

**CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 17(RES)**

**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA**

**TWENTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION**

**BY THE SENATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Offered: 3/23/99**

**Referred: Rules**

**Sponsor(s): SENATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**A RESOLUTION**

**1 Requesting that the National Marine Fisheries Service and the United States  
2 Congress act immediately to reverse the decline of the Cook Inlet beluga whale  
3 population and to regulate the harvest of the beluga whales in Cook Inlet until  
4 the beluga whale population has recovered.**

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

**6 WHEREAS** the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible under the  
**7 Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) for management and protection of beluga whales  
8 in Alaska; and**

**9 WHEREAS** NMFS has concluded that, although the data on population trends of Cook  
**10 Inlet beluga whales are incomplete, the Cook Inlet beluga whale population appears to have  
11 declined in recent years while harvest levels have increased substantially; and**

**12 WHEREAS** NMFS has concluded that the Cook Inlet beluga whale population was  
**13 at least 650 in 1994; and**

**14 WHEREAS** the most recent NMFS surveys place the Cook Inlet beluga whale  
**15 population at a minimum of 347; and**

**16 WHEREAS** environmental groups have recently petitioned NMFS to list the Cook

1 Inlet beluga whale population as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered  
2 Species Act; and

3 **WHEREAS** listing of this population under the Endangered Species Act would have  
4 significant negative effects on the economies of Cook Inlet as well as the entire state; and

5 **WHEREAS** there are procedures under the MMPA that provide for the regulation of  
6 the harvest of marine mammals; and

7 **WHEREAS** NMFS has apparently been reluctant to use its existing authority under  
8 the MMPA allowing for the regulation of harvests; and

9 **WHEREAS** continued delays by NMFS could further contribute to the decline in the  
10 Cook Inlet beluga whale population; and

11 **WHEREAS** the MMPA also specifically authorizes the Secretary of the United States  
12 Department of Commerce to enter into cooperative agreements with Alaska Native  
13 organizations to conserve marine mammals;

14 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the  
15 National Marine Fisheries Service to immediately begin the process of reviewing the status  
16 of Cook Inlet beluga whales to determine whether the status under the Marine Mammal  
17 Protection Act should be changed; and be it

18 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that  
19 the United States Congress immediately consider legislation amending the Marine Mammal  
20 Protection Act to require the National Marine Fisheries Service to regulate the harvest of Cook  
21 Inlet beluga whales in cooperation with the local Native subsistence users until the population  
22 has recovered; and be it

23 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that  
24 the United States Congress provide the National Marine Fisheries Service with adequate  
25 financial resources to secure, in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
26 and the local subsistence users, the information and management tools necessary to ensure that  
27 the Cook Inlet beluga whale population is not placed in jeopardy, that Alaskans dependent on  
28 the beluga whale resource are not unnecessarily penalized, and that associated industries in  
29 the state are not placed at risk.

30 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable William M. Daley, Secretary  
31 of the United States Department of Commerce; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the

- 1 Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S.
- 2 Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.