

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES**

February 2, 2004

9:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Paul Seaton, Chair
Representative Peggy Wilson, Vice Chair
Representative Dan Ogg
Representative Ralph Samuels
Representative Les Gara
Representative David Guttenberg

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Cheryll Heinze

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Mike Chenault

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 25
Relating to Alaska Wild Salmon Week, June 28 - July 4, 2004.

- MOVED HCR 25 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 32
Relating to the labeling of salmon and salmon food products.

- MOVED CSHJR 32(FSH) OUT OF COMMITTEE

DISCUSSION OF CUTS TO ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME,
COMMERCIAL FISHERIES DIVISION

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HCR 25
SHORT TITLE: ALASKA WILD SALMON WEEK
REPRESENTATIVE(S): WOLF

01/20/04	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/20/04	(H)	FSH, RES

02/02/04 (H) FSH AT 9:00 AM CAPITOL 124

BILL: HJR 32

SHORT TITLE: LABELING OF SALMON FOOD PRODUCTS

REPRESENTATIVE(s): KERTTULA

01/20/04 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

01/20/04 (H) FSH, L&C

02/02/04 (H) FSH AT 9:00 AM CAPITOL 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE KELLY WOLF

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the sponsor of HCR 25.

REPRESENTATIVE BETH KERTTULA

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the sponsor of HJR 32.

CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT, Staff

to Representative Paul Seaton

Alaska State Legislature

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during discussion of cuts to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Commercial Fisheries Division.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 04-2, SIDE A

Number 0001

CHAIR PAUL SEATON called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Representatives Seaton, Wilson, Ogg, Samuels, and Gara were present at the call to order. Representative Guttenberg arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HCR 25-ALASKA WILD SALMON WEEK

Number 0056

CHAIR SEATON announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 25, Relating to Alaska Wild Salmon Week, June 28 - July 4, 2004.

Number 0079

REPRESENTATIVE KELLY WOLF, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor, explained that the resolution is to promote Alaska wild salmon, "whether it be in the commercial industry, subsistence, or for traditional uses or tourism." He said Alaska has the largest commercial wild salmon fishery in the world and employs 29,000 people; nearly 95 percent of commercially caught salmon in the U.S. are harvested in Alaska. The state salmon harvest totals more than \$4.5 billion, making it extremely valuable to Alaska's economy. For visitors and [Alaskans] alike, sport fishing is one of the most popular activities; last year, approximately 370,000 resident and nonresident licenses were issued for sport fishing in the state.

REPRESENTATIVE WOLF said salmon has been a nutritional source for generations, and Alaskans consider wild salmon to be a large part of the state's heritage. Rich in omega-3 oils, salmon is a healthful food that can help lower cholesterol and reduce heart disease. Noting that HCR 25 would proclaim June 28 - July 4, 2004, as "Alaska Salmon Week," he said this proclamation will recognize the salmon industry as a huge part of Alaskan's lives and will raise public awareness of one of Alaska's most important industries by promoting and celebrating the catching and eating of salmon.

Number 0286

REPRESENTATIVE WOLF informed members that last year his office put together a poster to support and promote Alaska wild salmon; it included pictures from several sources, including the tourism industry and the commercial fishing industry, and was sent to all the members of Congress and to the state administration. He encouraged passage of HCR 25 and invited participation in producing another poster to promote Alaska wild salmon, which is what he said Alaska is most known for.

Number 0392

CHAIR SEATON informed members that Representative Wolf had clarified earlier that the written sponsor statement should say [370,000 instead of 470,000]. He noted that committee packets contain a number of letters, mostly from the Kenai Peninsula, but some from Southeast Alaska, the United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA), and fishermen across the state.

AN UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER moved [to put HCR 25, the original version, before the committee].

Number 0481

REPRESENTATIVE OGG [moved to report HCR 25 out committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal notes]. There being no objection, HCR 25 was reported from the House Special Committee on Fisheries.

Number 0540

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON commended the resolution and said she couldn't believe it hadn't happened years before.

CHAIR SEATON asked whether there is a way to make it annual.

REPRESENTATIVE WOLF said that's being looked at and that he'd like it to be an annual celebration.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked whether there are other recognitions taking place that week; she recalled one about drunken drivers, for example.

REPRESENTATIVE WOLF said he didn't know, other than the Fourth of July. [HCR 25 was reported from committee.]

HJR 32-LABELING OF SALMON FOOD PRODUCTS

CHAIR SEATON announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 32, Relating to the labeling of salmon and salmon food products.

Number 0725

CHAIR SEATON requested a motion to adopt the original bill version [Version 23-LS1508\D].

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON [moved to adopt HJR 32].

CHAIR SEATON announced that HJR 32 was before the committee.

Number 0773

REPRESENTATIVE BETH KERTTULA, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor, introduced Aurora Hauke, her staff, as the person who has done the majority of the work on the resolution. She told members

that she'd introduced a similar resolution two years before, in an effort to get better labeling for fisheries products, especially. She explained:

We all know how much better our fish is. And, indeed, around America, people are starting to ask for our fish. And I think that labeling will really help not only the industry, but people's health. In addition to just regular labeling of "wild" and "farmed", there's a country-of-origin labeling that we'd like to see placed on the fish when it's sold. So that's the effort. We've taken to heart some really good suggestions by members of the [Joint Legislative Salmon Industry Task Force] and those of you from fishing communities as well as the fishing industry.

