

# **UNITED SOUTHEAST ALASKA GILLNETTERS**

**Box 2196, Petersburg AK 99833 \* (253) 279-0707 \* [usag.alaska@gmail.com](mailto:usag.alaska@gmail.com) \* [akgillnet.org](http://akgillnet.org)**

USAG'S MAIN PURPOSE IS TO PROTECT, SERVE AND ENHANCE SOUTHEAST ALASKA'S COMMERCIAL GILLNET FISHERY

January 24, 2023

Senator Lisa Murkowski

522 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski,

United southeast Gillnetters are writing today to voice our support of the SEAK troll fleet in their efforts to counter the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit, which could result in the closure of the SEAK commercial troll fishery. The success of this lawsuit would set a precedence that could open the door to a plethora of lawsuits that could affect numerous Alaska fisheries. The extra-territorial aspects, and the fact that it would take precedent over the Pacific Salmon Commission Treaty is alarming.

The loss of the troll fishery would be a devastating blow to the economy of the region. Most of these troll dollars stay in state, as approximately 85% are Alaska residents and there are trollers in nearly every SE community. In 2022, commercial troll had an ex-vessel value of approximately \$35M and an average of \$85M in total SE economic output over the last several years. The region, and the state, will struggle mightily should this lawsuit move forward. The people here know it. Communities are considering donating public money to finance the defense fund. They realize the draconian impact this represents.

The State of Alaska has committed to fighting this lawsuit. At this time, it is unclear to us if NMFS intends to.

It's our ask today that you encourage NMFS to continue to:

- a) Appeal any decision that does not protect Alaska's sustainable troll fishery,
- b) Commit all necessary resources to timely National Marine Fisheries Service 2019 Biological Opinion (BiOp) revisions,
- c) Provide interim Endangered Species Act coverage to the Southeast Alaska troll fishery, if needed, while the BiOp is revised.

Please take the necessary steps to advise the NMFS it is of the utmost importance to do whatever is necessary to implement a temporary Incidental Take Statement that allows the troll fishery to remain open, while this lawsuit courses through the legal system. Our understanding is that this will allow them to fish until NMFS can produce a revised Biological Opinion.

United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters represents the interest of 474 SEAK permit holders, and is committed to preserving the economics of our fishery, the region, and the fishing industry in general. Our organization is community based throughout the region, with chapters in Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka, Juneau, and Haines. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Max Worhatch', with a stylized, flowing script.

Max Worhatch, Executive Director, USAG

Cc: Senator Dan Sullivan

Representative Mary Peltola

Doug Vincent-Lang

Alaska Trollers Association



**PETERSBURG BOROUGH  
RESOLUTION #2023-02**

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE SOUTHEAST ALASKA TROLL FISHERY AND  
URGING THE NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE AND THE ALASKA  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME TO COMMIT THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO  
DEFEND ALASKA'S FISHERIES**

**WHEREAS**, commercial fishing is a mainstay of Petersburg's economy and the largest private sector employer in the State of Alaska; and

**WHEREAS**, the Southeast Alaska troll fleet is the second largest fleet in Alaska with 44% of fishing income to trollers being derived from their Chinook catch; and

**WHEREAS**, approximately 22% of the Southeast Alaska troll fleet permits are home-ported in Petersburg; and

**WHEREAS**, 133 unique troll permits reported Petersburg as port of landing in the 2021 troll fish ticket records; and

**WHEREAS**, 14% of the total 2021 winter chinook troll fishery catch was landed in Petersburg; and

**WHEREAS**, commercial salmon trolling is a year-round contributor to Petersburg's economy and sustains year-round employment in the fishing, processing, and support sector industries; and

**WHEREAS**, including fishing, processing, and all related multiplier effects, the troll fleet has a total economic impact in Petersburg of approximately \$4.25 million annually, as measured in terms of total output; and

**WHEREAS**, the lawsuit filed by the Wild Fish Conservancy against the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) threatens to close the Southeast troll fishery despite that closure providing no meaningful benefits to Southern Resident Killer Whales; and

**WHEREAS**, the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit has the potential to impact other Southeast fisheries; and

**WHEREAS**, the community of Petersburg will suffer severe economic hardship if the Southeast troll fishery is closed.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Assembly for the Petersburg Borough strongly urges that:

1. NMFS prioritize preparation of the necessary documents and processes to support prosecution of the Southeast winter and summer troll fisheries; and
2. NMFS and Alaska Department of Fish & Game commit the necessary resources to effectively defend Alaska's fisheries and the Southeast troll fishery in particular; and
3. All necessary and available state, federal or private resources be made available to support lawsuit defendants and intervenors; and

4. The State of Alaska work with Alaska's Congressional delegation to protect Alaska's fisheries from present and future misdirected or malicious lawsuits.

