

BY SEN. BINKLEY

1 IN THE SENATE

2 SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 62

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 SIXTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5 Relating to the bycatch of herring in
6 the Bering Sea groundfish trawl fisher-
7 ies.

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

9 WHEREAS herring are caught incidentally in the Bering Sea and discard-
10 ed by fisheries targeting groundfish, and this incidental catch is known as
11 bycatch; and

12 WHEREAS there is a significant relationship between the magnitude of
13 the offshore harvest of herring and the conservation crisis facing discrete
14 stocks of the western Alaska herring fisheries; and

15 WHEREAS the Alaska Board of Fisheries has identified a serious re-
16 source conservation problem with western Alaska herring stocks that are
17 continuing to decline; and

18 WHEREAS two western Alaska commercial sac-roe fisheries, Nelson Island
19 and Nunivak Island, are projected to be closed in 1990; and

20 WHEREAS closure of these fisheries will create an economic crisis in
21 the affected communities; and

22 WHEREAS continued decline of herring stocks will result in restric-
23 tions or closures of the herring subsistence fishery which is a central
24 component of the subsistence economies of the communities in the Nelson
25 Island area; and

26 WHEREAS the anticipated stock decline of 43 percent in the Togiak area
27 will reduce stock abundance to near harvest threshold levels in 1990 and
28 below the threshold for commercial harvests in 1991 if no recruitment is
29 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 of herring at sea; and

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

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

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

20 WHEREAS the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, at its January
21 1990 meeting, put the public on notice that the council may take emergency
22 action on the herring bycatch issue at its April 1990 meeting; and

23 WHEREAS the council also decided to address the herring bycatch issue
24 during its 1990 regulatory amendment cycle;

25 BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests
26 the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to take emergency action at
27 its April 1990 meeting to implement herring bycatch controls before the
28 critical period between July and December 1990 when herring migrate through
29 areas fished by the groundfish trawl fleet; and be it

1 FURTHER RESOLVED that the council respond to the concerns of the
2 fishermen in western Alaska and of the State of Alaska during the 1990
3 regulatory amendment cycle as it addresses the herring bycatch issue.

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