

HJR

25

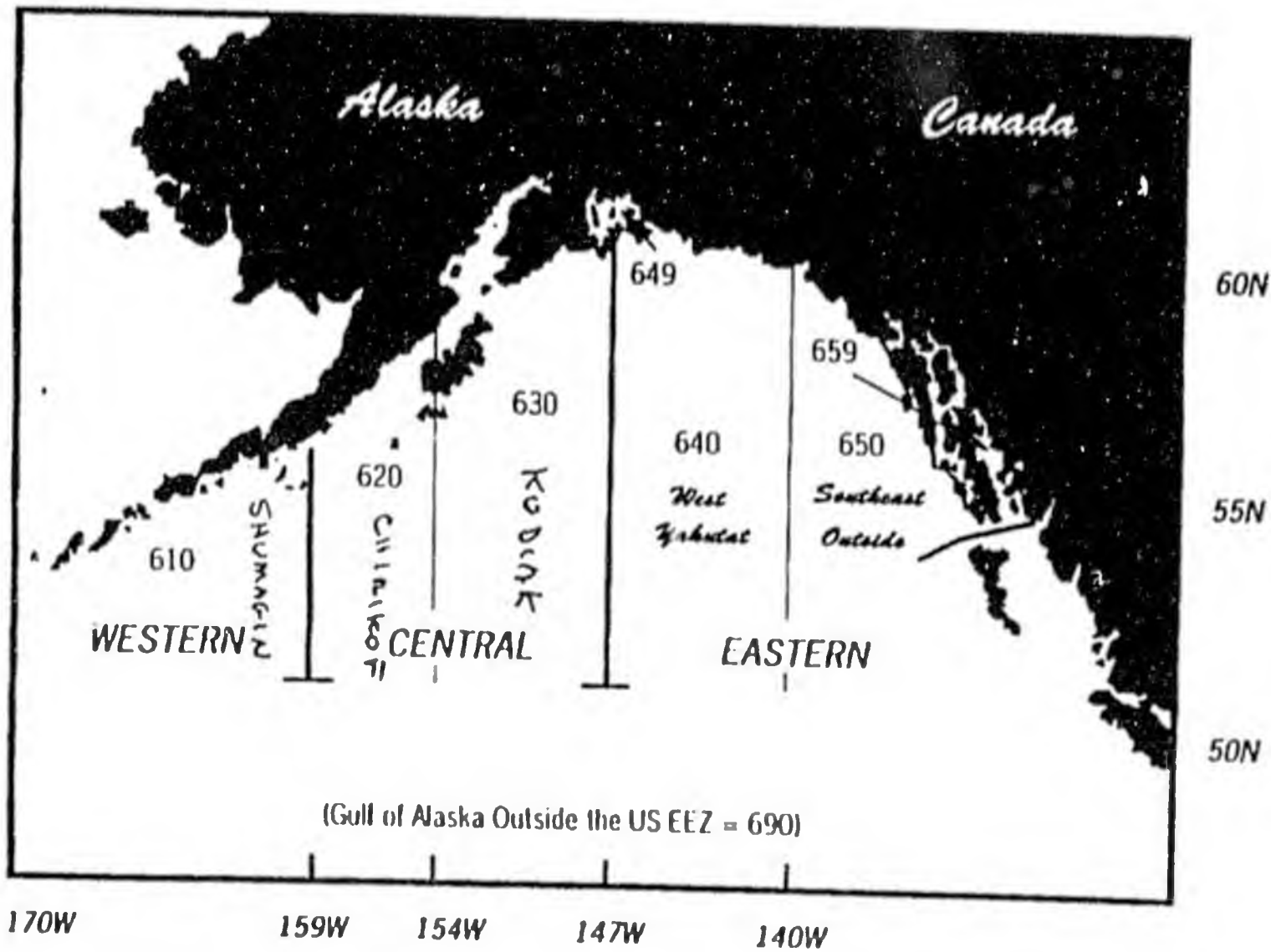


Chart 4. Gulf of Alaska Federal Reporting Areas

STATE OF ALASKA

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

SITKA FISH AND GAME ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Gov. Tony Knowles
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Ak. 99801-0001

Subject: Southeast Alaska Trawl Closure.

At our March 1, 1995 meeting, the Sitka Fish & Game Advisory Committee discussed and unanimously supported House Joint Resolution No. 25, now before the Alaska State Legislature, banning trawling east of 140 degrees longitude. The 14 committee members and approximately 30 members of the public in attendance all reflected the same points. 1. The trawl fisheries have no economic benefit to southeast communities. 2. The potential for environmental damage, inherent to the nature of the trawl fisheries, could severely impact existing traditional fisheries. 3. Trawl fisheries could destructively affect fish stocks, on which all southeast communities are economically dependent.

The Sitka Fish & Game Advisory Committee would appreciate all of the consideration and support you can give this matter as we feel it's of utmost importance to the future of Southeast Alaska.

Respectfully,



Sue Sturm, Chairman
617 Katlian B 23
Sitka Alaska, 99835

c/c Lt. Gov. Fran Ulmer
Rep. Austerman
Rep. Grussendorf
Senator Taylor
Senator Stevens
North Pacific Fishery Mgmt. Council
Alaska Longline Fisherman's Assoc.

Serving the Alaska Board of Fisheries and Alaska Board of Game
Board Support Section, P.O. Box 25526, Juneau, Alaska 99802-1526

Support Letters

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1995 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SSMJR 25

Revision Date: _____ Dept. Affected: Fish and Game
 Title: Sanctuary in eastern Gulf of Alaska BRU: CFMG
 Component: Fisheries Management
 Sponsor: Rep. Grossbardt
 Requester: House Fisheries Component Serial No. 1961

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01
PERSONAL SERVICES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TRAVEL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CONTRACTUAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
SUPPLIES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
EQUIPMENT	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
LAND & STRUCTURES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
GRANTS, CLAIMS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
MISCELLANEOUS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES						
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1008 GF/Program Receipts						
1008 GF/MHTLA						
Other						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY98) cost: \$ 0.0

POSITIONS

FULL-TIME					
PART-TIME					
TEMPORARY					

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: Geron Bruce
 Division: Commissioner's Office
 Approved by Commissioner: _____
 Agency: _____

Phone: 465-6143
 Date: 2/26/95
 Date: 2/23/95

PREPARER TO PROVIDE A
For further details

SLATIVE OFFICE

SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 3/21/95

FURTHER:

DATE TURNED INTO OFFICE: 4-7-95

Resources Committee considered CS SSHJR 25(RES)