**PASSED AND APPROVED by the Petersburg Borough Assembly on February 6, 2023..**

**ATTEST:**

  
Debra K. Thompson, Borough Clerk

  
Mark Jensen, Mayor



Armstrong-Keta, Inc.  
PO Box 1075, Sitka, AK, 99835  
Phone: (907)586-3443  
Email: aki@ak.net

### **AKI Resolution on the Wild Fish Conservancy Lawsuit**

Whereas Armstrong-Keta, Inc.'s mission is to enhance and support the commercial and sport fishing fleets, the rural communities, and the fishing-related businesses of southeast Alaska with research into salmon enhancement and the production of additional salmon; and

Whereas commercial fishing is a mainstay of Alaska's economy and the largest private sector employer in the state; and

Whereas the troll fleet is the second largest fleet in Alaska; and

Whereas 44% of the fishing income to trollers is derived from their Chinook catch; and

Whereas commercial salmon trolling is a year-round contributor to Southeast Alaska economy and sustains year-round employment in the fishing, processing, and support sector industries; and

Whereas including fishing, processing, and all related multiplier effects, the troll fleet has a total economic impact of approximately \$85 million for the whole of Southeast annually, as measured in terms of total output; and

Whereas the lawsuit filed by the Wild Fish Conservancy against the National Marine Fisheries Service threatens to close the Southeast troll fishery despite that closure providing no meaningful benefits to Southern Resident Killer Whales; and

Whereas the Wild Fish Conservancy has pledged to eliminate mixed stock fisheries and eliminate hatcheries; and

Whereas the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit has the potential to impact other Southeast Fisheries thru effects on the Pacific Salmon Treaty, a new Biological opinion and the Section 7 take permit; and

Whereas the communities of Southeast will suffer severe economic hardship if the Southeast troll fishery is closed.

Therefore, be it resolved Armstrong-Keta, Inc. urges in the strongest possible terms that:

NMFS prioritize preparation of the necessary documents and processes to support prosecution of the Southeast winter and summer troll fisheries; and

NMFS and ADFG commit the necessary resources to effectively defend Alaska's fisheries and the Southeast troll fishery in particular; and

All necessary and available state, federal and private resources be made available to support lawsuit defendants and intervenors through all possible appeals; and

The State of Alaska work with Alaska's Congressional delegation to protect Alaska's fisheries from present and future misdirected or malicious lawsuits.

Bryanna Torgeson  
General Manager AKI

Approved: February 8, 2023



SSRAA  
Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association, Inc.  
14 Borch Street, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901  
P: 907.225.9605 F: 907.225.1348

### **SSRAA Resolution on the Wild Fish Conservancy Lawsuit**

Whereas the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association's mission is to enhance and rehabilitate salmon production in southern Southeast Alaska to the optimum social and economic benefit of salmon users; and

Whereas commercial fishing is a mainstay of Alaska's economy and the largest private sector employer in the state; and

Whereas the troll fleet is the second largest fleet in Alaska; and

Whereas 44% of the fishing income to trollers is derived from their Chinook catch; and

Whereas commercial salmon trolling is a year-round contributor to Southeast Alaska economy and sustains year-round employment in the fishing, processing, and support sector industries; and

Whereas including fishing, processing, and all related multiplier effects, the troll fleet has a total economic impact of approximately \$85 million for the whole of Southeast annually, as measured in terms of total output; and

Whereas the lawsuit filed by the Wild Fish Conservancy against the National Marine Fisheries Service threatens to close the Southeast troll fishery despite that closure providing no meaningful benefits to Southern Resident Killer Whales; and,

Whereas the Wild Fish Conservancy has pledged to eliminate mixed stock fisheries and eliminate hatcheries; and

Whereas the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit has the potential to impact other Southeast Fisheries through effects on the Pacific Salmon Treaty, a new Biological opinion and the Section 7 take permit.

