

STATE OF ALASKA

THE LEGISLATURE

1987

Source

Legislative
Resolve No.

SJR 34

19



Relating to the interception of Alaska salmon on the high seas.

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

WHEREAS salmon is one of Alaska's most important natural resources; and

WHEREAS Alaska salmon are fully utilized in domestic fisheries and constitute the primary economic base of many coastal and river communities in the state and a principal component of the subsistence economy of most villages in the state; and

WHEREAS some western Alaska salmon stocks are so severely depressed that special conservation measures are again required this year, including the elimination of certain directed commercial salmon fisheries and possible additional subsistence restrictions; and

WHEREAS the Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimates that total losses to the Kuskokwim fishery from these restrictions may be as much as \$1,000,000 this year in a fishery in which the total paid to fishermen averages \$3,000,000 per year; and

WHEREAS the Yukon and Kuskokwim region in western Alaska is one of the most economically disadvantaged in the United States, where commercial fisheries are the single most important source of cash income, yet produce an average of less than \$7,000 per fisherman per year; and

WHEREAS it is estimated that the Japanese land-based and mother ship fisheries, while targeting other salmon species, intercept approximately 100,000 western Alaska chinook salmon annually, with additional uncounted but substantial dropout mortality; and

WHEREAS recently concluded renegotiations between the United States and Japan regarding high seas salmon fall far short of the goal of substantially reducing interceptions of North American salmon and steelhead by the high seas fleets of Japan; and

WHEREAS it is estimated that the renegotiations in their present form will reduce no more than 50 percent of known interceptions over an eight-year period; and

WHEREAS the renegotiation agreements do not reduce substantially the interceptions in the United States exclusive economic zone, remove the Japanese fleets from the central Bering Sea within an acceptable time frame, nor move the land-based Japanese salmon fishery 10 degrees further west, which is necessary in order to substantially reduce Alaska salmon interceptions; and

WHEREAS, for the past several years, United States observer coverage has been allowed on Japanese catcher boats in the international waters of the Bering Sea; however, Japan now refuses to renew this agreement, which leaves the United States with no ability to monitor catch levels or the dumping of salmon to avoid chinook harvest quotas in these waters; and

WHEREAS, according to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, conservation problems of the Kuskokwim and upper Yukon chinook stocks are worse than were known during the recent renegotiations, and additional protections of the Kuskokwim and upper Yukon chinook stocks are warranted; and

WHEREAS the Japanese high seas salmon fleets take a large number of marine mammals and diving sea birds incidental to their salmon harvest; and

WHEREAS a U.S. Department of Commerce administrative law judge recently recommended a reduced quota of certain marine mammals that can be taken by the Japanese high seas salmon fleets;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrator Anthony J. Calio to impose at least the restrictions recommended by the U.S. Department of Commerce administrative law judge in the issuance of a marine mammal permit to the Japanese because of the severe and immediate conservation measures needed to protect certain western Alaska salmon stocks and the lack of protection afforded to those stocks through the recent renegotiation process with Japan regarding interceptions of Alaska salmon; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that Administrator Calio release the marine mammal permit only if United States observers are permitted to be stationed on Japanese catcher boats and processing ships in international waters and in the United States exclusive economic zone in sufficient numbers to ensure 95 percent accuracy in reporting; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the Congress to provide continued funding for the United States high seas observer program and other salmon programs, including high seas tagging studies, scale pattern analyses, and full laboratory analyses of whole fish, to better

determine continental origins of salmon migrating in the high seas fishery area and to further define the magnitude of the Alaska salmon interception problem by the Japanese high seas salmon and other intercept fleets.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Ronald Reagan, President of the United States; the Honorable George Shultz, U.S. Secretary of State; the Honorable Malcolm Baldrige, U.S. Secretary of Commerce; to Dr. Anthony J. Calio, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce; the Honorable Robert C. Byrd, U.S. Senate Majority Leader; the Honorable Jim Wright, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; 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.