

Herring Industry Advisory Board (HIAB)

Recommendations from the September 2012 HIAB Meetings

HIAB members met three times in September 2012 (Sept 11, Sept 14, and Sep 19) to develop the following recommendations.

1. Roe Fishery

1 a) 2013 Roe Herring Quotas

The 2013 forecast abundance was reviewed at the meeting. Assuming there are no changes to the “expected use” of other fisheries in Prince Rupert and St of Georgia (i.e. the two stock assessment regions above *cutoff*) there will be 4,039 tons available to the roe herring sector in Prince Rupert, and 22,199 tons in the St.of Georgia.

Over the course of two meetings in September, HIAB reached a consensus recommendation for a coast wide roe quota of 17,000 tons, and a total food and bait (ZM) quota of 5,050 tons. These numbers represent a conservative harvest relative to available TAC. HIAB is willing and able to harvest all the available TAC, but in the interests of conservation, and economic (market) sustainability, is choosing not to do so. However, this fish is left in the water with the understanding that it will remain in the water, and not be reallocated to another user.

Catch recommendations by area are as follows:

In **Prince Rupert**, HIAB is recommending a harvest of 2,100 tons in this area (broken down into 800 tons for seine in Kitkatla, and 1,300 tons for gillnets in Port Simpson).

In the **St of Georgia**, 2013 recruitment is forecast to be “good”. HIAB is recommending a total roe harvest in the St. of Georgia of 14,900 tons, broken down into 8,550 tons for seines, and 6,350 tons for gillnets.

2013 Roe Harvest Recommendations (tons)

Area	Seine	Gillnet	Total
Prince Rupert	800	1,300	2,100
St of Georgia	8,550	6,350	14,900
Total	9,350	7,850	17,000
	55% Seine share	45% Gillnet share	

1 b) Remove Restriction on Number of Seine Licenses Per Vessel

HIAB is recommending removal of the two licenses per seine vessel restriction that has been in place since 1998.

1 c) 2013 Roe Herring Fishery in Area 2W

HIAB has previously stated that because SOK licenses can't change areas, and because Area 2E is closed, 2E SOK licenses could operate in Area 2W. However, Area 2W has had roe fisheries in the past, and SOK does not have priority access to this area. HIAB is not giving up their interests in Area 2W. If SOK does not utilize the available TAC in 2013, HIAB would like to have a small fishery in this area.

Roe herring fishing vessels will collect biological samples, and receive instruction in how to record and report any spawning observed while they are in the area. This information will assist DFO spawn survey efforts and the stock assessment program.

HIAB requests that the potential roe fishery opportunity be included in the roe herring IFMP, so that if the opportunity is available there will be no impediments to implementing the fishery. Discussions between DFO and industry are required to determine licensing requirements and timelines.

1 d) Roe Herring Exemption from CANFIS Web Based Portal

HIAB would like to have an exemption for roe herring for the 2013 season from the proposed web based licensing portal CANFIS in order to smoothly expedite the delivery of licensing for roe herring seine and gillnet fisheries. DFO needs to advise by end of September if they will be able to do this. If licensing has to be completed by the end of December 2012, it will have a huge impact in the industry in terms of early license fee submissions, business arrangements and licensing agents.

1 e) Roe Herring and Spawn on Kelp License Fee Reduction

HIAB and spawn on kelp license holders have long stated that the license fee structure in these fisheries is unrealistic, and a reduction in license fees for these fisheries is an urgent issue. In 2012, for example, a seine license holder will pay \$108 per ton just in licensing fees. (Monitoring program costs are in addition to licensing fees.) Harvesters recommend license fees for BC herring fisheries be adjusted to a more equitable fee structure that aligns fees with fishing revenue.

2. Food & Bait (ZM)

2 a) 2013 Food & Bait Quotas

HIAB is recommending a St. of Georgia Food & Bait (ZM) quota of 5,000 tons, and a Prince Rupert quota of 50 tons (i.e. one ZM license share). These quotas will provide interested parties with the security of access and flexibility that are needed to develop new markets. Access will be via lottery draw, using the same eligibility criteria that were used previously.

2 b) Extension of Fishing Season

HIAB recommends extending the ZM fishing season by one week (i.e. from Feb 9 to Feb 15).

2 c) ZM License for Charity

Prior to the *Larocque* decision there were several Special Use licenses available for charity purposes. In the 2011_12 season, a ZM license issued in the lottery draw was fished for charity sales. HIAB recommends that one ZM license be made available for funding the “Fishermen Helping Kids with Cancer” sale. DFO and HIAB will investigate licensing options for making one ZM license available for this charity for the 2012_13 season.

