



Sponsor Statement

HR 8 Encouraging the Department of Fish and Game to adopt certain regulations relating to fisheries bycatch.

House Resolution 8 encourages the Department of Fish and Game, through the department's regulatory authority and through the commissioner's seat on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) to support actions and regulatory changes on both the state and federal levels to reduce bycatch.

Alaska's rich marine resources support thriving fisheries managed by the NPFMC under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. However, alongside the targeted harvest of seafood, these fisheries inevitably result in bycatch — fish caught incidentally and often discarded due to regulatory constraints or unsuitability for commercial use.

Bycatch poses significant challenges to the health and sustainability of marine ecosystems, as well as to the economic viability of fishing operations and ultimately Alaskans' way of life. Current regulations allow for the annual discard of tens of millions of pounds of fish in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska waters, representing a substantial loss of potential food resources and economic value.

Moreover, this resolution acknowledges the recommendations of the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT) and the Bycatch Advisory Council which emphasized the importance of incremental regulatory changes to improve bycatch reduction, particularly for species caught with non-targeted gear or discarded due to regulatory requirements.

In essence, HR 8 represents a proactive step towards more sustainable fishing practices in Alaska's federal fisheries by emphasizing the need to reduce bycatch. It underscores the importance of balancing economic interests with environmental conservation to achieve a more resilient and prosperous future for Alaska's fisheries and way of life.