

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 35

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES RUFFRIDGE, Foster

Introduced: 2/23/26

Referred: House Special Committee on Fisheries, Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging federal fisheries managers to reduce trawl bycatch, maintain existing bycatch**
2 **limits, and strengthen enforcement; and supporting federal efforts aimed at reducing**
3 **bycatch and benthic habitat contact.**

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

5 **WHEREAS** the state's salmon species are central to the state's identity, economy,
6 food security, and cultural traditions, and support commercial, subsistence, and sport fisheries
7 across urban and rural communities alike; and

8 **WHEREAS** bottom dwelling species, such as crab, halibut, and other groundfish,
9 play an essential role in the marine ecosystem and contribute to habitat structure, biodiversity,
10 and long-term ecosystem resilience; and

11 **WHEREAS** trawl fisheries operating in federal water off the state's coast incidentally
12 capture significant numbers of salmon and bottom dwelling species as bycatch, resulting in
13 the waste of fish that are neither retained for sale nor available to state residents for food or
14 economic benefit; and

15 **WHEREAS** trawl bycatch reduces harvest opportunities for the state's fishermen,

1 undermines subsistence access, and disproportionately affects coastal and river communities
2 that depend on healthy, predictable salmon returns; and

3 **WHEREAS** repeated bycatch of salmon and benthic species places additional stress
4 on fish populations already facing warming oceans, changing food webs, habitat disturbance,
5 and other environmental pressures; and

6 **WHEREAS** contact between trawl gear and the seafloor can damage marine benthic
7 habitat, disrupting nursery areas and altering ecosystem functions necessary for the durability
8 of fish stocks over time; and

9 **WHEREAS** federal fisheries managers have, in some instances, raised allowable
10 bycatch limits rather than requiring meaningful operational changes to reduce incidental
11 catch, eroding public confidence in fisheries management and conservation commitments; and

12 **WHEREAS** increased bycatch limits risk normalizing waste of public resources held
13 in trust for all residents of the state, rather than reinforcing the principle that conservation and
14 utilization must proceed together; and

15 **WHEREAS** improved monitoring, electronic reporting, research, and accountability
16 measures have been identified at the federal level as necessary tools to reduce bycatch and
17 habitat effects, particularly in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Gulf of Alaska; and

18 **WHEREAS** the Alaska State Legislature has a long-standing interest in ensuring that
19 federal fisheries management decisions respect the state's constitutional mandate for sustained
20 yield and the needs of state communities that rely on fish for livelihoods and nutrition;

21 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the managers of federally
22 managed fisheries offshore of the state to require trawl vessels to fully process and donate all
23 salmon and other allowable bycatch for human consumption or other beneficial use to the
24 maximum extent practicable, rather than discarding bycatch at sea; and be it

25 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the North Pacific
26 Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service not to increase
27 bycatch limits and to ensure that existing limits are strictly enforced as true conservation caps;
28 and be it

29 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges federal fisheries
30 managers to institute significant penalties for the capture of bottom dwelling species in trawl
31 nets, reflecting the ecological value of benthic species and the long-term harm caused by

1 habitat disturbance; and be it

2 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports federal efforts to
3 expand research, electronic monitoring, and gear innovation aimed at reducing bycatch and
4 benthic habitat contact, and supports pairing that improved data with firm accountability and
5 enforcement.

6 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Donald J. Trump, President
7 of the United States; the Honorable Howard Lutnick, United States Secretary of Commerce;
8 the Honorable Dr. Neil Jacobs, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
9 and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrator; Angel Drobnica, Chair
10 of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and
11 the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Nicholas Begich, U.S.
12 Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.