Whereas the communities of Southeast will suffer severe economic hardship if the Southeast troll fishery is closed.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association urges in the strongest possible terms that:

NMFS prioritize preparation of the necessary documents and processes to support prosecution of the Southeast winter and summer troll fisheries; and,

NMFS and ADFG commit the necessary resources to effectively defend Alaska's fisheries and the Southeast troll fishery in particular; and

All necessary and available state, federal and private resources be made available to support lawsuit defendants and intervenors through all possible appeals; and

The State of Alaska work with Alaska's Congressional delegation to protect Alaska's fisheries from present and future misdirected or malicious lawsuits.

  
Susan Doherty

General Manager SSRAA

Approved: January 7, 2023



## **Killer Whale Lawsuit Against SE Trollers**

Whereas commercial fishing is a mainstay of Alaska's economy and the largest private sector employer in the state; and

Whereas the troll fleet is the second largest commercial fleet in Alaska; and

Whereas between 2000-2018, the troll fleet landed on average 3.02 million pounds of Chinook salmon each year at an average value of \$11.7 million; and

Whereas between 2000-2018, Chinook accounted for 44% of the troll fleet's annual ex-vessel earnings on average and in 2015 made up 58% of the fleet's income; and

Whereas approximately 1,450 fishermen/women earn income directly from the troll fishery, including skippers (permit holders) and crew, with total direct, indirect and induced labor income estimated at \$28.5 million; and

Whereas, in 2018, the residents of the Prince of Wales Island-Hyder Census Area (Craig, Klawock, Thorne Bay, Coffman Cove, Hydaburg, Metlakatla, Kake and other communities) landed 17% of the Alaska resident troll Chinook harvest and 15% of the total troll Chinook harvest value; and

Whereas in 2021, Craig ranked 30th in the nation for commercial seafood landings (21 million pounds) and 52nd in value (\$22.7 million), out of 137 of the nation's top fishing ports; and

Whereas commercial salmon trolling is a year-round contributor to the Southeast Alaska economy and sustains year-round employment in the fishing processing and support sector industries; and

Whereas including fishing, processing and all retailer multiplier effects, the troll fleet has a total economic impact of approximately \$85 million for the whole of Southeast annually, as measured in terms of total output; and

Whereas the lawsuit filed by the Wild Fish Conservancy against the National Marine Fisheries Service threatens to close the Alaska winter and summer troll fisheries despite those closures providing no meaningful benefits to Southern Resident Killer Whales; and

Whereas the Wild Fish Conservancy has pledged to eliminate mixed stock fisheries and eliminate hatcheries; and

Whereas the communities of Southeast will suffer severe economic hardship if the troll fishery is closed; then

Therefore, be it resolved that the ADFG Klawock Advisory Committee urge in the strongest possible terms that:

NMFS and ADFG commit the necessary resources to effectively defend Alaska's fisheries and the troll fishery in particular; and

All necessary and available state, federal or private resources be made available to support lawsuit defendants and intervenors; and



The State of Alaska work with Alaska's Department of Law and the Congressional delegation to protect Alaska's fisheries from present and future misdirected or malicious lawsuits.

ADFG Klawock Advisory Committee

**CITY OF PORT ALEXANDER**

**PO BOX 8068**

**PORT ALEXANDER, ALASKA 99836**

**907-568-2211**

**cityofportalexander@yahoo.com**

**RESOLUTION 23-02**

**A Resolution to support the Southeast Alaska Troll Fisheries**

Whereas Southeast Alaska salmon trolling has historically been one of the main sources of Port Alexander's economic existence;

Whereas the community of Port Alexander will suffer severe economic hardship if the Southeast Alaska troll fishery is closed;

Whereas the Wild Fish Conservancy (WFC), a Seattle-based organization, has singled out the Southeast Alaska troll fishery in a lawsuit against National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) threatening to close the Southeast Alaska troll fishery despite that closure providing no meaningful benefit to the Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW);

Whereas the WFC lawsuit challenges NMFS's Biological Opinion regarding Southeast Alaska troll fishery and the impact of Washington's Chinook and Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW);