Relating to a ban on trawling in the eastern Gulf of Alaska east of 140 degrees west longitude.

and recommends:

- be replaced with _____ CS _____ (_____)
- adopt previous _____ CS SS HJR 25 (RES)
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt Letter of Intent by _____ Committee
- further referral to the _____ Committee

Senate Bill:
 same title
 new title
 House Bill:
 same title
 technical change
 new SCR# _____

SIGNING; (NO PASS)	OR	OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS	NR	DNP	AM
<i>[Signature]</i>		<i>[Signature]</i>	✓		
<i>[Signature]</i>		<i>[Signature]</i>	✓		
<i>[Signature]</i>					
<i>[Signature]</i>					
<i>[Signature]</i>					
CHAIR: <i>[Signature]</i>					

NEW FISCAL NOTES:

Department	Date	Zero	Fiscal

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTES:*

Department	Date	Zero	Fiscal
P&G - CFMD	2-18	✓	

APPROPRIATION -- no fiscal note

*include fiscal notes accompanying Governor's bill



Alaska Longline Fishermen's Assoc.

P.O. Box 1229 Sitka, AK 99835 (907) 747-3400

TESTIMONY ON HJR 25: RESOLUTION TO BAN TRAWLING OFF SOUTHEAST ALASKA

Senate Resources Committee, April 8, 1995

My name is Linda Behnken. I am testifying on behalf of the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association, which has a membership that resides in communities throughout Southeast Alaska. I am testifying in support of HJR 25.

The socioeconomic health of Southeast Alaska depends on the region's coastal hook and line fisheries. The seafood industry is the largest private employer, and in many Southeast communities the only employer, providing a livelihood and a life-style to local residents. Residents of Southeast hold over 4,000 commercial fishing licenses; close to 6,000 people are employed as crew members. Another 1,000 people are employed in the shore-based processing sector, which has a total annual impact on the Southeast economy of \$547 million. The Southeast commercial fisheries pay over \$5.3 million in raw fish tax each year to local communities, and support a host of service industries. Down-sizing of the timber industry in Southeast has served to heighten the regional importance of the fisheries, and to emphasize the necessity of sustainable harvest. If properly managed, the seafood industry will be an increasingly important part of Southeast's socioeconomic base in the future.

The future socioeconomic health and stability of these communities is severely threatened by the incursion of trawl vessels into this hook and line zone. The oceanography, ecology and socioeconomic structure of Southeast combine to make this area unique--and uniquely vulnerable to trawl impact. The continental shelf/slope area, where most commercially valuable fish species reside, is rocky, relatively narrow, and close to the shore. The rocky substrate provides habitat for fragile deep water corals, making the benthic community particularly vulnerable to high-impact gear. The narrowness concentrates fishermen into the limited productive grounds, increasing potential conflicts between incompatible gear-types. The proximity of the shelf/slope to the shore makes the Southeast fishing grounds accessible to the local small boat fleet, boats too small in most cases to fish safely in other parts of the Gulf. The fishing families that operate these boats form the socioeconomic fabric of Southeast, weaving together livelihood and lifestyle.

The only trawlers that operate off Southeast are factory vessels. These vessels buy supplies, deliver product, and hire crew from outside the area--in most cases from outside Alaska. Although the harvest from Southeast waters constitutes only a fraction of each factory trawler's annual catch, the 7-15 factory trawlers that may receive Southeast licenses under the limited entry plan currently being considered by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council could have a major impact on the six thousand local fishermen who wholly depend on the Southeast fisheries. By taking as bycatch species important to local fisheries, factory trawlers could shut down the Southeast fisheries. In sum, factory trawlers contribute nothing to the Southeast economy yet could trigger closures of local fisheries and damage Southeast's uniquely sensitive habitat, wiping out the livelihood of Southeast.

Banning trawling in the waters east of 140 degrees West Longitude is Southeast's version of the Induce offshore allocation handed down by the Council in 1992. Alaskans must unite behind this resolution to provide Southeast with permanent protection. We ask that the Committee approve HJR 25 and move it swiftly forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ban Trawling

Dear Editor: Remember the campaign to eliminate trawling from the waters off Southeast Alaska? After years of work, we lost that campaign by one vote before the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Council members voting against the trawl closure called Southeast's concerns unquantifiable and anecdotal, demanding better documentation of the environmental and socioeconomic threat posed by the factory trawl fleet. We lost the battle, but not the war. Members of the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA) have watched and waited ever since, collecting information and preparing for the appropriate time to re-launch the campaign. The time is here — and this time we must win because it may be our last chance.

For the past three years, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council has been working on a comprehensive license limited entry program for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea groundfish fisheries. This program will issue licenses to vessel owners based on that vessel's history. Unless we can convince the council to designate Southeast an exclusive hook-and-line zone, a number of factory trawlers will receive licenses to target groundfish species off Southeast. Factory trawlers threaten local fisheries through habitat damage, bycatch of locally important species, and direct competition for species such as gray cod and slope rockfish. Factory trawlers contribute nothing to the economy of Southeast, since they buy supplies, hire crew, process catch and deliver product outside Southeast — in most cases, outside Alaska. Yet these trawlers threaten the health of our marine resources and the livelihood of the 6,000 people employed in the Southeast seafood industry.

In April, the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association will ask the council to eliminate trawling from Southeast by issuing only hook-and-line licenses for federal waters east of 140 degrees west longitude. If the council accepts the request, this option will be analyzed between the April and June council meetings as part of the comprehensive plan. The council is scheduled to take final action on the entire comprehensive plan in June; the Southeast trawl closure must be part of that package.

Rep. Grussendorf has introduced a resolution to the Legislature calling for the council to ban trawling off Southeast. On Tuesday, the Sitka city Assembly will consider endorsing this resolution. On Wednesday at 5 p.m. the House Fisheries Committee will consider Rep. Grussendorf's resolution, and the same evening the Sitka Fish and Game Advisory Committee will also address the issue. Testimony from all concerned fishermen and other Sitka residents is critical; please mark your calendar and attend prepared to testify. If you need any additional information, call or stop by the ALFA office. Remember, this could be our last chance!

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Linda Behnken, Sitka

Verstovia Petition

Dear Editor: This letter is in response to the article that was in Friday's paper about Verstovia Elementary School students signing a petition to have the burning of debris at a nearby construction site halted. I can't help to say that this article caught my attention because it is not every day a

person hears about elementary-aged students getting riled up over such an issue concerning the environment.

