

# ALASKA STATE SENATE

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## Senator Mike Cronk

### Sponsor Statement for SB 161

**“An Act relating to the use of certain trawl or dredge fishing gear in state water; and providing for an effective date.”**

In 2021, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) prohibited all chinook and chum salmon fishing on the Yukon River due to the catastrophically low salmon populations. In 2024, this regulation evolved into a seven-year, international moratorium on all chinook salmon fishing.

Due to the mismanagement and overharvesting of our fish, the dozens of communities along the Yukon cannot subsist on salmon, as they have done for hundreds of generations. This same phenomenon is not just exclusive to up-river communities; several fisheries in 2024 were forced to close in Kodiak due to the levels of bycatch by salmon and pollock trawlers. Over 2,000 chinook salmon were caught as bycatch and discarded, which jeopardized the careful, sustainable management of the declining chinook population.

Article VIII of the Constitution of the State of Alaska dictates that the State of Alaska utilize its marine resources for the maximum benefit and common use of the people, and to maintain the sustained yield of fish and all other replenishable resources.

Over the past few decades, however, the destructive commercial practice of bottom trawling has led to Alaska’s fish being depleted for the maximum benefit of trawlers at the expense of rural communities.

SB 161 puts an end to bottom trawling in state waters beginning in 2028 and directs ADF&G to study and report to the legislature on the effects of bottom trawling, the condition of Alaska’s seafloor, and the quantity of bycatch by species taken by bottom trawl and dredge fishing gear.

Fishing should be an activity for all Alaskans – commercial fishers, subsistence fishers, and sport fishers alike. Unfortunately, this will never be the case so long as bottom trawling is permitted in our waters. I strongly urge your support for SB 161 so that all Alaskans can benefit from our fish resources.

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