

Sitka Advisory Committee
Date 11/29/2017
Location of Meeting; Centennial Hall, Sitka

- I. **Call to Order:** 6:04pm, by Jon Martin
- II. **Chair comments:** People have words to share with everyone. Please provide testimony only after recognized. Order of flow: Person who proposed, Department Rep, Public Testimony, AC council reps.
- If folks wish to testify/speak, we kindly ask them to do so only if comments are new/substantially different information than what has already been shared
 - I would kindly ask members of the public and the AC to testify only after they have been recognized by the chair of the AC
- III. **Roll Call:**
Members Present: Joel Markis, Dick Curran, Wayne Unger, Bradley Sheaffer, John Murray, Eric Jordan, Jon Martin, Brian Massy. Karen Johnson, Moses Johnson, Stacy Wayne, Jeff Feldspausch, Tad Fujioka
Members Absent: Andrew Thoms, secretary (Heather Bauscher- substitute secretary)
Number Needed for Quorum on AC: 8
List of User Groups Present: Alaska Native Sisterhood/ Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANS/ANB), Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Subsistence Users, Commercial Fishermen, Local Community members
- IV. **Approval of Agenda:** Brian Massey moves to approve, John Murray second
- V. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:** Minutes Unavailable
- VI. **Fish and Game Staff Present:** Sherri Dressel- ADF&G, Troy Tydingco- ADF&G
Guests Present: Heather Bauscher, Larry Calvin, R. Spike Arnold, Harriet Miyasoto Beleal, Patricia Roberts Alexander, Holly Marban, Kyle Rosendale, Rachel Henderson, Roby Littlefield, Jean Arnold, Nina Vizcarrondo, Marian Allen, Bruce White, Woody Cyr, Elsa Sebastian, Peter Bradley, Spencer Severson, Andrew Callistine, Shawna Thornton, Lillian Owens, Troy Tydingco, Josh Wisniewski, James Fischer, Chandler O'Connell, Katie Riley, Cheryle Enloe, Tiffany Justice, Ben Timby, Scott Wagner
- VII.
- VIII. **Old Business:** Suggest that we set a net gear meeting in December to cover these
- Set Gillnet (Salmon)
 - 162 - 165
 - Purse Seine (Salmon)
 - 166 - 168
 - Drift Gillnet (Salmon)
 - 169 – 171

Set dates for net gear and other proposals that have not been dealt with.

IX. New Business:

Finfish/Herring

○ Subsistence

- **Proposal 94-** Reduce the amount of herring spawn reasonably necessary for subsistence in Sitka Sound.
 - Motion to adopt- Brian Massey, second- John Murray
 - Southeast Herring Conservation Council representative not present to speak to proposal 94
- **Support:** No comments reflecting support.
- **Oppose:** Significant conservation concerns among public. Concerns were voiced about diminishing stocks and importance for cultural and traditional use. Seeing gradual decline in quality of herring roe and decline in quantity of roe in accessible areas to harvest near to town.
 - **Agency Comments:**
 - **Sherri Dressel- ADF&G:**
 - Spoke to household surveys, ANS, Sitka Tribe survey, threshold, a number of other things. Very good information presented.
 - **Public Comments:**
 - **ANS: Jean Arnold, Pat Alexander, Harriet Miyasoto Beleal:**
 - Concerns of diminishing stocks and not enough for traditional use and sharing with the community. Precious food resource.
 - **General Public:**
 - Subsistence the use has priority- it should not be reduced. Locals not able to harvest good quality eggs, industry boats brought in low quality roe on branches. Found it disconcerting to let fishery go forward when tribe has so many concerns. The data doesn't match observations from local users.
 - **Advisory Council Comments:**
 - **Jeff Feldspausch-** spoke to the difficulties in harvesting eggs, takes more effort with diminishing returns.
 - **Moses Johnson-** spoke to method of surveys and resulting accuracy, questioned percentage of actual harvest that is surveyed
 - **Jeff Feldspausch-** explained how tribe collects, weighs, has list of harvesters that get surveyed. Also spoke to 2017 spawning, very spotty, flash spawns, theft of branches, very thin coverage on branches, none of the consistent spawning which produces good quality eggs.
 - **Tad Fujioka-** spoke to quality of eggs (lowest he has seen)

- **Wayne Unger**- spoke to discrepancies in the data. Questioned whether good information is being provided in surveys. Mentioned the individual who wrote this proposal wasn't available.