Whereas the Magistrate for the US Western Washington District Court recommendations in this lawsuit contradicts NMFS conclusion that the Incidental Take Permit (ITP) that allows Southeast Alaska's troll fishery to harvest Chinook year-round would not appreciably reduce the likelihood of both survival and recovery of the SRKW or destroy or adversely modify their designated critical habitat;

Whereas science tells us that cutting harvest is not going to be enough to restore Washington local Chinook populations and will do nothing to help SRKW;

Whereas SRKW are threatened by urbanization, toxic water pollutants and noise disturbance in their critical habitat and

Whereas fish managers recognize that continued disturbance and degradation

of habitat, not fisheries, are the primary problem limiting the viability of the Puget Sound Chinook; and, therefore be it

Resolved: That the City of Port Alexander urges the Magistrate take a hard look at the facts that Alaska Trollers Association has provided;

In the strongest possible terms consider the devastating economic impacts shutting down the Southeast Alaska troll fishery would have on many small Southeast Alaska communities; and, therefore be it further

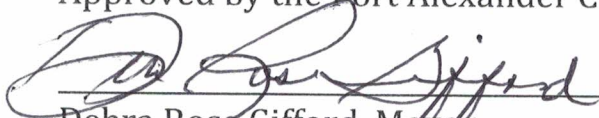
Resolved: That the City of Port Alexander urges the NMFS to prioritize preparations of the necessary documents and processes to support the continuation of the Southeast Alaska troll fishery;

That NMFS and Alaska Department of Fish and Game commit the necessary resources to effectively defend Alaska's fisheries and the Southeast Alaska troll fishery in particular;

That the State of Alaska and Federal resources be made available to support lawsuit defendants and intervenors through all possible appeals and

The State of Alaska work with Alaska's Congressional delegation to protect Alaska's fisheries from present and future misdirected or malicious lawsuits.

Approved by the Port Alexander City Council on January 25, 2023



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Debra Rose Gifford, Mayor



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Shanna Smith, City Clerk

**Become a Member Today!**  
<https://www.seiners.net/membership/>

**Southeast Alaska Seiners  
Association  
PO Box 6238  
Ketchikan, AK 99901**



January 31, 2023

Senator Lisa Murkowski  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Dan Sullivan  
302 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Mary Peltola  
153 Cannon HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Representative Peltola,

The Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SEAS) is writing to voice our support of the Southeast Alaska troll fleet in their efforts to counter the lawsuit brought by the Wild Fish Conservancy (a conservation organization based in Washington State) against the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

This lawsuit specifically attacks Alaska's management of its Chinook salmon fisheries under the Pacific Salmon Treaty and could result in the closure of the winter and summer Southeast Alaska commercial troll fishery.

The lawsuit argues that Alaska fisheries threaten the survival of several ESA-listed Chinook salmon stocks in Washington and Oregon, and thus, the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales that depend on Chinook salmon for food. Judge Jones supported their claims. This

lawsuit does not attack similar fisheries that occur off the coasts of Washington and Oregon despite similar impacts.

Wild Fish Conservancy's statements also make no mention of challenges currently faced by Chinook salmon and Southern Resident Killer Whales on the West Coast. These challenges range from warming and acidification of ocean waters, chemical pollution, acoustic and physical disturbance from vessels and other noise sources, and dams blocking salmon's return to natal streams to spawn.

SEAS is asking our Washington D.C. delegation and State officials to strongly advise NMFS to quickly implement a Temporary Incidental Take Statement that allows the Alaska troll fishery to remain open while this lawsuit progresses through the legal system. This will allow trollers to fish until NMFS can produce a revised Biological Opinion.

SEAS believes in the continued harvest of salmon which has been responsibly and sustainably managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) since 1959.

