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Bullard
3/20/13

CS FOR HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 6()
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY

Offered:
Referred:

Sponsor(s): HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

A RESOLUTION

1 **Requesting that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council take action to reduce**
2 **the quantity of Chinook salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea trawl**
3 **fisheries by setting new limits in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries and lowering the**
4 **existing limits in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea pollock fisheries to at least half of**
5 **the current limits; and requesting that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council**
6 **require that participants in those trawl fisheries take part in the SeaShare program and**
7 **that edible bycatch from the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea fisheries be provided to**
8 **Alaska residents.**

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

10 **WHEREAS** the Chinook salmon, the official state fish, is of critical importance to the
11 state, providing significant income to the state and its residents through commercial and
12 charter fisheries, and providing a critical source of food taken in recreational and subsistence
13 fisheries; and

14 **WHEREAS** the Chinook salmon is a cultural icon for both Native and non-Native

1 Alaskans; and

2 **WHEREAS**, in 2012, Chinook salmon runs were dramatically low, and disaster
3 declarations were made for Upper Cook Inlet and the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers; and

4 **WHEREAS**, in 2012, economic losses to the state for commercial and recreational
5 fisheries were over \$34,000,000, not including significant effects on subsistence users and on
6 the cultural and spiritual values of Alaskans; and

7 **WHEREAS**, in 2012, setnet fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet were almost entirely shut
8 down for fear of intercepting hundreds of Chinook salmon; and

9 **WHEREAS**, in 2012, recreational fisheries for Chinook salmon on the Kenai River
10 were completely shut down; and

11 **WHEREAS**, in 2012, subsistence fisheries in the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers were
12 under severe restrictions, and, despite those restrictions, many escapement goals were not
13 met; and

14 **WHEREAS** Chinook salmon stocks from Alaska are caught and discarded in the
15 Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska pollock fisheries and other trawl fisheries in the Gulf of
16 Alaska; and

17 **WHEREAS** Chinook salmon bycatch is a direct and controllable source of mortality
18 for extremely valuable and declining salmon runs throughout the state; and

19 **WHEREAS** nets containing salmon-excluding devices are available, and new
20 concepts and designs to reduce Chinook salmon bycatch are becoming available; and

21 **WHEREAS** the Chinook salmon bycatch cap in the Bering Sea pollock fishery is set
22 at 60,000, which is more than the entire subsistence fishery on the Yukon River; and

23 **WHEREAS** the Chinook salmon bycatch cap in the Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery is
24 set at 25,000, which is more than the 10-year average bycatch in the fishery; and

25 **WHEREAS** the Gulf of Alaska bycatch allowance represented 20 percent of the 2011
26 Cook Inlet, Prince William Sound, Kodiak, Chignik, and Alaska Peninsula sport, subsistence,
27 and commercial Chinook salmon harvest and will likely represent a greater percentage of the
28 2012 harvest; and

29 **WHEREAS** the other Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries, other than the pollock fishery,
30 currently operate without any bycatch limits; and

31 **WHEREAS** the North Pacific Fishery Management Council is considering a cap on

1 Gulf of Alaska fisheries, other than the pollock fishery, and is initiating a catch share program
2 for the Central Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries, which could lead to the adoption of regulations
3 that would further reduce bycatch;

4 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives requests that the North Pacific
5 Fishery Management Council take action to reduce Chinook salmon bycatch in the Gulf of
6 Alaska and Bering Sea trawl fisheries by setting new limits in the Gulf of Alaska trawl
7 fisheries and lowering existing limits in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska pollock fisheries to
8 at least half of the current limits and to further reduce bycatch in any Gulf of Alaska catch
9 share program; and be it

10 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives requests that the North
11 Pacific Fishery Management Council require 100 percent observer coverage in all Gulf of
12 Alaska trawl fisheries to provide accurate estimates of bycatch; and be it

13 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives requests that the North
14 Pacific Fishery Management Council require that participants in the Gulf of Alaska and
15 Bering Sea trawl fisheries take part in the SeaShare program and require that edible bycatch
16 from these fisheries be provided to Alaska residents.

17 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Sean Parnell, Governor of
18 Alaska; and all members of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.