- **Call to question Proposal 94**- John Murray, Tad Fujioka- second
 - **Vote:** Support- 0, Oppose- 12, Abstained- 1
 - **Motion to Support Proposal 94 Fails**

○ **Fishing Seasons**

- **95—97**
- **Proposal 95:** Repeal sac roe fishery in sections 15-B and 15-C.
 - **Tad Fujioka**- Not in our area
 - Decided Out of our area not to be discussed
- **Proposal 97:**
- NO comments, moving on

○ **HR and GHL**

- **98—103**
- **Proposal 98:**
 - Joel Markis to put it on the table, John Murray second.
 - Andrew Thoms, author of proposal 98 not present to speak
- **Support:** Consistent community argument for more conservative approach to herring harvest. Includes ecosystem language which does not seem to be considered in other proposals. Need to start including language like this in regulations to account for increased pressures on fish stocks due to warming ocean and ocean acidification.
- **Oppose:** A change to 0%-10% GHL is too drastic of a reduction. Too much economic impact without enough evidence of decline in herring stocks to warrant such a change.
 - **Agency Comments:**
 - **Dr. Sherri Dressel ADFG:**
 - Decided to address both proposal 98 and 99. 98 being rather complex with major change from 10 to 20 % GHL to 0 to 10 %. GHL differs between Sitka and other areas in SE. Under Prop 98- actual quota may be reduced by 65%. Difficult to project impact on fishery, subsistence harvest, ecosystem. According to the model 20% is a conservative harvest, mortality already accounted for in model- in long term forecast, natural mortality

changed in 1998 from 65% to 80% survival in 1980, predator mortality built in over a long term average but does not necessarily account for high whale years or spikes in predator populations. New data from BC shows a more conservative harvest rate may be helpful for sustainability. Over the last few years actual harvest was closer to 15% in Sitka.

- **Public Comments:**

- Consistent community argument for more conservative approach to herring harvest. This proposal takes into consideration ocean conditions which are changing. Significant public testimony of observations changing ocean conditions in regards to warming and ocean acidification. Concerns that these additional pressures on population not taken into consideration, and a more conservative approach and reduction in guideline harvest is desired.
- Sitka is the only existing viable Herring fishery left in Southeast Alaska.

- **Break called at 7:42pm- 7:55pm**

- **Continuation of Proposal 98**

- **Advisory Council Comments:**

- **Wayne Unger-** spoke to the beautiful job ADF&G doing to regulate the fishery with appropriate safeguards in place. Feels this proposal is too drastic of a reduction in guideline harvest.
- **Moses Johnson-** does not observe a decline in herring biomass. A drop in GHL to 10% is too drastic of a change. Does not support this significant of a change, does not feel enough evidence of decline in fish stocks to warrant this severe of a reduction in GHL. Although he does believe that the environment is changing, and thinks fishing needs to change with it.
- **Eric Jordan-** attempted to amend the proposal to include 0%-20% with the intention to allow for a lower GHL and allow for flexibility of department regulation.
 - Quite a bit of discussion, mostly confusion.
 - **Amendment vote:** support- 5, opposed-5, abstained-2
 - **Motion to Amend Prop 98 Fails**
- **Stacy Wayne-** The problem is that the way fisheries are managed is a formulaic structure and you can't amend those numbers without a huge impact to the model. It would mess up the formula. I would like to propose an amendment to change what we are doing with Sitka management to mirror general southeast.

- **Tad Fujioka**- That would be a better amendment to proposal 99.
- Call to question Proposal 98 as written-Brian Massey, second- Wayne Unger
 - **Vote:** support- 2, oppose- 9, abstain-1.
 - **Motion to support Prop 98 Fails**
- **Proposal 99-**
 - Brian Massey called to question, Tad second
 - **Jeff Feldspausch, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Sponsor of Proposal 99-**
 - Seeing indicators of stress in Herring stock. Small percentage of 3 year age class, potentially seeing an abrupt decline in juvenile age class. Will be a year or two before that shows up in the data. This would leave more roe in the water hopefully for more to wind up on the branches.
 - Heard much about how spawning patterns have changed. There are many factors that may lead to the decline in spawn, but also removal of a percentage of the biomass will lead to a decline.
 - 16-258 states “must provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence needs to be met.” The fishery needs to change to allow for the subsistence priority.
 - **Support:** Reduction in commercial take must be made to allow for subsistence priority. Consistent community argument for more conservative approach to herring harvest.
 - **Oppose:** A change to 0%-10% GHLL is too drastic of a reduction. Too much economic impact without enough evidence of decline in herring stocks to warrant such a change. Industry concerns that it will set a precedent for continued reduction.
 - **Agency Comments:**
 - **Dr. Sherri Dressel ADF&G**
 - Please see comments under proposal 98. As Dr. Dressel addressed both 98 & 99 simultaneously due to similarities.
 - **Public Comments:**
 - Ecosystem language from proposal 98 could be applied here. The drop to 10% should not be seen as radical but in alignment with other fisheries in the Pacific Northwest.
 - **Advisory Council Comments:**

