

**STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE**

2010

Source
CSHCR 22(FIN)

**Legislative
Resolve No.**
54



Establishing and relating to the Alaska Northern Waters Task Force.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS Alaska is the only Arctic state in the nation; and

WHEREAS recent warming trends have resulted in the depletion of Arctic perennial sea ice by nine percent a decade; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the rate of depletion is accelerating because of the interaction among the ice, oceans, and atmosphere; and

WHEREAS rapidly retreating sea ice is altering fish and wildlife habitats and affecting the accessibility and viability of certain species on which many local communities rely for nutritional and cultural purposes; and

WHEREAS reduced sea ice is affecting polar route navigation by opening oceans previously frozen year-round; and

WHEREAS the new accessibility of the Northern waters is resulting in increased marine transportation, access to resources, tourism, fisheries, and the presence of United States government agencies in the North; and

WHEREAS the waters of Northern Alaska are of national security and strategic importance to the United States and the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS, because of national security concerns, the United States Coast Guard is increasing its presence in the North and has plans to build new infrastructure to support its heightened activity, including housing and office facilities and possibly a deepwater port; and

WHEREAS Northern Alaska contains important mineral and other resources both in state waters and on the outer continental shelf; and

WHEREAS commercial activities, including resource development, and the revenue they generate for the state may be significantly affected by the changing Arctic waters; and

WHEREAS those changes will affect local communities, businesses, the state, and the natural resources on which they rely; and

WHEREAS there is no comprehensive state plan for Alaska's Northern waters; and

WHEREAS various federal agencies and international bodies are working together to form a commission to address the changing ocean patterns and the opportunities and problems that may arise as a result of those changing patterns; and

WHEREAS the State of Alaska should be involved in the process of forming the commission; and

WHEREAS a comprehensive plan to address the warming ocean, including the economic, ecological, and security effects, will benefit the state and its residents;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that the Alaska Northern Waters Task Force is created in the legislative branch and shall consist of 11 members as follows:

- (1) two senators appointed by the President of the Senate;
- (2) two representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
- (3) seven members appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, as follows:
 - (A) five public members, three of whom reside in coastal areas of the state;
 - (B) one member representing the executive branch of state government;
 - (C) one member representing the federal government; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that a vacancy on the task force shall be filled in the manner of the original appointment; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the legislators on the task force shall select a chair from among themselves, and the chair may assign staff to provide support to the task force; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the public members, and, if the member does not receive reimbursement for expenses from the federal government, the federal government member of the task force may receive per diem and travel expenses authorized for boards and commissions under AS 39.20.180; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force may meet during and between legislative sessions, and the duties of the task force include the following:

(1) assess and facilitate creation of a state and federal commission responsible for overseeing the development of state and federal northern ocean waters;

(2) facilitate regional coordination, cooperation, and outreach regarding the creation of the commission to keep local stakeholders informed and to incorporate their input into the process;

(3) identify and coordinate efforts of mutual concern for federal, state, and local agencies, as well as international interests in the creation of the commission; and

(4) conduct hearings in the Northern region of the state to fulfill its purpose; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall provide recommendations regarding the formation of the commission and shall deliver a preliminary report of its findings to the legislature by January 20, 2012, and deliver a final report to the legislature on January 30, 2012, together with legislative proposals for consideration; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall be available for legislative hearings regarding its final report and recommendations; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the continuation or termination of the task force shall be reevaluated during the Second Regular Session of the Twenty-Seventh Alaska State Legislature.