

Rob Sanderson Jr., Tlingit & Haida

Since the early territorial days through statehood and onto the present, Alaska's fisheries have been badly mismanaged by the State of Alaska. Throughout Alaska's history, there have only been a small amount "success stories" through the management OUR fisheries which needs to be remedied immediately. One of the fisheries that most would deem a management disaster is the Sitka Sac Roe Pacific Herring fishery. For years, population estimates of this fishery have been drastically over estimated and as a result our tribal citizens have been taking all of the negative impact of this mismanagement. However, the importance of Pacific Herring does not stop at our tribal citizens food source. From an ecological view, Pacific herring is arguably one of the most important fish species in our waters. For southeast Alaska, Pacific herring is the primary forage fish that is consumed by just about everything else. This means that Pacific herring is at the base of the food web. So many other organisms including but not limited to salmon, groundfish, and marine mammals all depend this vital resource to sustain life. Without herring, the rest of the ecosystem falls apart. This is another reason why it is crucial for the management system to put herring first (which the constitution of the State of Alaska is already supposed to uphold). We cannot allow the Sitka Pacific Herring fishery to collapse from state mismanagement. Examples of these collapses from mismanagement include Kah Shakes and Cat Island Pacific herring fishery, which at one time was the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Pacific Herring fishery in Alaska, the state tossed out the tribes' traditional ecological knowledge on that one. Another example was the West Behm Canal Pacific Herring fishery that closed after 1 year of a sac roe fishery and 3 years of a bait fishery that officially closed in 1980, it has yet to be reopened. The Auke Bay/Lynn Canal Pacific Herring Fishery, which at one time it was the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest fishery, closed that same year and also has never recovered. These are just a few of many examples of many failed Pacific Herring populations due to the mismanagement from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game. The sac roe fishery is inherently wasteful for two reasons. The first reason is because it intercepts the herring before they have a chance to spawn. Also since herring spawn multiple times in their lives, it takes away from future spawning events as well.

We must do everything in our power to support the Sitka Tribes of Alaska efforts to conserve this most important fish that will impact us all. It would be very important to continue to push our traditional ecological knowledge and science on the State of Alaska. I have every reason to believe that if we all work together on this critical issue we can be successful in conserving our fish for generations to come. My recommendation is to implement some sort of reduced harvest level, especially that of the commercial fishery, for a few years to allow the herring to have a chance at replenishing themselves. If this is not successful then I would recommend a closure to the commercial fishery. One important factor to remember is that the tribes take less than 1% of the total population of herring to feed ourselves.

Sincerely,

Rob Sanderson Jr.