

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 8

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

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Introduced: 4/20/23

Referred: House Special Committee on Fisheries, Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Encouraging the Department of Fish and Game to adopt certain regulations relating to**
2 **fisheries bycatch.**

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

4 **WHEREAS** the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
5 authorizes the state to have a majority of six seats on the 11-member North Pacific Fishery
6 Management Council; and

7 **WHEREAS** the North Pacific Fishery Management Council is given authority to
8 manage fisheries in the Arctic Ocean, Bering Sea, and Pacific Ocean seaward of the state; and

9 **WHEREAS** all fisheries managed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council
10 have bycatch, which the Magnuson-Stevens Act defines as "fish which are harvested in a
11 fishery, but which are not sold or kept for personal use, [including] economic discards and
12 regulatory discards"; and

13 **WHEREAS** National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act provides that
14 fisheries-related conservation and management measures must, to the extent practicable,
15 minimize bycatch and, to the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality of
16 such bycatch; and

1 **WHEREAS** current conservation and management measures implemented by the
2 North Pacific Fishery Management Council, while allowing for the harvest of hundreds of
3 millions of pounds of seafood, also annually result in tens of millions of pounds of bycatch in
4 the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska waters seaward of the state; and

5 **WHEREAS** virtually all bycatch is currently discarded as dead fish; and

6 **WHEREAS** many of the species discarded as bycatch are species that are commonly
7 sold, processed, and consumed as marine protein, yet these fish are discarded as bycatch
8 because they have been caught with the wrong gear, at the wrong time, or outside what the
9 existing regulatory structure permits; and

10 **WHEREAS** adopting regulations that permit fish caught as bycatch to be legally
11 retained instead of being of discarded as they are now would reduce fishery bycatch in
12 accordance with National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act; and

13 **WHEREAS** changes in regulations to incrementally allow fishers to retain fish that
14 are currently discarded as bycatch would reduce waste and affirm the intrinsic value of food
15 conservation; and

16 **WHEREAS** incrementally increasing the quantity and variety of fish currently
17 discarded as bycatch that fishers of the state may legally harvest would improve stewardship
18 of state seafood resources and increase the quantity of seafood available to feed Alaskans,
19 Americans, and the world; and

20 **WHEREAS** Governor Dunleavy established the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force
21 and commissioned the task force for the purpose of "exploring the issue of bycatch and
22 providing recommendations to policy makers with the goal of improving the health and
23 sustainability of Alaska's fisheries, and protecting Alaska's record as a leader of fisheries'
24 conservation and sustainability"; and

25 **WHEREAS** one of the recommendations of the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force
26 was that "[t]he State of Alaska should support taking incremental measures through the
27 regulatory process to improve bycatch utilization with a particular focus on species that are
28 otherwise marketable but are caught with non-targeted gear, or discards in a directed fishery
29 that are required by regulation";

30 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives encourages the Department of
31 Fish and Game, through the department's regulatory authority, and the commissioner of fish

1 and game, through the commissioner's seat on the North Pacific Fishery Management
2 Council, to support actions and regulatory changes on both the state and federal levels to
3 increase utilization of fish that would otherwise become economic discards; and be it

4 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives encourages the
5 Department of Fish and Game and the commissioner of fish and game, through the
6 commissioner's seat on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, to evaluate the
7 economic value that could be realized through better utilization of bycatch and the benefits to
8 fishery management derived from better utilization of bycatch.