

STATE OF ALASKA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2011

Source
HR 8

House
Resolve No.
8



Opposing the designation by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of 3,016 square miles of upper Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay as critical habitat for beluga whales.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

WHEREAS the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration designated 3,016 square miles of upper Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay as critical habitat for beluga whales; and

WHEREAS the designation failed to adequately consider the economic effects a critical habitat designation would have on shipping, oil and gas exploration and production, mining, and all other forms of economic activity in the inlet; and

WHEREAS the National Marine Fisheries Service has stated that the additional regulatory oversight will cost only an additional \$600,000 over the next decade; and

WHEREAS the cost estimate does not factor in the extra costs that existing and future operations may have to pay to meet unnecessary new regulatory burdens; and

WHEREAS scientists in the National Marine Fisheries Service have concluded that the primary reason for the population decline was the unsustainable subsistence harvest in the

1990s; and

WHEREAS a cooperative harvest management plan was put into place in 2000; and

WHEREAS scientists predicted signs of recovery of the beluga whale population would take five to seven years after a cooperative harvest management plan was instituted; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, the population of beluga whales was 278, and in 2010, the population was 340, which is a four percent increase a year; and

WHEREAS there is little evidence that human activity has harmed the beluga whale's environment, migration, or ecology; and

WHEREAS there is little evidence that commercial or sport fishing is harming the beluga whale population; and

WHEREAS the commercial and sport fishing industries could be gravely threatened by a critical habitat designation because the beluga whale's primary food source is fish; and

WHEREAS lost development opportunities because of critical habitat designations could ultimately lead to lost revenue to the State of Alaska and to local governments; and

WHEREAS all three members of Alaska's Congressional delegation and Governor Sean Parnell are opposed to the critical habitat designation; and

WHEREAS designation of broad areas of municipal, commercial, and industrial interest, without any known or identifiable link between activities in those areas and the conservation status of the Cook Inlet beluga whale, is contrary to the public interest; and

WHEREAS the conservation benefits, which are entirely uncertain and speculative, are outweighed by the costs and impediments posed by critical habitat in this instance in most, if not all, of the proposed designation area;

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives opposes the designation by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of 3,016 square miles of upper Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay as critical habitat for beluga whales.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States; the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable John Boehner, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Gary F. Locke, United States Secretary of Commerce; Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, United States

Department of Commerce; Kaja Brix, Director, Protected Resources Division, Alaska Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; the Honorable Dan Sullivan, Mayor of the Municipality of Anchorage; the Honorable DeLena Johnson, Mayor of the City of Palmer; the Honorable Verne E. Rupright, Mayor of the City of Wasilla; the Honorable Larry DeVilbiss, Mayor of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough; the Honorable James C. Hornaday, Mayor of the City of Homer; the Honorable Pat Porter, Mayor of the City of Kenai; the Honorable Peter A. Micciche, Mayor of the City of Soldotna; the Honorable David R. Carey, Mayor of the Kenai Peninsula Borough; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.