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA informed members that there was a proposed amendment that a title amendment would go along with.

Number 0850

CHAIR SEATON brought attention to Amendment 1, a handwritten amendment provided by the sponsor that read [original punctuation provided]:

line 1: replace "salmon" with "fish", and replace "salmon" with "fishery".

CHAIR SEATON explained that the latter replaces "salmon food products" with "fishery food products".

Number 0880

AN UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER moved to adopt Amendment 1. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

CHAIR SEATON clarified that Version H, a proposed committee substitute (CS) in packets, wasn't being addressed.

Number 0954

REPRESENTATIVE OGG moved to adopt Amendment 2, also provided by the sponsor, which read [original punctuation provided]:

Page 1, line 3 through Page 2, line 8
Delete all language
Insert the following

"WHEREAS Americans deserve wholesome foods and information about the contents and production of their food supply; and

WHEREAS concerns have recently been raised about the safety of farmed fish; and

WHEREAS farmed fish are often fed antibiotics, hormones, and coloring agents and their environments are treated with various chemicals; and

WHEREAS Alaska's fish production is distinct from farmed because our stocks are wild, free-ranging, and therefore naturally wholesome and healthy; and

WHEREAS there are numerous outstanding issues and questions regarding public policy, fair trade, and the social and economic consequences of farmed fish production; and

WHEREAS more and more consumers are expressing a preference and requesting wild fish over farmed; and

WHEREAS both the Alaska Legislature and Congress have passed labeling laws specifically to inform consumers about fishery and other food products,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature supports the timely labeling of fishery food products for country of origin; coloring and other additives; genetic modification; and, to distinguish between wild and farmed fish in the marketplace."

AN UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER objected in order to hear what it does.

Number 0983

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA explained that there has been controversy about some of the reports mentioned in "the original CS" and to some of the stronger language, perhaps; it was felt that it would be better to be more positive about stating the desire to support [Alaska's] fish and have the labeling, but avoid some of the other, more controversial issues. She said Representative Ogg had pointed this out to her early on, and when the resolution was circulated to "the fisheries group," this was clearly thought to be the better route.

Number 1022

REPRESENTATIVE GARA commended Representatives Ogg and Kerttula for their efforts to not state as fact some things that are controversial. He said sometimes the legislature is a little loose with the language in resolutions.

AN UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER removed his objection.

CHAIR SEATON asked whether there was any further objection.

Number 1063

REPRESENTATIVE OGG complimented Representative Kerttula for taking the comments and "putting together something that hits right at the point and is very positive for Alaskans."

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA credited Representative Ogg, her staff, and Dale Kelley [executive director of the Alaska Trollers Association], especially. She said it was a group effort.

[The committee aide informed members that no one was signed up to testify.]

Number 1130

REPRESENTATIVE OGG moved to report HJR 32, as amended, out of committee [with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes]. There being no objection, CSHJR 32(FSH) was reported from the House Special Committee on Fisheries.

DISCUSSION OF CUTS TO ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME,
COMMERCIAL FISHERIES DIVISION

Number 1182

CHAIR SEATON turned attention to cuts to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), Commercial Fisheries Division. A member of the commercial fisheries finance subcommittee, he said there are approximately \$2 million in budget cuts to commercial fisheries; thus he'd requested that the division report on what programs and positions those cuts would specifically affect. Calling attention to his memorandum dated January 30, 2004, Chair Seaton informed members that there is a listing by region of the decrements from the GF [general fund] and the PERS [Public Employees' Retirement System] rate increase.

CHAIR SEATON pointed out that this would eliminate such items as sonar counters and weirs from the budget, which will definitely impact the harvest of Alaska's fish. For example, in Southeast Alaska it will cripple the management of the Yakutat gillnet and Lynn Canal drift gillnet fisheries; eliminated will be any money for herring; and there will be further cutbacks on sea cucumber harvest opportunities because of inability to do assessments.

These proposed cuts will result in underharvest of the resources, but also less collected from the raw fish tax. He asked House Special Committee on Fisheries members to look at the problems and perhaps provide a suggestion to the House Finance Committee and its subcommittees as to what is desired in the budget.

[Members offered observations, emphasizing monetary contributions from various fisheries and regions of the state; the need to maintain the habitat; the link between fishery harvests and research/management; and the need to deal with the budget crisis.]

CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT, Staff to Representative Paul Seaton, Alaska State Legislature, answered questions, saying the industry currently generates about \$50 million; he mentioned raw fish taxes, crewmember license fees, and permit licenses as examples of contributions to the general fund. He said the division currently accounts for about \$25 million of a \$50 million total for the department, and said the industry has been paying quite a bit back into the general fund. In further response, he said he didn't know the exact breakdown of how much of the raw fish tax goes directly to municipalities; he estimated 60 to 70 percent goes back to the general fund.

NOTE: This portion of the meeting was recorded and handwritten log notes were taken. A copy of the tape(s) [Tape 04-2, Side A] and log notes may be obtained by contacting the House Records Office at State Capitol, Room 3, Juneau, Alaska 99801 (mailing address), (907) 465-2214, and after adjournment of the second session of the Twenty-Third Alaska State Legislature this information may be obtained by contacting the Legislative Reference Library at (907) 465-3808.

ADJOURNMENT

Number 2206

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 9:32 a.m.