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COMMENTS ON HJR 21 FOR THE HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

March 18, 2009

I would like to submit written comments in regard to HJR 21. I am in opposition to this Resolution and would like to refer you to my written comments submitted to the Fisheries Committee last week. Following are additional thoughts and comments.

The Resolution has created a significant amount of confusion with regard to the Pacific cod limited entry recency provision being contemplated at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council). It states that this action would facilitate federal takeover of Alaska's fisheries and that the license which would be issued is rationalization or a step toward rationalization. Both of these statements are inaccurate.

First, it is important to note that of the 11 voting members of the Council, a majority of six are Alaskan whose names are submitted to the Secretary of Commerce by the Governor of Alaska. This ensures that Alaska will be able to create and shape policy as it moves through the Council process. The leader of the state team is the Commissioner of ADF&G. There is only one federal voting member of the Council. The other four seats are from Washington and Oregon. I provide this information to assure the members of the Resources Committee that a federal takeover of fisheries in Alaska cannot occur without the State of Alaska in agreement and that is not about to happen.

In regard to the "rationalization" statements in the Resolution, this is very problematic to me. The definition of rationalization typically describes some sort of catch sharing program, either with cooperatives or individual fishing quotas. In fact, in the past two administrations with Governor Knowles and Governor Murkowski, the Council actively worked on rationalizing fisheries. Under the watch of Governor Knowles, the Council passed the crab rationalization program, which for the first time in history in the United States required harvesters to deliver 90% of their crab to specific processors. Under the Murkowski administration, for which Representative Austerman was fishery advisor, the rockfish pilot program emerged, as well as active movement toward individual catch quotas for Pacific cod in the Gulf of Alaska. It is important to note that within less than a week after Governor Palin was inaugurated in early December of 2006, the North Pacific Council, at the request of the governor and Commissioner Lloyd, took rationalization of Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod off the table and moved to a sector split discussion and then a recent landing requirement.

This is a limited entry discussion, not rationalization and I believe this important distinction has been lost in the rhetoric.

Since 1999, the Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod management has been under consideration at the North Pacific Council and at each step of the way, Alaska has led the policy on management options. Nothing has changed. Finally, after long years of dealing with this, the Council is poised to take final action in two weeks to address a significant problem. That problem is that there are a

significant number of groundfish limited entry permits that have never had a directed landing of Pacific cod – up to 600 in the Central Gulf alone. If someone has not purchased a permit or fished a permit for Pacific cod in the last nine years, I don't believe they've demonstrated a dependence on this resource. There are many others who are actively engaged in the fishery and they need protection from those who would enter this fully subscribed fishery. That protection is vital, particularly in light of the fact that those entities most likely to purchase unused permits and aggressively begin harvesting Pacific cod are those with significant funding sources, primarily out of Washington and Oregon.

Another issue for your consideration is that the state waters fishery, which is 25% of the overall catch limit, is not under any kind of license restriction, and action being contemplated by the Council would also not limit any efforts in the jig fishery. This is important for those entry level and small boat owners.

Before taking action to approve this Resolution, please read the recently released 129-page analysis that clearly identifies the problem being addressed, as well as potential solutions being considered. This process has been complete and measured, with the issue being addressed at many meetings over the last ten years. Remember, the State of Alaska is always shaping fish policy at the Council and this action is good fish policy. Many of us have worked closely with the governor's office and ADF&G to help create the proposal being considered for final action next month in Anchorage.

Thank you for reviewing my comments.