

**PROPOSAL 97**

**5 AAC 27.365 Prince William Sound Herring Management Plan.**

Reduce the minimum herring spawning biomass threshold, as follows:

(b) The management plan for herring fisheries in Prince William Sound assumes that all of these fisheries use a single stock of herring which may be harvested at the rate of zero to 20 percent of the spawning biomass. The management year for herring is July 1 through June 30. Guideline harvest levels are established before the food and bait season in the fall and are based upon the final spawning biomass estimate from the previous year, cohort analysis, and projected recruitment. The minimum spawning biomass threshold is **16,000** [22,000] tons, and no fishery may be opened if the estimated spawning biomass is below this threshold level. The department may allow, based upon age class strength, a harvest of herring at an exploitation rate between zero and 20 percent of the projected spawning biomass when that biomass is between **16,000** [22,000] tons and 42,500 tons. The department may allow a harvest of herring at a maximum exploitation rate of 20 percent when the total projected spawning biomass is greater than 42,500 tons.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** In 1994 the minimum herring biomass threshold was raised to 22,000 tons from 8,400 tons. Since this increase, there have been essentially zero commercial herring fisheries operating in Prince William Sound. The 8,400 minimum biomass was based on an aerial survey data biomass estimate. In 1994, the department switched to ASL sampling to build a model and used the data from a longer time series to establish a threshold. The current threshold is based on a 25 percent biomass. The time series used was based on 1980's herring biomasses, which was an above average level of herring productivity for the Prince William Sound Area. It is our understanding that if the department had switched the existing aerial survey model from the 8,400 ton threshold to ASL model, the threshold should have been closer to 16,000 tons. This 16,000 tons would reflect a biomass estimate without incorporating a longer time series of data and setting a threshold at 25 percent of unfished biomass. We would like the department to use a longer data set from 1980-2024 to establish a new minimum spawning biomass threshold. By using a longer time series, it reflects what the true unfished biomass is in Prince William Sound.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.**

**PROPOSED BY:** Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU)

(EF-F24-119)

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