SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 5

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATOR MICCICHE

Introduced: 3/18/13
Referred: Resources

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.**

6   **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE:**

7   **WHEREAS** the Chinook salmon, the official state fish, is of critical importance to the

8   state, providing significant income to the state and its residents through commercial and

9   charter fisheries, and providing a critical source of food taken in recreational and subsistence

10 fisheries; and

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

12 Alaskans; and

13   **WHEREAS**, in 2012, Chinook salmon runs were dramatically low, and disaster

14 declarations were made for Upper Cook Inlet and the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers; and

15   **WHEREAS**, in 2012, economic losses to the state for commercial and recreational

New Text Underlined [DELETED TEXT BRACKETED]

1   fisheries were over $34,000,000, not including significant effects on subsistence users and on

2   the cultural and spiritual values of Alaskans; and

3   **WHEREAS**, in 2012, setnet fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet were almost entirely shut

4   down for fear of intercepting hundreds of Chinook salmon; and

5   **WHEREAS**, in 2012, recreational fisheries for Chinook salmon on the Kenai River

6   were completely shut down; and

7   **WHEREAS**, in 2012, subsistence fisheries in the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers were

8   under severe restrictions, and, despite those restrictions, many escapement goals were not

9   met; and

10   **WHEREAS** Chinook salmon stocks from Alaska are caught and discarded in the

11 Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska pollock fisheries and other trawl fisheries in the Gulf of

12 Alaska; and

13   **WHEREAS** Chinook salmon bycatch is a direct and controllable source of mortality

14 for extremely valuable and declining salmon runs throughout the state; and

15   **WHEREAS** the Chinook salmon bycatch cap in the Bering Sea pollock fishery is set

16 at 60,000, which is more than the entire subsistence fishery on the Yukon River; and

17   **WHEREAS** the Chinook salmon bycatch cap in the Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery is

18 set at 25,000, which is more than the 10-year average bycatch in the fishery; and

19   **WHEREAS** the Gulf of Alaska bycatch allowance represented 20 percent of the 2011

20 Cook Inlet, Prince William Sound, Kodiak, Chignik, and Alaska Peninsula sport, subsistence,

21 and commercial Chinook salmon harvest and will likely represent a greater percentage of the

22 2012 harvest; and

23   **WHEREAS** the other Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries, other than the pollock fishery,

24 currently operate without any bycatch limits; and

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

26 Gulf of Alaska fisheries, other than the pollock fishery, and is initiating a catch share program

27 for the Central Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries, which could lead to the adoption of regulations

28 that would further reduce bycatch;

29   **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Senate requests that the North Pacific Fishery

30 Management Council take action to reduce Chinook salmon bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska and

31 Bering Sea trawl fisheries by setting new limits in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries and

1 lowering existing limits in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska pollock fisheries to at least half

2 of the current limits and to further reduce bycatch in any Gulf of Alaska catch share program;

3 and be it

4 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Senate requests that the North Pacific Fishery

5 Management Council require 100 percent observer coverage in all Gulf of Alaska trawl

6 fisheries to provide accurate estimates of bycatch.

7 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Sean Parnell, Governor of

8 Alaska; and all members of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.