Sincerely,

Phil Doherty – Executive Director SEAS

Cc: Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy

ADF&G Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang

ADF&G Extended Jurisdiction Manager Dani Evenson

Alaska Trollers Association Amy Daugherty, Executive Director

**CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA  
RESOLUTION NO. 2023-02**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA SUPPORTING THE  
SOUTHEAST ALASKA TROLL FISHERY**

**WHEREAS**, commercial fishing is a mainstay of Sitka's economy and the largest private sector employer in the state; and

**WHEREAS**, the Southeast Alaska troll fleet is the second largest fleet in Alaska and the largest fleet in Southeast Alaska; and

**WHEREAS**, approximately 30% of the troll fleet is based in Sitka; and

**WHEREAS**, 60% of the winter chinook troll fishery catch and approximately 40% of the total Southeast troll catch is landed in Sitka; and

**WHEREAS**, commercial salmon trolling is a year-round contributor to Sitka's economy and sustains year-round employment in the fishing, processing, and support sector industries; and

**WHEREAS**, including fishing, processing, and all related multiplier effects, the troll fleet has a total economic impact in Sitka of approximately \$34 million annually, as measured in terms of total output; and

**WHEREAS**, the lawsuit filed by the Wild Fish Conservancy against the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) threatens to close the Southeast troll fishery despite that closure providing no meaningful benefits to Southern Resident Killer Whales; and

**WHEREAS**, the community of Sitka will suffer severe economic hardship if the Southeast troll fishery is closed.

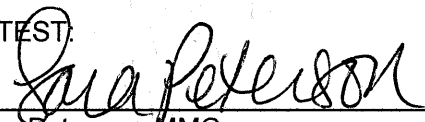
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka urges in the strongest possible terms that:

1. NMFS prioritize preparation of the necessary documents and processes to support prosecution of the Southeast winter and summer troll fisheries; and
2. NMFS and Alaska Department of Fish and Game commit the necessary resources to effectively defend Alaska's fisheries and the Southeast troll fishery in particular all the way to the highest court in the land; and
3. All necessary and available state, federal or private resources be made available to support lawsuit defendants and intervenors; and
4. The State of Alaska work with Alaska's Congressional delegation to protect Alaska's fisheries from present and future misdirected or malicious lawsuits.

**PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED** by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska on this 24th day of January, 2023.

  
Kevin Mosher, Deputy Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Sara Peterson, MMC  
Municipal Clerk

1<sup>st</sup> and final reading: 1/24/2023

Sponsors: Christianson / Ystad





# UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

**Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 20229, Juneau AK 99802-0229

**Phone:** (907) 586-2820

**E-mail:** [ufa@ufa-fish.org](mailto:ufa@ufa-fish.org) **Website:** [www.ufa-fish.org](http://www.ufa-fish.org)

## **UFA Resolution on the Wild Fish Conservancy Lawsuit**

Whereas the United Fishermen of Alaska's mission is to promote and protect the common interest of Alaska's commercial fishing industry, as a vital component of Alaska's social and economic well-being; and

Whereas commercial fishing is a mainstay of Alaska's economy and the largest private sector employer in the state; and

Whereas the troll fleet is the second largest fleet in Alaska; and

Whereas 44% of the fishing income to trollers is derived from their Chinook harvest; and

Whereas commercial salmon trolling is a year-round contributor to Southeast Alaska economy and sustains year-round employment in the fishing, processing, and support sector industries; and

Whereas including fishing, processing, and all related multiplier effects, the troll fleet has a total economic impact of approximately \$85 million for the Southeast economy annually, as measured in terms of total output; and

Whereas the lawsuit filed by the Wild Fish Conservancy against the National Marine Fisheries Service threatens to close the Southeast winter and summer troll fishery despite that closure providing no meaningful benefits to Southern Resident Killer Whales; and,

Whereas the Wild Fish Conservancy has pledged to eliminate mixed stock fisheries and eliminate hatcheries; and

Whereas the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit has the potential to impact other Southeast Fisheries thru effects on the Pacific Salmon Treaty, a new Biological opinion and the Section 7 take permit; and

Whereas the communities of Southeast will suffer severe economic hardship if the Southeast troll fishery is closed.

Therefore, be it resolved that the United Fishermen of Alaska urges in the strongest possible terms that:

NMFS prioritize preparation of the necessary documents and processes to support prosecution of the Southeast winter and summer troll fisheries; and,

NMFS and ADFG commit the necessary resources to effectively defend Alaska's fisheries and the Southeast troll fishery in particular; and

All necessary and available state, federal and private resources be made available to support lawsuit defendants and intervenors through all possible appeals; and

The State of Alaska work with Alaska's Congressional delegation to protect Alaska's fisheries from present and future misdirected or malicious lawsuits.

Matt Alward  
President, United Fishermen of Alaska

Approved: January 12, 2023