

# STATE OF ALASKA

## THE LEGISLATURE

1991

Source

HJR 52

Legislative  
Resolve No.

38



Relating to protection of crab, halibut, and salmon in the Bristol Bay area from the trawl fishery.

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

**WHEREAS** an estimated 200,000 king crab, almost 1,000,000 bairdi Tanner crab, and 5,000,000 pounds of juvenile halibut are taken each year as bycatch in the Bristol Bay area and discarded as waste; and

**WHEREAS** the survey records and harvest records of the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game document that the Bristol Bay area is a critical habitat and harvest zone for red king crab; and

**WHEREAS** the State of Alaska, since statehood, has prohibited trawl fishing for king crab due to the adverse effects of trawl fishing on king crab; and

**WHEREAS** the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game recognize that Bristol Bay king crab stocks have been depressed since 1983 and that the stocks show little potential for recovery in the near future; and

**WHEREAS** the continued bycatch in the Bristol Bay area may inhibit the recovery of the valuable king crab stocks; and

**WHEREAS** the Bristol Bay area is recognized as a major nursery area for juvenile

halibut by the International Pacific Halibut Commission; and

**WHEREAS** the International Pacific Halibut Commission has closed the entire Bristol Bay area, except for a limited 100,000 pound quota for western Alaskans, to directed longline fishing for halibut since 1967 in order to prevent fishing mortality on juvenile halibut; and

**WHEREAS** the International Pacific Halibut Commission recognizes that halibut stocks are in a state of decline and will continue to decline for the next few years; and

**WHEREAS** the bycatch mortality of halibut in the Bristol Bay area reduces the amount of halibut that may be taken in the directed fishery on halibut and seriously affects the livelihood of Alaska residents; and

**WHEREAS** areas currently closed to trawling have not adequately reduced bycatch of crab, halibut, and salmon in the trawl fisheries; and

**WHEREAS** the United States negotiated bilateral agreements with Japan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics between 1965 and 1975 that established a "no trawl" pot sanctuary in Bristol Bay to protect the developing domestic king crab fishery and to conserve and protect near shore salmon and halibut stocks from interception and depletion in the adjacent offshore areas by unregulated foreign fishing fleets; and

**WHEREAS** the bycatch of salmon by the trawl fishery occurs on a mixture of salmon stocks well before run strength can be assessed and thus reduces the number of fish available in onshore areas and increases the risk of overharvest;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and the Secretary of Commerce to immediately review the existing domestic observer data and the foreign trawl observer data and regulations to establish improved management measures, including time and area closures, for the trawl fleet that will effectively protect crab, halibut, and salmon in the Bristol Bay area; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council immediately initiate the biological and economic studies necessary to establish a king crab and halibut protection zone in the Bristol Bay area; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game should conduct the studies necessary to document the need for an improved king crab and halibut protection zone in the Bristol Bay area.

**COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Rick Lauber, Chair of the North

Pacific Fishery Management Council; the Honorable Robert A. Mosbacher, Sr., Secretary of the 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.