- **Joel Markis**- This is an extremely complex fishery and the department does a good job. Lots of testimony about the vulnerability of herring and these are forage fish, we do not know what the impact of removing these could have on the ecosystem as a whole. Been working on fish management for 20 years, and go to these meetings and hear these precautionary tales of other places that have led to disaster. All of the advice I have heard is that we are lucky to be on the forefront of that and should heed these tales. We have heard much about the drastic impacts of these changes in percentage, but we also need to consider the volatility of the fishery that takes place currently. The board is good at working with the variety of user groups in the community and maybe if we worked through committee we could find a solution. We are seeing uncertainty in all of the fisheries right now. If we take no action the consequences could be serious all the way up the food chain. I would like to see some of the concerns we have heard tonight addressed as well as the desire for conservation.
- **Moses Johnson**- I like Stacy's idea of using the general southeast model. That would be a reduction but not as drastic and maybe not as significant for conservation as some would like. No one can make perfect decisions all the time. Which means if we might have a bad decision the impacts are greater. I think of the industry and the seiners and the permit holders, I think we have a lower threshold- why not have an upper threshold? We would not harvest all the fish if there's a lot because we want them to come back. If the groups could get together with the users and the board of fish, we could come up with a number that could be the upper threshold and ensure the fishery for the future without being too painful.
- **Jon Martin**- What Mo is saying could build in for inherent times when there might be a calculation. I think that's a neat idea.
- **Stacy Wayne**-
 - **Make a motion to Amend to read:** The guideline harvest level for the herring sac roe fishery in Sections 13-A and 13-B shall be established by the department using a percentage that is not less than 10 percent, not more than 20 percent and within that range shall be determined by the following formula: $\text{Percentage Harvest Rate} = 8 + 2 (\text{Forecast Spawning Population Size} / \text{threshold level})$ The fishery will not be conducted if the spawning biomass is less than 25,000 tons. **Joel Markis**- second
- **Stacy Wayne**- Would not be dramatic and not would have a large impact on the commercial fishery but would be protection and safety in case the stocks dropped.

- **Jon Martin**- asking for clarification- change language from 12% to 10% and keeping 20?, replacing Sitka GHL with SEAK GHL, retaining 25,000 ton threshold- (no fishery if less than)?
 - **Eric Jordan**- we are not harvesting 20% (14-16) what would this mean? Would this put us at 15% which we are at? Or would we end up lower?
 - **Dr. Sherri Dressel ADF&G**- The reason the target is 20% but we ended up harvesting 15% is because we under forecasted. Our intent is to hit 20%, but sometimes actual harvest is a little high, sometimes low. If we continue to underforecast or perform like we have in the past the actual harvest will likely continue to result as less than the target GHL.
 - **Wayne Unger**- How high would the GHL have to be to actually result in a harvest of 20%? I do think it is very conservative and appreciate that maybe it does need to be slightly more conservative. There are two parts to this: how I personally feel vs how I represent processors. All parts are important, testimony has been great and that will show more to the board and the industry. The industry does not hold much value in this committee and this process. I can't get the other plants to participate. We have some drastic proposals thrown out there and we don't know. I think it's already very conservative. Industry is concerned that it will just keep being reduced. It may go away, but it will not end the commercial fishing industry. Industry has just as much of a part in this fight as any other group.
 - **Eric Jordan**- Thank you so much to the public and the support for this tough process. This is why this system maintains a sustainable fisheries in Alaska.
- **Call to question: Support amendment to prop 99**- Brian Massey, Jeff Feldspausch- second
 - **Vote:** support- 12, oppose-0
 - **Motion to amend proposal 99 Passes Unanimously**
 - Jon call to question Prop 99 as amended, Stacy Second, support-12, oppose-0 Passes unanimously
 - **Call to question: Support proposal 99 as amended**- Jon Martin, Stacy Wayne- second
 - **Vote:** support-12, oppose- 0,
 - **Motion to support proposal 99 as amended Passes Unanimously**

Final Amended Proposal as supported by Sitka AC:

PROPOSAL 99

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

Reduce maximum harvest rate used to establish the commercial sac roe herring fishery guideline harvest level in Sections 13-A and 13-B from 20% of the spawning biomass to 10% of the spawning biomass, as follows:

SITKA AC HAS AMENDED THE FOLLOWING PROPOSAL TO:

(g) The guideline harvest level for the herring sac roe fishery in Sections 13-A and 13-B shall be established by the department using a percentage that is not less than 10 percent, not more than 20 percent and within that range shall be determined by the following formula: Percentage Harvest Rate = $8 + 2 \left(\frac{\text{Forecast Spawning Population Size}}{\text{threshold level}} \right)$ 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? The current guideline harvest level (GHL) for the Sitka Sound sac roe fishery is exceeding market demand and is one of the variables affecting subsistence herring egg harvester's ability to meet their needs or the amount necessary for subsistence. ADF&G data suggest that the Sitka Sound herring biomass was on an upward trend starting 1995 and peaked in 2009. This reported increase in biomass combined with the Board approved maximum harvest rate of 20% has significantly increased the annual GHLs. The length, duration, and intensity of the fishery have increased substantially in an attempt to harvest these excessive GHLs. The Sitka Tribe of Alaska firmly believes that this increased fishing effort is disrupting the spawning patterns of herring in the Sound and is causing a high frequency of subsistence herring egg harvester needs not being met. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE? There will continue to be a high frequency of subsistence herring egg harvester's needs not being met. OTHER SOLUTIONS CONSIDERED Closing the fishery. PROPOSED BY: Sitka Tribe of Alaska (HQ-F17-070)

- Upcoming meeting Dates
 - December 6th- Wrap up Herring

- **Motion to Adjourn**- Eric Jordan, John Murray Second. 10:02 pm

Adjournment:

Minutes Recorded By: Heather Bauscher
Minutes Approved By: Sitka AC
Date: Dec 14th, 2017