

Summary of 2004-2005 Pacific Herring Spawning-Ground Surveys and Commercial Catch in Humboldt Bay and Crescent City

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The Humboldt Bay spawning biomass estimate for the 2004-05 season is 174 tons, down 332 tons from last season's estimate of 506 tons. The spawning biomass this season represents only 49% of the 9-year average (354 tons) from seasons when spawn assessments were conducted in Humboldt Bay. Herring spawned on the large eelgrass beds found in both the north and south sections of the bay. The Department conducted eelgrass surveys throughout the bay this winter and found this vast area of prime herring spawning habitat in good condition. The mean size for herring caught with the Department's variable-mesh gill net this season is 179 mm (range 148-225 mm). Commercial Pacific herring landings were down again this season with just over 0.6 tons landed. This is the third season in a row that landings have been far below the 23-year Humboldt Bay average of 37 tons. The quota of 60 tons for Humboldt Bay has only been reached once since the 1997-98 El Nino with the herring landings since that event averaging only 15 tons per year. Although all three permits are still active for the Crescent City herring fishery, no fishing effort has taken place for the last three seasons.