

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 10(FSH)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Offered: 2/14/01

Referred: Resources

Sponsor(s): HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

A RESOLUTION

1 **Relating to the management of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska**
2 **groundfish fisheries and the protection and restoration of the Steller sea lion.**

3 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 **WHEREAS** the population of Steller sea lions has substantially declined over the past
5 25 years; and

6 **WHEREAS** the National Marine Fisheries Service has listed the western Alaska
7 population of Steller sea lions as endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973; and

8 **WHEREAS** the reasons for the decline in the population of Steller sea lions are
9 poorly understood; under one theory, the decline is associated with the harvest of groundfish,
10 including pollock, Pacific cod, and Atka mackerel; and

11 **WHEREAS** the National Marine Fisheries Service, as the result of litigation and
12 criticism by a federal district court, has undertaken a series of increasingly strict restrictions
13 on groundfish fishing in more than 100,000 square miles of fishing areas in the waters off
14 Alaska; and

15 **WHEREAS** the National Marine Fisheries Service lacks an adequate scientific basis
16 for such restrictions on groundfish fishing and has not explained why the restrictions are

1 scientifically or legally necessary; and

2 **WHEREAS** a United States District Court order in July 2000, banned all trawlers
3 from fishing within 20 miles of 122 rookeries and haul-outs and three large "at-sea foraging
4 areas" in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska from Prince William Sound to the Aleutian
5 Islands chain; and

6 **WHEREAS** the court order would significantly restrict the groundfish fisheries off
7 Alaska and dramatically alter the conservative and proven management plans that have been
8 continually refined and strengthened over the past 20 years; and

9 **WHEREAS** the November 30, 2000, biological opinion for the Bering Sea/Aleutian
10 Islands and Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries that was prepared by the National Marine
11 Fisheries Service had the effect of closing the majority of the groundfish fishery and
12 suggested similar restrictions in the salmon and herring fisheries; and

13 **WHEREAS** the economic loss to the groundfish fishing fleet in the Bering Sea and
14 Gulf of Alaska is estimated to be up to \$500,000,000 if the regulations remain in effect
15 through the first half of 2001; and

16 **WHEREAS** additional immeasurable economic losses would be suffered by
17 businesses, families, and individuals who rely on this fishery for economic support and by
18 state and local governments that receive taxes from this fishery; and

19 **WHEREAS** the United States Congress, through the efforts of Senator Ted Stevens,
20 has been able to delay to some extent the full impact of these regulations and new measures
21 proposed in the biological opinion of November 30, 2000; and

22 **WHEREAS**, during 2001, the United States Department of Commerce and the
23 National Marine Fisheries Service are to cooperate with the North Pacific Fishery
24 Management Council and the National Academy of Sciences in conducting an independent
25 scientific review of the November 30, 2000, biological opinion for the Bering Sea/Aleutian
26 Islands and Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries; to prepare proposed conservation and
27 management measures for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska groundfish
28 fisheries; to develop and implement a coordinated comprehensive research and recovery
29 program for the Steller sea lion; and to provide funds for payment to communities, businesses,
30 groups, and individuals to mitigate the economic losses caused by Steller sea lion protection
31 measures;

1 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature expresses its support for the
2 efforts of the United States Congress and Senator Ted Stevens to place restrictions on the
3 implementation of the alternatives contained in the November 30, 2000, biological opinion
4 prepared by the National Marine Fisheries Service; and be it

5 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature also expresses its support
6 for the independent scientific review of the November 30, 2000, biological opinion for the
7 Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries; and be it

8 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the
9 United States Department of Commerce, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the North
10 Pacific Fishery Management Council to develop a scientifically sound and legally sufficient
11 management program for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska groundfish
12 fisheries that maintains the pollock, Pacific cod, and Atka mackerel fisheries in conjunction
13 with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 for the protection and restoration of the Steller sea
14 lion by December 31, 2002 and to develop measures to restore listed endangered species that
15 minimize adverse economic consequences on affected fishing industries and communities.

16 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Donald L. Evans, United
17 States Secretary of Commerce; the Honorable William T. Hogarth, Acting Assistant
18 Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, United States Department of Commerce;
19 and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and
20 the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in
21 Congress.