

TIMELINE OF HERRING FISHERIES IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA (DRAFT)

- 1878 Commercial herring production in Alaska begins in 1878. A combination of beach seines, gill nets and a form of Norwegian seining produces an initial total catch of 30,000 lbs. Jigs and rakes produce a small fraction of that, usually by individuals for use as bait or for curing (Huizer 1952, Rauwolf 2006).
- 1882 The first herring reduction plants are constructed in Southeast Alaska at Killisnoo in Chatham Strait. The plant produce 30,000 gallons of oil annually (ADF&G 2007).
- 1900 Fishing operations begin purse seining from power boats allowing fishermen to increase catch rates in less time with less human labor (Huizer 1952).
- Herring bait production begins; 4–6 million lb (1,800–2,700 mt) per year. (ADF&G 2007).
- “Soon after 1900 the small operators of Petersburg and Ketchikan commenced using purse seines from power boats”* (Rounsefell 230:1930).
- 1912-13 Halibut fishing is introduced as an important Alaskan industry. Herring bait fuels the fishery (Rounsefell 1930).
- 1918 Power seine boats almost totally replace the old Norwegian method of operation in all of Southeast Alaska. All are powered by gas internal-combustion engines. Five to seven man crew per boat. Average net tonnage is 17 tons (range of 11-31 tons). (Rounsefell 1930).
- 1927 Purse-seine boat average net tonnage is 31 (range of 20-42 tons). Half of the fleet is powered by diesel engines. Six to eight man crew per boat (Rounsefell 1930).
- The halibut industry uses over 8,000,000 pounds of herring bait from Alaska: 4,600,000 from the southeastern region (Rounsefell 1930).
- 1950s Japanese and Russian ships begin trawling for herring in the Bering Sea. (ADF&G 2007).
- Herring reduction plants begin to decline due to competing Peruvian anchovy production (ADF&G 2007).
- 1960 The last herring reduction plant shuts down due to market conditions and depleted herring stocks (Rauwolf 2006)
- 1967-1972 *“Unregulated bait fisheries deplete stocks in George Inlet (9000) tons and Carroll Inlet (1200) tons while being surveyed by ADF&G’s biologists aboard the vessel Sundance”* (Rauwolf 2006).
- 1968 ADF&G opens the spawn on kelp fishery (Rauwolf 2006).
- 1970s HERRING STOCKS EXPERIENCE THE FIRST COLLAPSE (ADF&G 2007)

Herring sac roe production begins in the 1970s to provide for declining herring numbers in Japanese waters. Much of the current herring sac roe harvest in Alaska is destined for these Japanese markets although younger generations are not so keen on this traditional dish.

Japanese and Russian ships trawling for herring in the Bering Sea reach 320 million lb (146,000 mt) in 1970 (ADF&G 2007).

“The development of extensive crab fisheries in the 1970s greatly increased the demand for herring bait” (ADF&G 2007).

1972-1975 ADF&G conducts stock surveys on spawning grounds in preparation for the sac roe fisheries. The results of these surveys on diminished stocks are called “pristine biomass” by ADF&G biologists and are the low levels of abundance that they have attempted, but failed to maintain ever since. During this same period, area residents and the troll fleet had already noticed huge declines in the herring stocks (Rauwolf 2006).

1976 The Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act creates the following for all commercial fisheries:

“A fishery conservation zone between the territorial seas of the US and 200 nautical miles offshore. An exclusive US fishery management authority over fish within the fishery conservation zone (excluding highly migratory species). Regulations for foreign fishing within the fishery conservation zone through international fishery agreements, permits and import prohibitions. National standards for fishery conservation and management and eight regional fishery management councils to apply those national standards in fishery management plans” (MMS 2007).

ADF&G opens commercial sac roe fisheries in Southeast Alaska (gillnet and seine) (Rauwolf 2006)

1980 West Behm Canal closes to commercial herring fishing after only one year of sac roe and three years of bait fishing. (Rauwolf 2006)

Auke Bay/Lynn Canal fishery collapses (third largest biomass in Southeast Alaska) (Rauwolf 2006)

1980-1988 Many small spawning areas are depleted by gillnet and seine fisheries (Rauwolf 2006)

1990 Kah Shakes gillnet sac roe fishery, second largest biomass in Southeast Alaska closes (Rauwolf 2006).

1991 ADF&G moves the Kah Shakes gillnet fishery outside the legal boundary, 12 miles west to Cat Island, adjacent to the Annette Island Reserves herring fishery on Crab Bay flats. (Rauwolf 2006).

1993 Board of Fish tosses out proposals from local concerned citizens, and does not allow testimony on these proposals. At the same time the BOF expands the legal boundary of Kah Shakes to include Cat and Mary Island, and classifies all area stocks as one stock (Revilla Channel Stock) (Rauwolf 2006).

- 1994 Local citizens file lawsuit in an attempt to protect the remaining herring populations in Kah Shakes and Cat Island (Rauwolf 2006)
- 1995 People begin to notice a reduced size in herring in the channel. Spawning biomass at Kah Shakes has shrunk to 143 tons from a high of over 20,000 tons at the onset of the fishery (Rauwolf 2006)
- 1996 ADF&G combines Kah Shakes and Cat Island biomass in order to meet the 6,000 ton minimum threshold and justify a fishery. The harvest at Kah Shakes totals 257 tons, 180% of the previous year's total biomass. This was the last fishery ever conducted at Kah Shakes. Since that date, no herring have spawned at this historic site (Rauwolf 2006)
- 1996 The combined spawning biomass of herring at Kah Shakes and Cat Island total 4338 tons, 1662 tons below the required 6,000 ton biomass threshold set by ADF&G before they are supposed to allow a commercial harvest for the coming season, and yet ADF&G sets a harvest quota for 1997 at 912 tons when there should be no fishery (Rauwolf 2006)
- 1997 Gillnetters exceed the 912 ton quota at Cat Island by 43%, taking 1137 tons (theoretically, there should not have been a fishery) (Rauwolf 2006)
- 1998 Gillnetters exceed the quota at Cat Island by 11%. No fishery has been conducted at Cat Island since (Rauwolf 2006)
- 2000 The Board of Fisheries denies proposals to open West Behm Canal to sac roe fishing due to local opposition. (Rauwolf 2006)
- 2003 The Board of Fisheries opens West Behm Canal to commercial herring harvests in spite of intense local opposition and ADF&G briefing documents requesting more time to study the fishery. (Rauwolf 2006)
- 2003 Fishery fails to open after fleet and processors are kept on standby for three weeks. Dive surveys later indicate that less than 500 tons of herring spawned in West Behm Canal. (Rauwolf 2006)
- 2004 No fishery due to low returns. (Rauwolf 2006)
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- 2006 BOF meets with Ketchikan. Will consider proposals to make West Behm Canal and the Cat Island area herring sanctuaries pending approval by the legislature. (Rauwolf 2006)