

## Haida join coastal nations in opposing herring roe fishery

Posted by Joan Russow

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The Haida Nation is voicing its concerns about a decision by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to open the commercial roe herring fishery in the area, joining two other coastal First Nations to create a united opposition.

The Haida, along with the Heiltsuk Nation of Bella Bella and the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC), say allowing the fishery to proceed in their territory is a step in the wrong direction.

"The Federal Minister of Fisheries, Gail Shea, has made a serious mistake in proposing to open commercial herring fisheries in our territories" said Peter Lantin, President of the Haida Nation.

"Minister Shea has taken this action against our specific recommendations not to fish herring in 2014. Just when the herring stocks in our territories were starting to rebuild, Minister Shea has proposed significant commercial fisheries that might wipe out the rebuilding that is underway."

Of particular concern to the three nations is how the fishery is carried out. The fishery uses large industrial purse seine vessels and near-shore gill nets to harvest herring as they prepare to spawn. The three nations allege that after the eggs are stripped from the female to be shipped to Asia, the bodies of the females are treated as a byproduct as are any male herring caught during the fishery.

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Although the fishery has been closed for a number of years, a proposal would allow fishermen to harvest 19,700 tonnes in 2014. Of that total, 4,067 tonnes would come from Haida Gwaii, the central coast and the west coast of Vancouver Island. NTC president Debra Foxcraft said the opening is simply unnecessary.

"There are enough herring in the Strait of Georgia and Prince Rupert area to meet the industry's demand for herring this year. There is no need for DFO to open up our territories to commercial fishing in 2014," she said.

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