

CS FOR HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 8(FSH)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Offered: 5/2/24

Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES VANCE, Cronk, Rauscher, McCabe, Allard

A RESOLUTION

1 **Encouraging the Department of Fish and Game to adopt a bycatch policy and certain**
2 **regulations relating to fisheries bycatch.**

3 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:**

4 **WHEREAS** the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
5 authorizes the state to have a majority of six seats on the 11-member North Pacific Fishery
6 Management Council; and

7 **WHEREAS** the North Pacific Fishery Management Council is given authority to
8 manage fisheries in the Arctic Ocean, Bering Sea, and Pacific Ocean seaward of the state; and

9 **WHEREAS** all fisheries managed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council
10 have bycatch, which the Magnuson-Stevens Act defines as "fish which are harvested in a
11 fishery, but which are not sold or kept for personal use, [including] economic discards and
12 regulatory discards"; and

13 **WHEREAS** National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act provides that
14 fisheries-related conservation and management measures must, to the extent practicable,
15 minimize bycatch and, to the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality of
16 such bycatch; and

1 **WHEREAS** current conservation and management measures implemented by the
2 North Pacific Fishery Management Council, while allowing for the harvest of hundreds of
3 millions of pounds of seafood, also annually result in tens of millions of pounds of bycatch in
4 the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska waters seaward of the state; and

5 **WHEREAS** virtually all bycatch is currently discarded as dead fish; and

6 **WHEREAS** many of the species discarded as bycatch are species that are commonly
7 sold, processed, and consumed as marine protein, yet these fish are discarded as bycatch
8 because they have been caught with the wrong gear, at the wrong time, or outside what the
9 existing regulatory structure permits; and

10 **WHEREAS** Governor Dunleavy established the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force
11 and commissioned the task force for the purpose of "exploring the issue of bycatch and
12 providing recommendations to policy makers with the goal of improving the health and
13 sustainability of Alaska's fisheries, and protecting Alaska's record as a leader of fisheries'
14 conservation and sustainability"; and

15 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council, established by the commissioner
16 of fish and game, is charged with advising the Department of Fish and Game on
17 implementing the recommendations contained in the final report of the Alaska Bycatch
18 Review Task Force, which includes a recommendation to develop a state bycatch policy;

19 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives encourages the commissioner
20 of fish and game, through the commissioner's seat on the North Pacific Fishery Management
21 Council, to ensure that the public has an opportunity to provide to the council information on
22 issues relating to bycatch and to direct the council to fund and conduct research on limiting
23 bycatch to protect the state's fisheries resources for the benefit of all residents of the state; and
24 be it

25 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives encourages the
26 Department of Fish and Game, through the department's regulatory authority, to develop a
27 bycatch policy for the state that, through implementation of the principles of resource
28 conservation and sustained yield, will protect the state's fisheries resources for the benefit of
29 all residents of the state; and be it

30 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives encourages the
31 Department of Fish and Game, in developing a state bycatch policy, to engage concerned state

1 residents, partner with entities willing to fund or conduct related research and work
2 collaboratively with the department, establish research priorities using input from the public,
3 local governments, Alaska Native tribes, commercial fishers, and the fishing industry, make
4 information and resources related to bycatch available to the public in a manner that is easily
5 understood and accessible, and implement management priorities that avoid or reduce bycatch
6 in all fisheries; and be it

7 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives encourages the
8 Department of Fish and Game, in adopting regulations implementing a state bycatch policy, to
9 include regulations that provide for genetic reporting on the composition of Western Alaska
10 salmon taken as bycatch so that the pollock fishery may be managed in a manner that avoids
11 taking Western Alaska salmon in the Bering Sea as bycatch, that reduces chum salmon
12 bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery, and that facilitates departmental cooperation with
13 commercial fishers and the fishing industry to better track and reduce bycatch and associated
14 mortality.