

HJR

59

Alaska State Legislature

Representative Carl E. Moses

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

House Joint Resolution 59

Reduction of wanton waste in North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea fisheries.

House Joint Resolution 59 addresses an issue of immediate concern to Alaska and its commercial fishing industry. In a May, 1993, report prepared for the Alaska Department of Fish & Game by Pacific Associates, the wanton waste of fishery resources in the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea fisheries was documented.

Discards of either dead or live fishery resources occur in these commercial fisheries for three basic reasons: economics, management policies and fishing practices. Discards sometimes occur because of the economic loss associated with processing the entire harvest. When species of little or no value are harvested along with the target species, there is no real economic incentive to discourage discarding.

Management induced discards occur for several reasons. There are federal regulations which prohibit fishermen utilizing certain gear types from retaining certain species. The fact that the fish may be dead or alive does not matter. This is called prohibited species catch. Groundfish fisheries in the North Pacific are managed by an open-access method with species quotas. Fishermen are interested in targeting their particular species as rigorously as possible before the allotted quota is reached. This method also lends itself to waste through discards of non-target species.

Fishing practices discards may be the result of direct action by fishermen or through a combination of management requirements and fishing practices. Some fishermen "prospect" for a closed-fishery species while targeting another species. Because they will harvest prohibited species while doing this, there is mortality associated with the non-targeted species. Technical modifications to gear to make it "legal" (e.g. modifying on-bottom trawl gear to mid-water trawl) can cause increased bycatch mortality.

HJR 59 urges Congress to either amend the Magnuson Fishery Management and Conservation Act or to enact other legislation to address the waste of fishery resources in the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea fisheries. Congress can utilize a variety of means to disallow fishery resource waste.

ADAK • AKUTAN • AMCHITKA • ATKA • ATTU • BELKOFSKI • CHERNOFSKI • CHIGNIK • CHIGNIK LAGOON • CHIGNIK LAKE
COLD BAY • DUTCH HARBOR • EGEGIK • EKWOR • FALSE PASS • IVANOF BAY • KING COVE • KING SALMON • KULIGANEK • LEVELOCK • NAKNEK
NELSON LAGOON • NEW STUYANOK • SAND POINT
SHEMYA • SQUAW HARBOR • UNGA

SPONSOR STATEMENT

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1994 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HJR 59

Revision Date: _____ Dept. Affected: _____
 Title: Relating to the reduction of wanton waste DRU: _____
in North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea fisheries Component: _____
 Sponsor: House Rules Committee
 Requestor: House Rules Committee COMPONENT SERIAL NO. _____

Expenditures/Revenues

(Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	0					
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	0					
CHANGE IN REVENUES	0					

FUND SOURCE

(Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF:Program Receipts						
1006 GF:MHTIA						
Other						
TOTAL	0					

Estimate of any current year (FY94) cost: \$ 0

POSITIONS

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

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 Division: _____ Date: March 2, 1994
 Approved by Commissioner: *Carl E. Moses* Date: March 2, 1994
 Agency: House of Representatives/Legislature

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**DISCARDS IN THE GROUND FISH FISHERIES
OF THE
BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS
& THE GULF OF ALASKA
DURING 1992**

prepared for

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game

by

Pacific Associates

May, 1993

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper identifies the amount and source of discards of groundfish, crab, halibut, herring and salmon resulting from the commercial groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska during calendar year 1992. Discards related to the directed commercial fisheries for crab and halibut are not identified.

The data base used to detail the groundfish discards was generated by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and reflects only the reports submitted to the NMFS by fishing vessel operators and/or processors, who are required by federal regulation to report their discards to the NMFS. Discard data for species other than groundfish, such as prohibited species catch (PSC), are from observer data generated by independent contract observers.

A significant variance in the amount of groundfish discards reported is found when comparing discard reports by the vessel operator and/or processor to discard reports by the independent contract observers. For example, in the 1992 Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands pollock fishery, vessel operators and/or processors reported total pollock discards of 47,772 mt while federal observers reported extrapolated pollock discards of 113,000 mt — or 237% greater than those reported by the vessel operators.

It is also noteworthy that the largely unobserved hook and line vessels in the Gulf of Alaska reported no discards of groundfish in the sablefish and Pacific cod directed fisheries in 1992.

As a result, the groundfish discard information depicted in this paper should be viewed as a conservative estimate of the actual discards which occurred in the 1992 groundfish fisheries.

The table below depicts the total groundfish harvest, the reported groundfish discards, and the prohibited species discards for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska during 1992:

	<u>mt</u>	<u>pounds</u>
Total Groundfish Catch	1,893,074	4,173,470,940
Total Groundfish Discards	229,999	507,055,795
Percent Discarded	12%	12%
Halibut Mortality	20,035,767	pounds
Chinook Salmon	49,571	fish
Other Salmon	50,420	fish
King Crab	148,401	crab
Bairdi Tanner Crab	3,967,622	crab
Other Crab	16,360,418	crab
Herring	1,080,280	pounds

With the exception of halibut, the mortality rate for fish returned to the ocean in the Alaskan groundfish fisheries is assumed to be 100% by the NMFS. Halibut mortality rates are displayed in Table 1 (page 4) for the various fisheries.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands

The following findings apply to the groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BS/AI) management area.

