

STATE OF ALASKA

THE LEGISLATURE

1989

Source

Legislative
Resolve No.

CSHCR 5(Res) am

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Encouraging citizen participation in state-wide beach cleanup and anti-dumping efforts.

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

WHEREAS lost and accidentally and purposely discarded plastic debris, including six-pack yokes, strapping bands, sheeting, packaging material, dunnage, bags, particles, pellets, fishing nets, fishing line, and related fishing gear, are annually killing at least an estimated 1,000,000 sea birds, 100,000 marine mammals, and untold numbers of sea turtles and fish by entanglement in the debris and ingestion of the debris; and

WHEREAS many of the fish and wildlife killed by the debris are resident wildlife of the state, and some of this wildlife are listed as depleted under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1361 - 1407), including the Steller's sea lion and the northern fur seal, or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 - 1543), including the humpback whale, bowhead whale, and Aleutian Canada goose; and

WHEREAS plastic debris is generally persistent, durable, and nondegradable, and may last for hundreds of years or longer; and

WHEREAS plastic debris deposited on the state's beaches by tidal action, wind, waves, storms, and similar occurrences may also entangle wildlife, and future storms and high tides may wash the plastic back into the sea where it will continue its lethal effect, possibly for hundreds of years; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the problems plastic debris causes to wildlife, garbage-strewn beaches are aesthetically unpleasant, discourage tourism, and are costly to clean, and floating plastics also foul boat propellers, block cooling intake vents, snag fishing equipment, entangle submarines, and endanger divers; and

WHEREAS effective December 31, 1988, the Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act of 1987 (33 U.S.C. 1901 - 1912) prohibits vessels from dumping plastics at sea and within the navigable waters of the state, although certain public vessels have five years in which to comply with this prohibition; and

WHEREAS enforcement by the United States Coast Guard of these anti-dumping provisions will be difficult, especially since the Coast Guard faces expanding responsibilities and a shrinking budget; and

WHEREAS the Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act of 1987 contains a provision allowing an informant, in the discretion of the court, to receive up to one-half of the penalty assessed against a violator of the Act;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature strongly encourages all residents of the state to participate in Coast-weeks '89, a national beach cleanup effort involving many public and private groups concerned about the environment, by taking part in a May 1989 beach cleanup along the 36,000 miles of the state's accessible shoreline; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature encourages those citizens who witness possible violations of the plastics anti-dumping law to contact the Port Operations Department of their local United States Coast Guard Marine Safety Office and, where possible, to provide the Coast Guard with as much of the following information as possible about the occurrence: date, time, location, witnesses' names, ship or vessel's name and number, photographs, and a sample of the discarded plastic.