

Introduced by: Cooper, Johnson, Hibbert,
Dunne, Carpenter
Date: 10/13/20
Action: Adopted
Vote: 9 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent

**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION 2020-074**

**A RESOLUTION ADVOCATING FOR A REDUCTION
OF HALIBUT BYCATCH**

WHEREAS, it has been more than five years since the State of Alaska, through the federal North Pacific Fishery Management Council, agreed to lower Pacific halibut bycatch caps in the face of a diminishing biomass; and

WHEREAS, despite efforts on both sides for five years, tying the management of halibut bycatch to the halibut abundance is still not a reality; and

WHEREAS, while the federal council struggles with the abundance-based management issue, Alaska's small boat commercial, charter, sport and subsistence fleets and their coastal communities bear the short and long-term impacts that high halibut bycatch creates; and

WHEREAS, short-term impacts are felt every year when halibut fishermen in the Bering Sea lose a part of their annual allocation that is tied, not strictly to abundance, but to the forecasted landings of bycatch; and

WHEREAS, long-term impacts are felt by halibut fishermen beyond the Bering Sea, as all sizes (including sub-legals) are removed from the entire biomass forever; and

WHEREAS, the loss of the juvenile halibut to future catches in Southcentral and Southeast Alaska represent more than a 1:1 loss to those fishing communities; and

WHEREAS, managing the prohibited species bycatch of halibut without tying it to an accurate abundance index of the halibut stocks is a political decision, while managing bycatch using abundance indices for the stock as a whole, is a sustainability decision; and

WHEREAS, politically based management decisions that impact a long-lived, wide-ranging species such as Pacific halibut, are indefensible and if the overarching goal is sustainability, abundance-based bycatch management is the only approach; and

WHEREAS, tying halibut bycatch to abundance is especially important during low levels of abundance, a situation we have been in for the past eight years., and the halibut population is particularly vulnerable to high caps that leave the gate open for high-

take levels that could mark a point of no return for several year-classes of Pacific halibut; and

WHEREAS, abundance-based management (ABM) would bring immediate positive results to Alaska's rural coastal communities as ABM control of bycatch means coastal communities are more sustainable because they can rely on rigorous and informed management strategies which are not only more consistent and responsive to the health of the resource, but are also more equitable, managing all halibut users on abundance, including those harvesting as bycatch; and

WHEREAS, the revenue generated by Alaska's coastal communities mean the state's economy is more stable long-term, as well as more diversified when coastal communities thrive and they cannot thrive with the uncertainty of high prohibited species catches looming over them each year;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH:

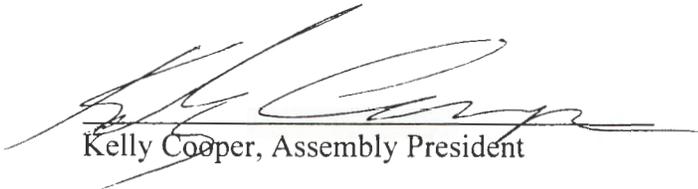
SECTION 1. Pacific halibut is important to Alaskans culturally, economically, and socially. Halibut, salmon and crab are Alaska's most iconic seafoods. Coastal communities rely upon them but are sadly losing access to them.

SECTION 2. The borough assembly strongly encourages the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to take the lead in this issue when it comes before the North Pacific Fishery Management Council this October. Actions to reduce all halibut bycatch caps to levels that are directly tied to the best available scientifically informed indexes of abundance will ensure that all sectors share in conserving the resource.

SECTION 3. That a copy of this resolution shall be provided to the Commissioner of ADF&G and shall be provided as testimony during the October 14, 2020 public comments section of the NPFMC meeting.

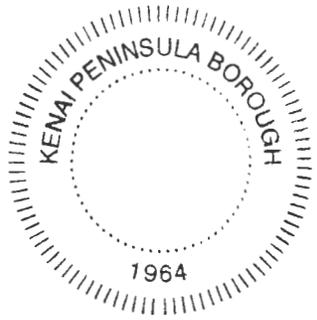
SECTION 4. That this resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.

ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH THIS 13TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2020.


Kelly Cooper, Assembly President

ATTEST:


John Blankenship, MMC, Borough Clerk



Yes: Blakeley, Bjorkman, Carpenter, Cox, Dunne, Hibbert, Johnson, Smalley, Cooper
No: None
Absent: None