I was impressed at first, because I don't recall being so alert to such events when I was that age. It was great to see children that age being so aware. However, what scared me was that these children seemed to have a one-sided view of the issue. I think there needs to be some explaining done before these children jump on the Greenpeace bandwagon.

There are more components to this issue than devastation to the forest. The land behind Verstovia Elementary School is being developed into a housing subdivision which will undoubtedly help answer Sitka's cry for housing once this area is developed. This is only going to make Sitka stronger economically. This development creates jobs to keep Sitka's people working, these new lots will bring money to Sitka in the form of property taxes, and more people mean more business for our local merchants. So there is more to this issue than destroying trees and homes for animals.

Actually, this project is quite positive for Sitka considering that it has been just over a year since the pulp mill shut down and Sitka has not turned into the ghost town that some thought it would. I agree that maybe burning debris during school hours is not the best thing for the students, but as the article said, "the worst is over" and plans were made "to have the burning done at times when school is not in session." I hope this clarifies the issue; so the students at Verstovia have a better understanding of what is taking place. Thank you.

John Collins, Student
Sitka High School

Comprehensive Plan

Dear Editor: The Forest Service has been trying to make a transition into a new design. One that would be an ecosystem management responsible to the concerns of a number of groups: subsistence, fishing, hunting, tourism, conservation, etc.

This new ecosystem management would hopefully then use best-science in its strategic plan, where resource yields are responsible to all these citizens and not simply the by-product of a management committed to clearcutting industries. The Sitka Comprehensive Plan (a document recently drafted by local residents at the request of the City Assembly) had for some politicians some surprising results. The document is full of wording crying out for environmental responsibility, for preservation of the forest and our "subsistence way of life," for "small town self-reliance and diversified businesses."

Yet I understand that Assembly members Miller, Perkins, Hallgren and Smith have not gotten the message. On Feb. 14, they voted to endorse a resolution by Robin Taylor that was designed to slow down and halt the transition to a responsible ecosystem management. I thought that perhaps they might better understand if the message came from a different source, namely Republican President Dwight Eisenhower in his farewell address to the nation:

"We, ourselves and our government, must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for our own ease and convenience the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss of their political and spiritual heritage."

Henry Miller, Sitka
TOTAL P.02



City of Pelican

BOX 737

PELICAN, ALASKA 99832

PHONE 735-2202

FAX 735-2258

CITY OF PELICAN, ALASKA

RESOLUTION 1995-5

A RESOLUTION RELATING TO A BAN ON TRAWLING IN THE EASTERN GULF OF ALASKA EAST OF 140 DEGREES WEST LONGITUDE.

- WHEREAS: the eastern Gulf of Alaska has been a significant hook and line fishing area for almost 100 years and most of the high value fisheries in the area are fully utilized by the hook and line fishing fleet; and,
- WHEREAS: the level of trawl fishing effort in the eastern Gulf of Alaska is expected to exert undue fishing pressure on fish stocks in the area and displace traditional hook and line fisheries; and,
- WHEREAS: foreign trawl fishing in the Gulf of Alaska resulted in depressed populations of several species of rockfish; and,
- WHEREAS: the eastern Gulf of Alaska contains a unique assemblage of valuable rockfish species in amounts small enough that the rockfish stocks could be easily damaged by large vessel activity; and,
- WHEREAS: under federal fishing regulations, if any single species in the rockfish complex reaches its overfishing level, the entire rockfish complex and any other fishery that might take any of the overfished rockfish species are closed; and,
- WHEREAS: the trawl fishery in the eastern Gulf of Alaska can significantly disrupt the traditional fisheries on which 3,000 Southeast Alaska hook and line fishermen depend; and
- WHEREAS: the narrowness of the continental shelf and continental slope in the eastern Gulf of Alaska concentrates trawl fishing effort in a small area and as a result prevents recovery of trawl fishing areas and may permanently impoverish the ecosystem of the eastern Gulf of Alaska; and,
- WHEREAS: the Southeast Alaska area contains limited smooth bottom areas suitable for trawls, but many rocky areas that support an abundant, diverse, but fragile deep water habitat; and,

WHEREAS: the impact of trawl roller gear and trawl doors could significantly affect corals and associated hard bottom species; and,

WHEREAS: only by closing the eastern Gulf of Alaska east of 140 degrees west longitude to trawl fishing, will the unique assemblage of local marine resources be protected;

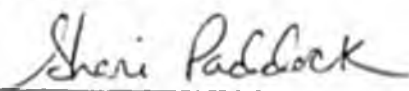
BE IT RESOLVED: by the Pelican City Council that the United States Secretary of Commerce is respectfully requested to immediately implement permanent regulations closing the eastern Gulf of Alaska east of 140 degrees west longitude to pelagic and bottom trawling.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED THIS 26th DAY OF March 1995.

Signed: 

Deborah A. Spencer,
Mayor Pro Tempore

attest:


Sheri Paddock
City Clerk/Treasurer

CITY OF WRANGELL, ALASKA

RESOLUTION NO. 03-95-558

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WRANGELL, ALASKA, ENDORSING HJR 25, AND URGING THE NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL TO ELIMINATE FACTORY TRAWLING FROM SOUTHEAST

WHEREAS, the fishing industry is a vital, economic industry in Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the recent closures of the Wrangell Sawmill, and the Sitka Pulp Company had a devastating effect on the local economy, heightening dependence on commercial fisheries; and

WHEREAS, the seafood industry is the largest, and in some communities the only private employer, providing a livelihood and lifestyle to local residents; and

WHEREAS, over 4,300 Southeast residents hold commercial fishing licenses, employ approximately 6,000 crew members and employ 1,400 in shore-based processing businesses; and

WHEREAS, Southeast commercial fisheries pay over \$5.3 million in raw fish tax each year to local communities, and support a host of service industries; and

WHEREAS, the seafood industry must be properly managed in order to maintain ecosystem health and ensure continued access of local fishermen to southeast fish stocks; and

WHEREAS, small Alaska based beam trawlers, unlike factory trawlers, contribute to the local and regional economy and pose no threat to fisheries habitat; and

WHEREAS, factory trawlers threaten the sensitive habitat unique to Southeast and could trigger closures of fisheries targeted by local Southeast fishermen; and

WHEREAS, factory trawlers do not contribute anything to the Southeast economy, yet could shut down local fisheries, eliminating the lifeblood of Southeast; and

WHEREAS, the factory trawl fleet presents the single greatest threat to the future socioeconomic health and stability of Southeast fisheries and fishery dependent communities.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WRANGELL, ALASKA, endorsing HJR 25 and urging the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to ban factory trawling in the federal waters east of 140 degrees West longitude (east of Yakutat).

