

SJR

14

Original sponsor: Zharoff

1 IN THE SENATE

BY THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

2 HOUSE CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 14 (Resources)

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 FOURTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5 Urging the United States Fish and Wild-
6 life Service to postpone the proposed
7 cattle slaughter on Simeonof Island.

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

9 WHEREAS cattle have been on Simeonof Island since 1894; and

10 WHEREAS the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has indicated that
11 it plans to kill the cattle on this island; and

12 WHEREAS the people in the communities near Simeonof Island are suffer-
13 ing difficult economic times due to the decline of the fishery stocks; and

14 WHEREAS the people in the communities near Simeonof Island have used
15 the cattle on Simeonof Island as a supplemental food source in the past,
16 and would like to continue to do so in the future; and

17 WHEREAS there are cattle holding pens and loading chutes on Simeonof
18 Island to facilitate removal of the cattle; and

19 WHEREAS the Shumagin Village Corporation desires to transplant the
20 cattle from Simeonof Island to Unga Island, but the Shumagin Village Corpo-
21 ration may require until September 1985 in order to do so; and

22 WHEREAS the slaughter of the cattle would constitute a waste of thou-
23 sands of pounds of beef that could be used by needy Alaskans in the immedi-
24 ate area; and

25 WHEREAS the elimination of the cattle will be very expensive; and

26 WHEREAS the cost of the destruction of the cattle could be used to
27 better advantage to help the Shumagin Village Corporation transplant the
28 cattle to Unga Island;

29 BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that it respectfully

1 urges the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to postpone its ultimate
2 termination action related to the cattle until at least October 1985; and
3 be it

4 FURTHER RESOLVED that the legislature respectfully urges the United
5 States Fish and Wildlife Service to assist the Shumagin Village Corporation
6 in its effort to transplant the Simeonof Island cattle to Unga Island; and
7 be it

8 FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature urges the Alaska
9 delegation in Congress to ensure that the United States Fish and Wildlife
10 Service postpones the cattle slaughter on Simeonof Island until at least
11 October 1985.

12 COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Ronald
13 Reagan, President of the United States; the Honorable Donald Hodel, Secre-
14 tary of the Interior; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable
15 Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Repre-
16 sentative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.
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Alaska State Legislature

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MEMORANDUM

TO: House Resources Committee Members
FROM: Representative Adelheid Herrmann
DATE: February 25, 1985
SUBJECT: Background on Shumagin Island Cattle Issue

This memorandum provides back-up information regarding Senate Joint Resolution 14 (am) and similar resolutions which I have sponsored on the House side.

Background

Three islands within the Alaska National Maritime Wildlife Refuge currently support populations of wild cattle: Caton, Chernabura and Simeonof. The cattle of Caton and Chernabura were put there as a result of grazing permits issued by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the early 1960's; cattle have been on Simeonof Island since 1984.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which has inherited management of the islands, plans to eliminate all cattle from the three islands. The grazing permits originally issued by the BLM have expired and the cattle are now the responsibility of the USFWS. The USFWS wants to eliminate the cattle because the cattle, in the opinion of the USFWS, have overgrazed the islands and are otherwise damaging the habitat values of the islands. The original grazing permits issued by the BLM allowed for 275 head. During the late 1970's, the unmanaged population grew to over 700. More recently, the cattle population is estimated at 240. (The USFWS estimates the grazing capacity of the island as 300 head. Talbot, et al, 1984.)

In an effort to get rid of the cattle, the USFWS has offered to give away the cattle. In July of 1984, the USFWS began allowing unrestricted taking on the islands. During the late summer of 1984, local residents of the area, represented by the Shumagin Village Corporation approached

the USFWS with a plan to relocate cattle from Simeonof to near-by Unga Island. In contrast to many of the earlier proposals, the Shumagin Corporation proposal was a locally developed proposal based on the experience and expertise of people who live in the region.

Although the open taking period was to have ended officially in October, that deadline was extended until March 4th. On that date, the USFWS planned to shoot any cattle remaining on the island.

This prompted the resolution now before the Committee.

Current Situation

Local residents of the region remain interested in removing a large number of cattle from Simeonof where there are estimated to be 240 head. However, the Shumagin Corporation, which has been coordinating the relocation effort, requires additional time to finalize the transplant proposal.

Part of the difficulty involves getting consent for the use of Unga Island from all of the affected land owners with an interest in Unga Island. A substantial number of the landowners have provided letters of non-objection and it is anticipated that the rest will be forthcoming. Also, lining up a barge to transport the animals has proven difficult because of the there are only a few such vessels which are available in the region.

Local residents of the region want the USFWS to defer the cattle slaughter until the relocation plan can be implemented. As a practical matter, this means putting off the slaughter until the end of the September. This would allow local residents sufficient time to finalize arrangements and execute their plan.

Senate Joint Resolution 14 (am)

Senate Joint Resolution 14 (am) addresses the need for a brief delay in the USFWS cattle kill. The resolution calls upon the USFWS to hold off until October 1985 so that the cattle can be moved. In light of the fact that cattle have been on Simeonof since 1894, it is apparent that another six months will not make a material difference. Also, it should be noted that the USFWS estimates the Simeonof Island grazing capacity at about 300 head which is greater than the number of cattle currently on the island.

Although the resolution would not, of course, be binding on the federal government it would be an expression of support from the Legislature for a delay in order to accommodate the local interest in the wild cattle as a supplemental food resource.

Anyone who has had the opportunity to visit the lower Alaska Peninsula and knows how expensive freight and travel expenses are in this part of the state can readily appreciate the value of this locally available wild food resource.

During the Resources Committee meeting I will update the Committee on recent developments concerning this issue.