2 d) Management Controls

The cost of the monitoring program was very onerous for fishery participants last season. It would be useful if some efficiencies could be found in the program (perhaps for example moving to an Elog reporting system). However, HIAB will support the management controls that were in place for the 2011_12 season:

- Continue to use the basic access structure of the existing lottery system, with the same rules of access and transfer of license eligibility
- Continue with no restriction on the number of licenses that can be stacked on a vessel.
- Continue with 100% at sea observer coverage. Each vessel that sets a net will have an observer onboard
- Establish (with DFO and service provider) a maximum number of vessels that can be fishing at any one time.
- Establish an in season communication structure to deal with DFO concerns about capacity to communicate with fishers.
- Continue to use a quota reconciliation process to allow for transfer of quota between licenses.
- Preseason discussions with industry and service provider to consider operational efficiencies

3. Special Use Fishery

DFO's proposed changes for 2012_13 are supported: tightening of the occurrence reporting protocol for this fishery, 100% at sea observer coverage for ZY3 and ZY4 licensed vessels, extension of the fishing season to February 15, with a release date for ponded fish remaining at March 1st.

Other observations and recommendations:

- Processing at sea should not be allowed without at at sea observer or camera observation system onboard the vessel.

- There is no limit on the number of ponds that a Special Use license holder can set up. This open ended use of fish is not proper management
- DFO reports there was no C&P coverage or monitoring of this fishery in 2011_12. This is a particular concern because there should be some level of observation beyond operators' log books when fish is held in ponds.
- The release date for ponded fish in Areas 14 and 17 should be February 15. Holding ponded fish in these areas could have biological impacts on holding spawning fish and could impact spawning behavior, and therefore we request that the release date should be February 15 and not March 1st.

4. Spawn on Kelp Fishery

While the “additions to the monitoring program to define more occurrences” will be a good step – if implemented – overall DFO’s proposed management changes for 2012_13 are paltry at best and unsatisfactory at worst. DFO should keep in mind that any changes in this fishery will have management implications when areas currently closed to spawn on kelp are re-opened (i.e. what is in place in an open area now will be expected when areas are re-opened). If changes to the management structure of this fishery are to be implemented, this would be a good time to do so, when three areas closed to commercial fishing.

- The main issue in this fishery is the unrestricted use of herring without any accountability for mortality. There is no limit on the number of ponds at a spawn on kelp operator can set up, and an operator can continue to fill a pond as many times as they want. (Compare this to Alaska, where herring can only be placed in a pond for 4 days, at which time no more herring can be added. In Alaska fish must be released on Day 6, and after Day 6 no more herring can be caught.) The open ended use of fish with no accountability in the BC spawn on kelp fishery is not proper management.
- Monitoring standards in this fishery should be on a level consistent level with the Food & Bait fishery.
- The **increase** in maximum allowable pond size to 60 by 60 ft (along with no limits on the number of sets that can be made, or the amount of fish that can be put into the ponds) is a step backwards in proper management of this fishery.
- HIAB does not support the automatic extension in Prince Rupert fishing season to mid June. The closure date in Prince Rupert should be left as is, but local managers could use their discretion if they feel an extension is warranted. The use of at sea observers should be investigated if the season is extended. Changes to the management structure of the Prince Rupert fishery will have an impact in other areas such as WCVI and Central Coast when those areas are reopened.
- There has been extensive research done (and publications available) on the impact of ponding fish on disease levels in herring populations. DFO managers should familiarize themselves with this research, and consider it when making future management decisions. In particular, when

reopening areas, the impact of open ended unmonitored spawn on kelp operations on newly rebuilding stocks may be more than the recovering population can withstand, thereby quickly driving the abundance level below cutoff levels again.

5. Baynes Sound Aquaculture

There have recently been two huge applications for sea cucumber aquaculture in Baynes Sound. Additionally, the Province of BC has already approved a 5.8 ha tenure in Henry Bay (although DFO has not approved the aquaculture license for this tenure yet). The process used to approve these tenures, and criteria that are considered and evaluated prior to awarding aquaculture licenses is not clear. HIAB was only informed about the sea cucumber applications anecdotally and at the last minute. The Henry Bay tenure was approved with no herring industry consultation.

- HIAB requests a clear description of how the aquaculture approval process works – what are the criteria that are considered prior to approving a tenure, and prior to giving an aquaculture license.
- There should be a link between approval boards and the industry.
- There should be a process in place where the industry is informed that the applications have been submitted.