ADOPTED: _____ March 14 _____, 1995

Fern Neimeyer
Fern Neimeyer, Vice Mayor

ATTEST: *Franette A. Vincent*
Franette A. Vincent, City Clerk

I certified a true and correct copy of the original filed in my office.
Franette A. Vincent
City Clerk
City of Wrangell

CITY of HOONAH

P.O. Box 360
HOONAH, ALASKA 99829

RECEIVED
APR 18 1991

Resolution No. 91-04-06

- WHEREAS, the Eastern Gulf Steller sea lion populations are stable and possibly increasing; and
- WHEREAS, the evidence suggests that trawling may be implicated in the decline of Steller sea lions in other parts of their range; and
- WHEREAS, the Eastern Gulf has been a hook and line zone for approximately 100 years; and
- WHEREAS, the community of Hoonah relies on the longline fishermen for economic support; and
- WHEREAS, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council postponed the longline sablefish fishery until May 15, 1991, to reduce halibut bycatch; and
- WHEREAS, factory trawlers, with 100% halibut bycatch mortality rate, will be working the same grounds closed to longliners in order to protect halibut stocks, and retaining their allowed 15% sablefish bycatch; and
- WHEREAS, there is substantial concern over the amount of salmon bycatch taken by trawlers.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HOONAH, ALASKA that trawling be prohibited in the Gulf of Alaska east of 140 degrees West longitude; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that closing the Eastern Gulf to trawlers will allow the Canadians to believe that the North Pacific Council honestly intends to reduce halibut bycatch.

Albert W. Wick
Mayor of Hoonah

ATTEST: Carol Christy
City Clerk

PO Box 23
Tenakee Springs, AK 99841

March 21, 1991

Mr. Robert Alverson
Interim Chairman
N.P.F.M.C.
PO Box 103136
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Mr. Alverson,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the expansion of trawl fleet operations into the Eastern Gulf of Alaska. Traditionally, the stocks in this area are harvested by the hook and line fisheries. The resources that those fisheries depend upon are already fully utilized. I am also very concerned about the destructive effects of trawling on marine habitat.

At this point, management is maintaining a delicate balance in the Eastern Gulf fisheries by imposing quotas, area restrictions, and limiting fishing periods, etc.. One effect of the trawl fleet (and their incessant demand for more and more by-catch) moving into the Eastern Gulf would be to destroy this delicate balance. This would be devastating to the local economies that depend on the existing fisheries. It would be a disaster for the hook and line fishermen! Where would this by-catch come from? Are the existing fishermen expected to bite the bullet yet again and donate part of their quotas for the benefit of the trawl fleet?

I have fished the Gulf for 14 years and I do not want to see these rich, productive grounds left as a biological desert in the wake of the trawl fleet! I strongly support permanently closing the Eastern Gulf of Alaska to trawling.

Sincerely,

Samuel E. McBeen

copies: ALFA
Governor Walter Hickie
Representative Ben Cussendorf
Senator Dick Eliason



SEAFOOD PRODUCERS COOPERATIVE

PRODUCERS, PROCESSORS & MARKETERS OF PREMIUM QUALITY SEAFOODS

March 14, 1995

Representative Ben Grussendorf
House of Representatives
Room 415
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Grussendorf:

The 350 member fishermen of Seafood Producers Cooperative enthusiastically support HJR 25, which would ban trawling in the waters east of 140 degrees west longitude.

The oceanography, ecology, and socioeconomic structure of Southeast Alaska make the area unique, and uniquely vulnerable to the impact of trawl fishing. Factory trawlers in Southeast Alaska will displace the local small boat fleet with a handful of large vessels who buy supplies, hire crews, process, and deliver product outside Alaska. Factory trawlers contribute nothing to the economy of Southeast, yet could damage sensitive habitat, deplete locally important fish stocks, and cause extreme economic harm to local Southeast residents and communities.

Economic changes in Southeast Alaska during the past few years have served to heighten the regional dependence on local commercial fisheries. Southeast residents hold over 4300 commercial fishing licenses, with over 6000 people employed as crew members. Another 1400 people work in the shore based processing sector, which has a total annual impact on the Southeast economy of \$547 million. The Southeast commercial fisheries pay over \$5.3 million in raw fish taxes each year, and support a host of service industries in the region.

We feel the future of Southeast will be determined by the future of the local fisheries. Our concern for the long term ecological and socioeconomic stability in Southeast Alaska mandates that factory trawling be eliminated east of 140 degrees west longitude.

Thank you for your consideration.

SEAFOOD PRODUCERS COOPERATIVE


Barry S. Lester
General Manager/C.E.O.

CITY OF PORT ALEXANDER

PO. Box 8725 Port Alexander, AK 99836 909/568-2211

RESOLUTION 95-3

A Resolution relating to a ban on trawling in the eastern Gulf of Alaska east of 140 degrees west longitude.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF PORT ALEXANDER, ALASKA:

WHEREAS the eastern Gulf of Alaska has been a significant hook and line fishing area for almost 100 years and most of the high value fisheries in the area are fully utilized by the hook and line fishing fleet; and

WHEREAS the level of trawl fishing effort in the eastern Gulf of Alaska is expected to exert undue fishing pressure on fish stocks in the area and displace traditional hook and line fisheries; and

WHEREAS foreign trawl fishing in the Gulf of Alaska resulted in depressed populations of several species of rockfish; and

WHEREAS the eastern Gulf of Alaska contains a unique assemblage of valuable rockfish species in amounts small enough that the rockfish stocks could be easily damaged by large vessel activity; and

WHEREAS, under federal fishing regulations, if any single species in the rockfish complex reaches its overfishing level, the entire rockfish complex and any other fishery that might take any of the overfished rockfish species are closed; and

WHEREAS the trawl fishery in the eastern Gulf of Alaska can significantly disrupt the traditional fisheries which our community has participated in since the early 1900s and on which 3,000 Southeast Alaska hook and line fishermen depend; and

WHEREAS the narrowness of the continental shelf and continental slope in the eastern Gulf of Alaska concentrates trawl fishing effort in a small area and as a result prevents recovery of trawl fishing areas and may permanently impoverish the ecosystem of the eastern Gulf of Alaska; and

WHEREAS the Southeast Alaska area contains limited smooth bottom areas suitable for trawls, but many rocky areas that support an abundant, diverse but fragile deep water habitat; and

WHEREAS the impact of trawl roller gear and trawl doors could significantly affect corals and associated hard bottom species; and