- A total of 462 million pounds of groundfish (12% of the total harvest) were discarded during 1992 in the BS/AI, according to vessel operator and/or processor reports.
- Trawl fisheries were responsible for 93% of the groundfish discards, while fixed gear accounted for 7% of the discards.
- In trawl fisheries, 47% of the discards consisted of the species being targeted.
- In fixed gear, 2% of the discards consisted of the species being targeted.
- The mortality of halibut taken as incidental bycatch totaled nearly 14 million pounds.
- The average size of halibut taken as bycatch in the trawl fisheries was 0.94 pounds per halibut; in the pot fisheries the average size was 2.16 pounds per halibut; and, in the hook and line fishery the average size was 11.94 pounds per halibut.
- 20.3 million crab were discarded (60% of this total came from the yellowfin sole trawl fishery).
- 73,000 salmon of all species were discarded (81% of this total came from the mid-water trawl pollock fishery).
- 1 million pounds of herring were discarded.

The following findings apply to specific fisheries in the BS/AI:

Mid-Water Trawl Pollock Fishery: From a percentage perspective, this was a relatively

clean fishery as 4% of the total groundfish harvest of 2.27 billion pounds was discarded. This "mid-water" fishery, however, had a higher incidental bycatch of bottom-dwelling animals than the bottom trawl pollock fishery: 2.2 million pounds of halibut mortality and 3.2 million crab.

Bottom Trawl Pollock Fishery: The total groundfish harvest was 360 million pounds. Of this amount, 18% (64 million pounds) was discarded. The PSC discard consisted of 1.7 million pounds of halibut mortality and 2.2 million crabs.

Yellowfin Sole Trawl Fishery: The total groundfish harvest was 354 million pounds; 38% (133 million pounds) was discarded, including 58.7 million pounds of yellowfin sole. Halibut bycatch mortality associated with the fishery was 1.55 million pounds, and 12.2 million crab were taken as bycatch.

Rocksole Trawl Fishery: The total groundfish harvest was 115.5 million pounds; 61% (70 million pounds) of the total catch was discarded, including twenty-two million pounds of rock sole and nineteen million pounds of pollock. The PSC discard consisted of 2 million crab and 1.6 million pounds of halibut mortality.

Pacific Cod Trawl Fishery: The total groundfish harvest was 146 million pounds; 36% (53 million pounds) was discarded. Halibut bycatch mortality was 3.5 million pounds.

Pacific Cod Hook & Line Fishery: The total groundfish harvest was 229 million pounds; 12% (29 million pounds) was discarded. Discards of Pacific cod accounted for less than one-tenth of one percent (618,000 pounds). Halibut bycatch mortality was 2.4 million pounds.

Pacific Cod Pot Fishery: The total groundfish harvest was 30.5 million pounds; 3% (1 million pounds) was discarded. Ninety-seven percent of the catch was the target species. 274,000 crab were taken as bycatch.

Gulf of Alaska

Discard information available for the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) management area varies significantly from that in the BS/AI. The following findings apply to the Gulf of Alaska management area.

- A total of 45 million pounds (9% of the total catch) of groundfish were discarded during 1992 in the GOA, according to vessel operator and/or processor reports.
- While the total catch in the GOA is approximately 16% of the total

catch in the BS/AI; the reported groundfish discards in the GOA are 9% of the reported groundfish discards in the BS/AI. This is likely due to greater observer coverage in the BS/AI.

- The total groundfish discard rate reported by the vessel operators in the GOA hook and line fishery is significantly less than 1%. This seems unexpectedly low.
- Trawl groundfish discard rates in the GOA are more reflective of the Bering Sea: 9% of the total groundfish harvest.
- Halibut bycatch mortality was 6.2 million pounds..
- The average size of halibut taken as bycatch was greater in the Gulf than the Bering Sea: 7.25 pounds per fish for trawl gear, 10.14 pounds per fish for pot gear, and 14.38 pounds per fish for hook and line.
- 26,500 salmon of all species were reported as discards.

The following findings apply to specific fisheries in the GOA:

Bottom Trawl Pollock Fishery: The total groundfish harvest was 53 million pounds; 6% (3 million pounds mt) of the harvest was discarded. 118,051 pounds of halibut mortality were associated with the fishery.

Mid-Water Trawl Pollock Fishery: The total groundfish harvest was 121 million pounds; 7% (8 million pounds) were discarded. Approximately 4,000 chinook salmon were taken as bycatch. Unlike the Bering Sea, there was little halibut bycatch mortality associated with this fishery.

Pacific Cod Trawl Fishery: The total reported groundfish harvest was 113 million pounds; 6% (6.6 million pounds) of the harvest was discarded. Halibut mortality associated with the fishery was 1.2 million pounds. 5,300 chinook salmon were also taken as bycatch.

Rockfish Trawl Fishery: The total reported groundfish harvest was 48 million pounds; 18% (8.7 million pounds) of the harvest was discarded. There were no discards of rockfish reported. Halibut mortality associated with the fishery was 1.1 million pounds. Over 5,000 salmon of all species were also taken.

Deepwater Flatfish Trawl Fishery: The total reported groundfish harvest was 34 million

pounds: 50% of the harvest was discarded. Halibut mortality was 1.3 million pounds.

Pacific Cod Hook and Line fishery: The total reported groundfish harvest was 32 million pounds. There were zero discards of groundfish reported; 98% of the reported harvest was Pacific cod. Halibut bycatch mortality associated with the fishery was 843,000 pounds.

Sablefish Hook and Line Fishery: The total reported groundfish harvest was 47.4 million pound; 93% of the total reported harvest was sablefish. Less than 2% of the total groundfish catch was reported as discard. Halibut bycatch mortality associated with the fishery was 1 million pounds.

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The data used in this paper, drawn exclusively from the NMFS 1992 records, is attached in appendices at the end of this paper.