

BY SEN. BINKLEY

1 IN THE SENATE

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 62

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IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

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SIXTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

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Relating to the bycatch of herring in

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the Bering Sea groundfish trawl fisher-

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ies.

8 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

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WHEREAS herring are caught incidentally in the Bering Sea and discard-

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ed by fisheries targeting other groundfish species, and this incidental

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catch is known as bycatch; and

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WHEREAS there is a significant relationship between the magnitude of

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the offshore harvest of herring and the conservation crisis facing discrete

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northern stocks of the western Alaska herring fisheries; and

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WHEREAS the Alaska Board of Fisheries has identified a serious re-

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source conservation problem with western Alaska herring stocks that are

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continuing to decline; and

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WHEREAS two western Alaska commercial sac-roe fisheries, Nelson Island

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and Nunivak Island, are projected to be closed in 1990; and

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WHEREAS closure of these fisheries will create an economic crisis in

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the affected communities; and

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WHEREAS continued decline of herring stocks will result in restric-

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tions or closures of the herring subsistence fishery which is a central

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component of the subsistence economies of the communities in the Nelson

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Island area; and

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WHEREAS the anticipated stock decline of 43 percent in the Togiak area

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will reduce stock abundance to near harvest threshold levels in 1990 and

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below the threshold for commercial harvests in 1991 if no recruitment is

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observed in 1990; and

1 WHEREAS similar declines are occurring in other western Alaska herring
2 stocks; and

3 WHEREAS the bycatch of herring by groundfish trawlers in the Bering
4 Sea is reported to amount to an exploitation rate of at least five percent,
5 but it is believed that the data on which this estimate is based represents
6 only a small proportion of the actual herring bycatch due to unobserved and
7 unreported discharges at sea; and

8 WHEREAS the North Pacific Fishery Management Council has failed to
9 control the bycatch of herring in the Bering Sea groundfish trawl fisher-
10 ies; and

11 WHEREAS the Board of Fisheries has removed provisions that would allow
12 an increase in the Dutch Harbor food and bait herring fishery in the event
13 that the harvest by the Togiak sac-roe herring fishery is below the allow-
14 able exploitation rate; and

15 WHEREAS the Board of Fisheries has directed the Department of Fish and
16 Game to close the Dutch Harbor bait fishery if subsistence herring harvests
17 are being affected anywhere in western Alaska; and

18 WHEREAS the efforts of the Board of Fisheries and the Department of
19 Fish and Game to address this issue and to support trawl closures to im-
20 prove the opportunity for resource recovery, including expanded state
21 enforcement within the territorial sea, are to be saluted and supported;

22 BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests
23 the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to address the herring bycatch
24 issue during its 1990 regulatory cycle; and be it

25 FURTHER RESOLVED that the council take emergency action to implement
26 amendments to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management
27 Plan to control herring bycatch during the critical period between July and
28 December 1990 when herring will be migrating through areas fished by the
29 groundfish trawl fisheries.

1 COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Robert A.
2 Mosbacher, Sr., Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce; the Honorable
3 Don W. Collinsworth, Chairman, North Pacific Fishery Management Council;
4 the Honorable Steven Pennoyer, Regional Director, Alaska Region, National
5 Marine Fisheries Service; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honor-
6 able Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S.
7 Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.