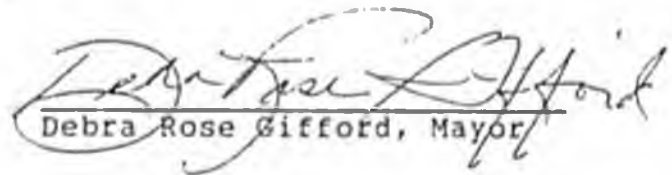
WHEREAS only by closing the eastern Gulf of Alaska east of 140 degrees west longitude to trawl fishing, will the

unique assemblage of local marine resources be protected;

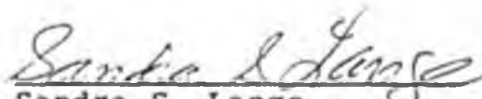
BE IT RESOLVED by the City of Port Alexander that the United State Secretary of Commerce is respectfully requested to immediately implement permanent regulations closing the eastern Gul of Alaska east of 140 degrees west longitude to pelagic and bottom trawling.

Copies of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Ron Brown, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.

Adopted this 6th day of March, 1995, at a Port Alexander City Council meeting.

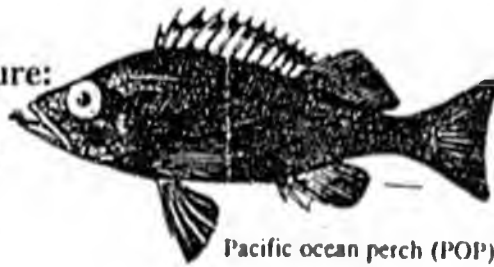

Debra Rose Gifford, Mayor

ATTEST:


Sandra S. Lange
City Clerk

Southeast Alaska trawl closure: A case study in risk-averse management

Linda Behnken
P.O. Box 6065
Sitka, Alaska, U.S.A. 99835



Pacific ocean perch (POP)

INTRODUCTION

In February 1991, the fishers of Sitka, Alaska launched a campaign to protect the waters off Southeast Alaska from the effects of trawling. Over the following year and a half, fishers, seafood processors, environmental organisations, towns and communities, the Alaska State Legislature and the Governor's office joined Sitka's effort. Letters, resolutions, and petitions were sent to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the federally-appointed management body requesting protection for Southeast's marine resource and coastal communities. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game compiled an Environmental Assessment (EA) emphasizing the importance of precautionary management in Southeast's unique environment. And yet, despite this enormous effort, in September, 1992, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council voted 7 to 4 against closing Southeast to trawling, dismissing the EA and the public testimony documenting trawl impacts as either "unquantified" or "anecdotal."

The Council's decision highlights a flaw in U.S. fisheries management policy: despite a Congressional mandate in the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act to err on the side of conservation, managers too often place the burden of the proof for "quantifying" habitat or ecosystem damage on concerned fishers and environmentalists. Since information on the deepsea environment is limited, and quantifying damage occurring at 260 metres (140 fathoms) is difficult at best, the suspected offenders, in this case the factory trawlers, have an easy upper hand. Until risk-averse management becomes integral to fisheries policy, the marine environment will continue to pay the price for unquantified or unquantifiable effects. With the Magnuson Act scheduled for reauthorization in 1993, policy-makers have a responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of U.S. fishery management policy. As a case study, the Southeast trawl closure provides insight into the current interpretation and application of the Act.

HISTORY

Trawling off Southeast began in the 1960s when foreign factory trawlers first prosecuted slope rockfish stocks in the waters of the Eastern gulf of Alaska (the Eastern Gulf includes both the Southeast and the Yakutat regulatory areas). Catches peaked in 1965, then dropped off precipitously. Species in the slope rockfish complex are long-lived (95-140 years), have a late age of reproduction and limited movement patterns. These characteristics make the complex highly vulnerable to over-exploitation. By the late 1960s, stocks of Pacific ocean perch (POP) (*Sebastes alutus*), the dominant and most targeted species within the slope complex, had been reduced to 10-16% of historic levels. In 1982 the North Pacific Fishery Management Council

significantly reduced slope rockfish quotas in the Eastern Gulf and initiated a rebuilding program for Pacific ocean perch. In the same year, the council prohibited foreign trawlers from fishing off Southeast Alaska.

In 1985, the domestic factory trawl fleet first appeared in the Southeast area. Local hook-and-line fishers, called longliners, watched with concern. As was the case with the foreign trawlers operating off Southeast, the domestic trawlers targeted POP and other slope rockfish species. Although little or no stock recovery had yet occurred, slope rockfish quotas were raised in response to lobbying pressure from domestic trawlers and the rebuilding program was abandoned. Between 1985 and 1991, factory trawl landings increased from 423 metric tonnes (mt) to 1,402 mt in the Southeast area, and from 807 mt to 5,108 mt in the Yakutat area. Although only five to seven factory trawlers fished off Southeast in any one year, the impact was noticeable. Slope rockfish live on or near the ocean floor, hence are targeted with hard-on-bottom trawls. After the arrival of trawlers on traditional fishing grounds, local longliners pulled up empty hooks from once productive areas. Their concern deepened.

In February 1991, representatives from a factory trawl company visited Sitka to investigate crew transportation and emergency docking facilities. The representatives mentioned that their company intended to send three factory trawlers into Southeast to fish its "virgin grounds" for Pacific cod (*Gadus macrocephalus*), a traditional longline species. As is the case with most factory vessels, all supplies, gear, crew, etc. were to be obtained outside of Alaska, and all fish would be processed on board the vessels. The intent of this company sparked the smouldering fire: Sitka fishers drafted a proposal to prohibit trawling off Southeast Alaska.

The fishing grounds that appeared "virgin" to the trawlers have been fished by shore-based longline fishers for close to a century. Over the years the grounds have remained productive, evidence that longline fishing is a sustainable harvest technique appropriate to the area. Southeast longliners target Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*), sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*), demersal shelf rockfish (*Sebastes* spp.) and the Pacific cod. The local longline fleet is composed of relatively small vessels (less than 20 metres (60 feet) in length) that deliver to processors in the Southeast coastal communities. Many of the vessels are family-owned and operated, part of a fishing tradition that stretches back through two or three generations. In many of these communities commercial fishing is the sole source of employment and revenue. Consequently, local fishers and processors have supported conservative management of marine fish species. Longliners had already seen the destructive force of the foreign trawlers; how they feared that history was repeating itself. The grass-roots effort to protect communities and the resources they depend on grew from that fear.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Pacific ocean perch are the dominant species harvested with domestic trawl gear in the Southeast area. POP recruit into the trawl fishery (i.e. start to be caught by trawlers) between the age of five and seven, but do not become sexually mature until age nine or eleven. Prior

to exploitation, the POP population consisted of a wide distribution of age classes from juveniles to 95 year old adults. According to 1987 data now only 12% of the population is over age 15, which is an indication of the severely reduced reproductive potential of the stock (Heifetz and Clausen, 1991). The POP biomass reached minimum levels during the late 1970s and early 1980s, showed signs of slight recovery following the Council's rebuilding effort, then, according to triennial trawl research surveys, declined by 43% between 1984 and 1990. Recent verification of the trawl survey data by submersibles suggests that stock depletion may be more severe than previously assumed; observations indicate that the biomass figures currently used to evaluate quotas may over-estimate POP abundance by a factor of two (Krieger, 1992).

