

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES HIMSCHOOT, Vance, Hannan, Stutes

Introduced: 2/10/23

Referred: House Special Committee on Fisheries

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the United States Secretary of Commerce, the National Marine Fisheries Service,**
2 **the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and other federal and state agencies to**
3 **defend the state's fisheries, including the Southeast Alaska troll fishery.**

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

5 **WHEREAS** commercial fishing is a mainstay of the state's economy and the largest
6 private sector employer in the state; and

7 **WHEREAS**, in Southeast Alaska alone, the seafood industry directly employed
8 11,300 workers and provided \$653,000,000 in total economic output in 2019; and

9 **WHEREAS** the troll fleet is one of the largest fleets in the state and the largest fleet in
10 Southeast Alaska, and, in 2019, approximately 1,450 fishers earned income directly from the
11 fishery; and

12 **WHEREAS** state residents comprise 85 percent of the state's commercial troll permit
13 holders, making it the highest level of local ownership of any major fishery in the state; and

14 **WHEREAS** commercial salmon trolling contributes to the economy of Southeast
15 Alaska year-round, with winter, spring, and summer troll seasons sustaining employment in

1 fishing, seafood processing, and fisheries-related industries; and

2 **WHEREAS**, when accounting for multiplier effects of the fishing, seafood
3 processing, and fisheries-related industries, commercial trolling is one of the three most
4 valuable commercial fisheries in Southeast Alaska and has a total annual economic impact of
5 approximately \$85,000,000, as measured in terms of total output; and

6 **WHEREAS**, as compared to the costs of entry to other state fisheries, the affordability
7 of the troll fishery provides an entry level opportunity for new commercial fishers, and, as a
8 result, there are troll fishery permit holders in nearly all 33 communities in Southeast Alaska,
9 all of which will suffer if the Southeast Alaska chinook troll fishery is closed; and

10 **WHEREAS** the Wild Fish Conservancy filed a lawsuit against the United States
11 Secretary of Commerce and the National Marine Fisheries Service alleging that the Southeast
12 Alaska chinook troll fishery authorized by the National Marine Fisheries Service is
13 contributing to the extinction of an endangered population of southern resident killer whales;
14 and

15 **WHEREAS** only two to three percent of the total Alaska catch is from the Puget
16 Sound chinook salmon and Columbia River fall stocks, which constitute the most important
17 stocks for southern resident killer whales, and the Alaska fishery catch is only a small portion
18 of those stocks' runs; and

19 **WHEREAS** numerous studies have identified habitat loss and industrial activities in
20 Puget Sound as factors negatively affecting southern resident killer whales; and

21 **WHEREAS**, while the population of southern resident killer whales has struggled,
22 most of the northern and Alaska resident killer whale populations have at least doubled over
23 the last 40 years; and

24 **WHEREAS** the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit has the potential to result in the
25 closure of the Southeast Alaska troll fishery, despite the improbability of the closure resulting
26 in meaningful benefits to southern resident killer whales; and

27 **WHEREAS**, if successful, the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit could affect other state
28 fisheries by rescinding the state's delegated authority to manage and implement salmon
29 fisheries in state water and in the exclusive economic zone off the shores of the state,
30 requiring changes in the allocation of salmon under the Pacific Salmon Treaty and
31 implementing new restrictions and closures in the state's fisheries;

1 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the National Marine
2 Fisheries Service to find a way to hold the Southeast Alaska troll fishery harmless and
3 prioritize preparation of the necessary documents and processes to support the continuation of
4 the Southeast Alaska winter and summer troll fisheries while the National Marine Fisheries
5 Service prepares a new biological opinion; and be it

6 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the National Marine
7 Fisheries Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to commit the necessary
8 resources to effectively defend the state's fisheries in present and future lawsuits, including
9 the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit; and be it

10 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the state to work
11 with the Alaska Congressional delegation to keep the Southeast Alaska troll fishery open
12 should the court adopt the magistrate judge's recommendation that the troll fishery be closed.

13 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, President
14 of the United States; the Honorable Kamala D. Harris, Vice President of the United States and
15 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Gina Raimondo, United States Secretary of
16 Commerce; the Honorable Richard W. Spinrad, Ph.D., United States Under Secretary of
17 Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and National Oceanic and Atmospheric
18 Administration Administrator; Janet Coit, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National
19 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; the Honorable Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner,
20 Alaska Department of Fish and Game; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable
21 Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Mary Peltola, U.S. Representative, members
22 of the Alaska delegation in Congress.