

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 44

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE BY REQUEST

Introduced: 3/18/04
Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Relating to research into the decline of the Southwest Alaska population of the Northern**
2 **Sea Otter in the western Gulf of Alaska.**

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

4 **WHEREAS** the Southwest Alaska population of the Northern Sea Otter in the
5 western Gulf of Alaska may have declined as much as 65 percent since the mid-1970s; and

6 **WHEREAS** the Southwest Alaska population of the Northern Sea Otter is found in
7 the nearshore water of the Aleutian Islands, the Alaska Peninsula, and the Kodiak
8 Archipelago; and

9 **WHEREAS** the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has recently proposed to list
10 the Southwest Alaska population of the Northern Sea Otter as threatened under the
11 Endangered Species Act; and

12 **WHEREAS** commercial fishing activity in the western Gulf of Alaska may be
13 restricted if the Southwest Alaska population of the Northern Sea Otter is listed under the
14 Endangered Species Act; and

15 **WHEREAS** coastal communities of western Alaska, and the State of Alaska, as a
16 whole, are heavily dependent upon the revenue generated by commercial fishing in the

1 adjacent nearshore water of the western Gulf of Alaska; and

2 **WHEREAS** Kodiak, a major commercial fishing port of the United States, is located
3 in the western Gulf of Alaska, the area of the sea otter population decline; and

4 **WHEREAS** the cause of the decline in abundance of the Southwest Alaska
5 population of the Northern Sea Otter is unknown; and

6 **WHEREAS** long-term studies are necessary to assess changes in the population of sea
7 otter off Alaska and to determine the extent of variability in sea otter population levels; and

8 **WHEREAS** previous surveys of sea otter population levels off western Alaska have
9 been sporadic and asynchronous;

10 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that the
11 United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the United States Congress provide \$5,000,000 a
12 year over the next five years to conduct research into the abundance of the Northern Sea Otter
13 and the cause of the decline of the Southwest Alaska population of the Northern Sea Otter in
14 the western Gulf of Alaska; and be it

15 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that
16 research regarding the Southwest Alaska population of the Northern Sea Otter be centered in
17 Kodiak with field stations located in the coastal communities of western Alaska where the
18 Northern Sea Otter occurs.

19 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Gale Norton, United States
20 Secretary of the Interior; the Honorable Steve Williams, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service,
21 U.S. Department of the Interior; the Honorable J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the U.S. House
22 of Representatives; the Honorable Ted Stevens, President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate and
23 member of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and to the Honorable Lisa Murkowski, U.S.
24 Senator, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska
25 delegation in Congress.