The rockfish conservation problem is further exacerbated in the waters off Southeast by the narrowness of Southeast's continental shelf/slope and the abundance of rocky, high-relief terrain. The Southeast trawl closure EA emphasizes that the Southeast area contains very little smooth bottom suitable for trawls, which serves to concentrate trawl effort. Submersible observations recorded row after row of trawl furrows in this limited smooth bottom habitat, some estimated to be almost 2 metres (5 feet) deep (Krieger, video footage, 1992). Since rockfish are widely recognized as being non-migratory and area-specific, concentrating trawl effort in the few smooth bottom areas may result in localized depletion of rockfish species (Bracken and Hibb, 1992).

The smooth-bottom habitat off Southeast is interrupted by deep-water canyons and boulder fields. Although adult POP are found in the smooth bottom areas, rougheye rockfish (*Sebastes aleutianus*) and shortraker rockfish (*Sebastes borealis*), slope rockfish species of secondary importance to the factory trawl fleet, are commonly associated with this rocky, high-relief terrain. Using rolling gear (similar to over-sized tires filled with cement) along the lower edge of the net, some rockfish trawlers have recently developed techniques that allow them to fish the rocky areas. These rocky areas support a high abundance and diversity of fragile deep-water corals, including octocorals, hydrocorals and hexacorals. These corals are presumed to be long-lived and slow-growing. During public testimony, rockfish trawlers claimed to avoid contact with corals, stating that corals tear and damage nets, a claim supported by the lack of corals in the fish-catch observer data. However, submersible observations recorded pieces of broken coral along trawl tracks and attributed to trawl impact the displacement of boulders 1.5-3.0 metres (5-10 feet) in diameter. This suggests that, although trawl nets may not come in contact with corals and associated hard-bottom species, the impact of roller gear and trawl doors could be significant (trawl doors, used to spread the net mouth, weigh several tons apiece).

The canyons and other isolated rocky areas are often uncharted, hence are difficult for large vessels with heavy gear to avoid. In recent years three trawl vessels brought into Sitka for emergency repairs have all had significant amounts of *Primnoa*, or red tree coral, piled on deck. (Pictures of these vessels with coral on deck were submitted to the Council by local fishers). Although research vessels conducting the triennial trawl surveys tried to avoid rough-bottom terrain, in 1990 eight Southeast survey crews reported the occurrence of substantial amounts of

coral; one tow reported 925 kg (2,039 pounds) of *Primnoa* (Derrah, 1990). *Primnoa* is predicted to have a growth rate of 1 cm/year (0.4 inches/year) and to require 100 years to reach full size. After reviewing a 1987 trawl impact study conducted in near-shore, South Atlantic waters, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) concluded that repeated trawling in live-bottom, coral areas could result in significant habitat loss (SAFMC, 1988). Cold water corals are presumed to be slower growing and have a lower rate of production than warm water corals (Cimberg, et al., 1981). A recent study concluded that the effect of trawling on the seabed environment in deeper water (greater than 500 m (1,600 feet) could be severe and that any recovery may be measured in decades (Jones, 1992). The rockfish trawlers fishing off Southeast operate in cold water at depths of 200-600 m (650-2000 feet). Although information on the deepsea environment and the coral/trawl interactions occurring off Southeast are limited, the best available information indicates that the impacts on habitat could be long-term and significant.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

There are several documented management problems associated with trawl effort in the Southeast area. The quotas for many fish species are relatively small. The trawl fisheries are fast-paced and high-volume, and have a history of exceeding the small Southeast quotas. In recent years actual catches have been as high as 185% of the area quota. Many of the rockfish species in the Eastern Gulf are managed close to biological threshold levels (i.e., estimated maximum sustainable harvest levels). Exceeding quotas and these threshold levels may pose severe conservation problems.

In some cases quotas are also set close to the "overfishing" definition¹. In 1991, one trawl vessel's misreporting of its demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) bycatch almost triggered the overfishing definition for DSR. Along with creating a potential conservation problem, triggering the overfishing definition would have preempted the traditional longline halibut and directed DSR fisheries in the Southeast area. This demonstrates the potential for a single trawl vessel to affect the traditional fisheries of the entire area. Even after reclassifying most of the misreported DSR bycatch, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) closed by emergency rule the Southeast area to trawl gear to prevent overfishing of DSR and to ensure that the fall halibut longline fishery was not preempted (emergency rules can be implemented for a maximum of 180 days). Although the emergency rule prevented a disaster, such crisis management can not be expected to function effectively in every situation.

The ability of high-volume trawl fisheries to quickly harvest small quotas has also caused many species in the Southeast area to be listed early in the year as "bycatch" or "prohibited." When a species is listed as "bycatch," it may only be harvested in limited amounts incidental to other target fisheries. If this limited amount is exceeded, the species must be discarded. When

¹ When the overfishing definition for a species is reached, any fishery that may affect the species is closed.

a species is listed as "prohibited," any amount harvested must be discarded. For example, during the 1990-1992 fall halibut fisheries, rougheye and shortraker rockfish were listed as "prohibited" and had to be discarded by longline halibut fishers. Factory trawlers also discarded rougheye and shortraker during the 1992 POP fishery. Since the mortality of discarded rockfish is 100%, such listings mandate waste. Eliminating the directed rougheye and shortraker trawl fishery would ensure that small quotas were adequate to meet the bycatch needs of traditional fisheries, preventing waste and minimizing the risk of exceeding quotas.

