

Kodiak Herring Season Slowing Down

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Jacob Resneck/KMXT

Two more buyers entered the Kodiak herring market this season to boost participation though low prices have kept many herring fishermen out of the water. One fisherman reports that one processor is paying \$175 a ton compared to \$425 last year.

At its peak there were four processors buying herring. Now Trident and Ocean Beauty, both of which entered the game late, are the two remaining buyers.

Fish and Game assistant area management biologist Geoff Spalinger says about half of the allowed catch has been taken so far.

-- herring 1 :11 "For the entire Kodiak ... have been harvested."

At its peak late last month, about a dozen seiners were active in the Kodiak fishery. But both Western Alaska Fisheries and Alaska Pacific Seafoods have stopped buying and some vessels are transiting to other areas of the state.

Now there are about eight seiners left and Spalinger says the season is coming to a close.

-- herring 2 :34 "They're winding down ... weeks, I think."

Representatives from Ocean Beauty and Trident didn't return phone calls, but Spalinger characterized the quality of the herring as inconsistent and marginal overall.

-- herring 3 :05 "It's been up and down ... see in others."

The herring is harvested for its sac roe which is exported to Japan as a delicacy. There had been fears that this spring's earthquake and tsunami would harm markets and the current low prices suggest this could be one after effect of the devastation.

Last year's ex-vessel value topped \$2.2 million but will almost certainly be much less this season.

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