1.65 million. This is based on an advance price estimate of \$100 per ton and does not include any postseason adjustments.

## **AGE COMPOSITION**

Over the course of the fishery the department sampled 7,600 herring from the commercial harvest in order to: 1) determine the age composition of the harvest, 2) estimate the age composition of the biomass, 3) determine the size at age of herring in this year's spawning biomass and 4) provide data for next year's forecast. Preliminary data suggests that 44% of the herring in this year's harvest were age-7 or younger, 31% were age-8 or age-9, and 25% were age-10 or older. The mean weight of herring in the gillnet harvest was 381g and the purse seine harvest was 316g.

## **EXPLOITATION**

The 2018 Togiak herring fisheries were managed for a maximum exploitation rate of 20% of the preseason biomass estimate. The purse seine harvest was 16,490 tons the average roe content was 11% and the average reported weight was 327 grams. Gillnet harvest remains confidential. The Dutch Harbor food and bait fishery has not occurred at this time. If the Dutch Harbor fishery harvest is equal to the quota of 1,810 tons, then the total harvest for 2018 would be estimated at 18,300 tons without the gillnet harvest. Based on the preseason biomass estimate of 136,756 tons, the 2018 exploitation rate would be approximately 13.4%.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The department would like to thank the Bristol Bay Funding Collaborative (BBFC) for committing to fund Togiak herring fishery monitoring activities in 2018. While BBFC funding was not used, their commitment allowed the department to continue a monitoring program essential to the understanding of Togiak herring.

The department would like to thank processors for allowing us to collect herring samples from their 2018 commercial harvest. The biological data collected in our herring sampling program allows the department to produce biomass estimates which are the basis of sustainable management.