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The continental slope is significantly closer to the shore off Southeast Alaska than it is off central or western Alaska. This proximity enables Southeast's small boat longline fleet to safely access the off-shore sablefish and halibut grounds. Most of the over 3,000 longliners fish only in the Southeast area, being limited by vessel size to the near-shore fisheries. The Southeast longline fleet is shore-based, delivering 75% of its harvest to Southeast processing plants. These landings are taxed by the State of Alaska at 3%, with half of the revenue generated by the tax accruing to the Southeast coastal communities. The seafood industry is the largest private, basic industry employer in the State; in many of the small Southeast communities, it is the only employer. Both Southeast fishers and the communities in which they live depend on the long term productivity of their traditional fisheries.

In 1991, a total of eleven trawl vessels fished off Southeast. These factory vessels are highly mobile and currently participate in fisheries throughout the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea. Fishing off Southeast contributes to, but does not fully constitute the fleet's annual income. None of these factory vessels deliver to Southeast processing plants nor pay any seafood tax to the communities or State of Alaska. However, as was demonstrated by the rockfish trawler in 1991, any one of these eleven vessels could significantly disrupt the traditional fisheries on which the 3,000 Southeast longliners depend. Such disruption would impose severe social and economic costs on Southeast fishers and coastal communities. As North Pacific Council member Lary Cotter stated, "This region is scared to death for the future if trawling is allowed to continue."

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

The Environmental Assessment (EA) separates the economic effects of the proposed trawl closure into three categories: losses to trawl vessels, gains to hook-and-line vessels, and net benefits to the nation. The EA estimates that gross revenue losses to the trawl fleet would range from \$3 million to \$3.6 million. These losses would be mitigated to some extent by the ability of the affected trawl vessels to fish in other areas. Estimated economic gains to the hook-and-line fleet and the coastal communities ranged from \$1.9 million to \$2.3 million. Additional gains identified in the EA arise from: protecting rockfish stocks from overfishing, preventing curtailment of other groundfish and halibut fisheries, and ensuring that "increased trawl effort in the future will not erode the economic base of the [Southeast] coastal communities" (Bracken and Hobb, 1992).

Closing the Southeast area to trawling would result in an estimated net loss to the nation of \$1.1 to \$1.3 million. Virtually all of this loss is attributed to the forgone harvest of POP in the Southeast area (estimated value of POP in the Southeast area is \$1.2 to \$1.4 million). The analysis states that this loss would occur only if the POP quota constitutes a "truly harvestable surplus." Given the current depleted status of POP and the conservation concerns associated with the rockfish trawl fishery, it is difficult to consider the POP quota a "truly harvestable surplus."

Prohibiting trawling off Southeast would benefit the resource and the nation through habitat protection, decreased waste, and the conservation of depleted rockfish stocks. Southeast coastal communities would benefit through increased economic and social stability. The Council weighed these "unquantified" benefits against the trawler's economic loss and found them insufficient. To the dismay of a region united in its concern, the trawl closure was denied.²

SUMMARY

At the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), participating nations agreed that: "States should commit themselves to the conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources...promote the development and use of selective fishing gear...[and] preserve rare or fragile ecosystems as well as habitats and other ecologically sensitive areas." Southeast Alaska's nearly century-long tradition as a productive, hook-and-line area indicates that longline fishing is an appropriate, sustainable means of harvesting Southeast's marine resources. Southeast fishers fear that factory trawlers could destroy that tradition. The United Nations have urged managers to promote sustainable, selective gear and to protect critical habitat. Through the Southeast trawl closure, local fishers sought to follow this directive.

The Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act directs regional Councils to base decisions on the "best scientific information available," (Section 301 (a) (2)). The Act defines the terms "conservation and management" as "all the rules, regulations, conditions, methods and other measures which are required to rebuild, restore and maintain...any fishery resource and the marine environment, and which are designed to assure that...irreversible or long-term adverse effects on fishery resources and the marine environment are avoided" (Section 3 (2)). Proponents of the Southeast trawl closure sought to apply these directives. Gathering the best scientific information available, proponents asked the Council to rebuild depleted slope rockfish stocks and to prevent long-term adverse effects on the marine environment off Southeast. Although quantifiable information specific to the Southeast was limited, in the words of Council member Ron Hegge: "It does not do much good at all the fact to know for sure that the damage has been done." Given the complexity and inaccessibility of the marine resource, information on marine fish species and the ecological sensitivity of deep sea habitat is likely to

² Four of the six Alaskan council members voted in favor of prohibiting trawling off Southeast; Council members from Oregon, Washington and the National Marine Fisheries Service voted against the trawl closure.

remain limited. Only risk-adverse policy will protect the diversity and productivity of the marine environment. The UNCED Resolutions mandate conservative management in the face of uncertainty; the Magnuson Act provides a similar directive. Application of the Act should reflect these directives.

The State of Alaska, Southeast coastal communities, fishing organizations, seafood processors, environmentalists, and several thousand Southeast residents asked the Council to protect local marine resources by prohibiting trawling off Southeast. The request was denied. Southeast fishers are now working to compile additional information, hoping to someday "quantify" trawl damage to the satisfaction of the Council. As Congress begins the process of reauthorizing the Magnuson Act, those same individuals and organizations will be looking for opportunities to strengthen the conservation standards within the Act.

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A sweep towards change in Nova Scotia! The Moushead-Clean Nova Scotia Beach Sweep and Litter Survey.

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INTRODUCTION

Starting in 1989, The Clean Nova Scotia Foundation has helped volunteers organize local beach clean ups throughout the province of Nova Scotia at hundreds of locations. The first Beach Sweep attracted 119 volunteers in April 1989. In September of the same year, 700 volunteers participated. Since that time, thousands of Nova Scotians have shown their concern for our coastal environment by participating in the Beach Sweep and Litter Survey Programmes. The June 1992 Sweep involved close to 10,000 participants making it one of the largest per capita coastal clean-up projects in North America.

In 1992, during Spring and Fall Beach Sweep programmes, volunteers across the province recorded over 4,075 bags of plastic trash from approximately 260 kilometres of Nova Scotian coastline. Collection results indicate an estimated 20 tonnes of marine debris and beach litter were gathered from our beaches in 1992.

Now sponsored by Moushead Breweries Limited, the Beach Sweep programme provides volunteer groups with the practical materials to organize a fun and rewarding shoreline clean up. In 1992, organizational guides, sample media releases, posters, garbage bags, data collection cards, pencils and rubber gloves were provided to participants at 214 clean up locations. Over the years, the Foundation has modified and enhanced materials to reflect our Nova Scotian coastal environment and address specific environment concerns. For instance, the Beach Sweep organizational guide now lists all beach areas which are home to the Piping Plover, an endangered bird species which nests each spring on Nova Scotia's shoreline.

