PROPOSAL 174

5 AAC 27.160. Quotas and guideline harvest levels for Southeastern Alaska Area.

Establish a maximum guideline harvest level and minimum spawning biomass to conduct fisheries for the Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery.

If the Sitka Sound sac roe fishery is to exist, it must be at a much lower intensity to reduce disturbance to spawning herring. 5AAC 27.160(G) should be revised as follows:

(G) The maximum Guideline Harvest Level for the herring sac roe fishery in Sections 13-A and 13-B (combined) is 5,000 tons. In years where the spawning biomass is less than 100,000 tons, the guideline harvest level is 2,500 tons. The fishery will not be conducted if the spawning biomass is less than 50,000 tons.

[(G) THE GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL FOR THE HERRING SAC ROE FISHERY IN SECTIONS 13-A AND 13-B SHALL BE ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT AND WILL BE A HARVEST RATE PERCENTAGE THAT IS NOT LESS THAN 12 PERCENT, NOT MORE THAN 20 PERCENT, AND WITHIN THAT RANGE SHALL BE DETERMINED BY THE FOLLOWING FORMULA:

HARVEST RATE PERCENTAGE = 2 + 8 [SPAWNING BIOMASS (IN TONS)] /20,000)

THE FISHERY WILL NOT BE CONDUCTED IF THE SPAWNING BIOMASS IS LESS THAN 25,000 TONS.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Between 1979 and 1995, the average commercial harvest of herring during the sac roe seine fishery in Sitka Sound was 5,490 tons. In the years since, the average commercial harvest has been 11,560 tons. Economic value has declined over this same period as catch has increased.

The doubled average annual catch since that earlier stage of the fishery has involved a commensurate increase in fishing pressure and disruption to spawning herring with known consequences for subsistence harvest success and unquantified consequences for other species and the marine ecosystem.

The Board of Fisheries has received complaints from subsistence users in Sitka in each board cycle since 1997.

Biomass estimates for earlier years in the time series are deflated due to inadequate sampling capabilities. Recognizing that historical biomass exceeded estimates means that the GHL in previous decades was likely much lower than 12-20% of the actual biomass; thus, fishing at 12-20% of today’s more accurate biomass estimates results in unprecedented and dangerous pressure on spawning populations.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. We developed the proposal in consultation with a small group of harvesters and elders and informed by prior conversation with many others.

PROPOSED BY: Herring Protectors (EF-F24-173)

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