Beach Sweep volunteers not only collect garbage but record their findings as well. Specially designed data collection cards enable participants to efficiently document the debris they are collecting. The data cards are available in either French or English. These data collection cards are modelled on cards created by the Center for Marine Conservation in Washington, D.C. for their Coastal Clean-up Project. The debris survey results from the Fall Beach Sweep are forwarded to Washington to be included in the International Clean-up Project numbers each year. The International Project now compiles statistics from 26 countries around the world. The results from the data cards provide researchers with pertinent information about the numbers and sources of marine debris. Common sources include commercial and recreational fishing activity, galley wastes and beach-front garbage, illegal shoreline dumping and antiquated sewage systems.

**Joint Testimony of the
United Fishermen of Alaska
and the Alaska Trollers Association
to the Alaska Senate Finance Committee
April 7, 1995**

HJR 25: Ban Trawling East of 140

The United Fishermen of Alaska and the Alaska Trollers Association (ATA) support HJR 25, which seeks to ban trawling in the waters off Southeast Alaska. UFA and ATA are concerned about issues related to conservation and allocation of the fisheries resource.

Trawl bycatch of salmon has been documented by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) observer programs for many years. Observers believe that 100 percent of the salmon caught in trawl nets die.

In 1993, trawlers operating in the Bering Sea discarded 46,000 chinook and 241,000 "other species" salmon. Also in 1993, 19,000 chinook and 86,000 "other species" salmon were discarded by trawlers in the Gulf of Alaska. "Other species" is predominately chum salmon.

Since the mid-1970's fishermen in Southeast Alaska have suffered reduced harvests to rehabilitate chinook stocks from Oregon to Alaska. Gillnetter's lost their directed fishery on chinook salmon in the 1970s and in 1980 quota of 263,000 chinook salmon was established for the troll fishery; a full

100,000 below the historic average. In 1985, the United States and Canada signed the Pacific Salmon Treaty and committed to rebuilding the coastwide salmon resource. The Southeast all-gear chinook quota was set at 283,000, further reducing the troll harvest. Sport anglers were limited to a set quota in 1992.

In 1991, several races of Snake River salmon were listed under the Endangered Species Act. In 1993, trollers lost 11 days of fishing time. In 1994, trollers lost 19,000 and sport anglers 4,000 chinook salmon. In both years, our fishermen's loss was estimated to save only one Snake River salmon.

There is no good historical data to estimate the expected trawl chinook bycatch in Southeast. However, it is known that chinook salmon from Southeast Alaska, the lower 48 and Canada rear in this region. And, it is clear that chinook salmon cannot bear additional fishing pressure, nor can Alaskan's fishermen afford increased competition for the chinook resource.

In response to the declining opportunity for chinook salmon, trollers have increasingly diversified into other species, such as rockfish and cod. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is currently working to establish a comprehensive limited entry program for the Gulf of Alaska. Unless the Southeast Gulf is designated an exclusive hook and line area,

factory trawlers will be granted groundfish licenses. This will put local, small boat fishermen in direct competition with a highly capitalized fleet, which contributes nothing to our region's economy.

With well over 10,000 license holders and crew members, the Southeast region is critically dependent upon healthy fisheries.

HJR 25 will send a strong message that the legislature is concerned about fisheries conservation and protection of the Southeast economy. We encourage you to vote yes on HJR 25.

Alaska State Legislature

REPRESENTATIVE
REN GRUSSENDORF
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FINANCE COMMITTEE

DISTRICT 2
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PETERSBURG
SITKA
WRANGELL



WHILE IN JUNEAU
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House of Representatives SPONSOR STATEMENT

SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 25

"Relating to a ban on trawling in the eastern Gulf of Alaska east of 140 degrees west longitude."

Southeast Alaska has a unique marine environment. The delicate marine environment differs from northern areas. It is extremely vulnerable to long term damage to the habitat of the bottom. Southeast Alaska also has a long history of longline fishing offshore. This economy is threatened by the activities of the factory trawlers. The species affected by the trawlers are fully allocated.

Southeast's marine environment has provided longline fishers the opportunity to make a living for over a century. Targeted species of halibut, sablefish, shelf rockfish and cod are caught on longlines with little damage, if any, to the bottom of the Pacific shelf. Most of the longline vessels are small. In many small towns commercial fishing is the only commercial opportunity.

I have introduced this resolution at the request of the Alaska Longline Fisherman's Association. I believe it is a good compromise with the trawl fleet and protects a generously productive marine environment from harm. It also will protect an industry that is for the most part locally owned and operated and which provides great returns to the communities and the economies of those communities.

I respectfully request your support.

Sponsor Statement

Alaska State Legislature

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FINANCE COMMITTEE

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House of Representatives

TO: Senator Loren Leman
Chair
Senate Resources Committee

FROM: Representative Ben Grussendorf

DATE: March 22, 1995

RE: SSHJR 25, "Relating to a ban on trawling in the eastern Gulf of Alaska east of 140 degrees west longitude."

SSHJR 25 was introduced in response to concerns expressed by Southeast fishermen for the devastating impacts of trawl fisheries on the condition of the rockfish stock and on the delicate habitat on the bottom of Southeast Alaska waters. The level of trawl fishing effort in the eastern Gulf of Alaska is expected to increase, resulting in depressed populations of several species of rockfish and damage to the fragile deep water habitat in Southeast. I believe this resolution represents a good compromise with the trawl fleet and protects a generously productive marine environment from harm. It also will protect an industry that is for the most part locally owned and operated and which provides great returns to the economy of the state.

The sponsor substitute made the following changes from the original resolution:

page 1, lines 1 - 2 was amended as follows:

"Relating to a ban on trawling in the eastern Gulf of Alaska east of 140 degrees west longitude."

page 1, line 12 added a new whereas:

"Whereas the eastern Gulf of Alaska contains a unique assemblage of valuable rockfish species in amounts small enough that the rockfish stocks could be easily damaged by large vessel activity; and"

page 1, lines 15 - 16; page 2, line 1 reworded a whereas:

"Whereas, under federal fishing regulations, if any single species in the rockfish complex reaches its over fishing level, the entire rockfish complex and any other fishery that might take any of the over fishing rockfish species are closed; and"

page 2 lines 13 - 14 was amended as follows:

"Whereas, only by closing the eastern Gulf of Alaska east of 140 degrees west longitude to trawl fishing, will the unique assemblage of local marine resources be protected;"

page 2 line 16 was amended by deleting the reference to emergency regulations.

I appreciate your consideration in scheduling a hearing for this resolution in your committee at your earliest convenience.

Thank you.