

Introduced by:	Mayor, Johnson, Elam, Bjorkman, Tupper
Date:	05/17/22
Action:	Adopted as Amended
Vote:	8 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent

**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION 2022-034**

**A RESOLUTION URGING THE STATE OF ALASKA AND THE NORTH PACIFIC
FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL TO ADOPT AGGRESSIVE MEASURES TO
REDUCE COMMERCIAL FISHING “BYCATCH” IN ALASKA HALIBUT AND
SALMON FISHERIES**

WHEREAS, the term “bycatch” is a created term, defined under Federal law as “fish that are harvested in a fishery but which are not sold or kept for personal use; and

WHEREAS, the federally defined term is meant to minimize or soften the more accurate label of “discarded and killed fish”; and

WHEREAS, the Pacific halibut longline fishery was one of the first fully domestic fisheries to become established off Alaska; and

WHEREAS, halibut are taken as incidental catch in federally-managed groundfish trawl, hook-and-line, and pot fisheries in the Gulf and Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands; and

WHEREAS, according to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC), bycatch accounted for 17% of the coastwide halibut mortality; and

WHEREAS, according to the NPFMC, approximately 4,500,000 pounds of halibut bycatch mortality occurred in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) fishery in 2019; and

WHEREAS, according to the NPFMC, just over 2,000,000 pounds of halibut bycatch mortality occurred in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) fishery in 2019; and

WHEREAS, while these numbers are down from 1991 peaks of 10,000,000 and 6,000,000, respectively, pounds of halibut bycatch mortality, the numbers remain unacceptably high; and

WHEREAS, Chinook salmon is the official fish of Alaska and a cultural icon for both native and nonnative Alaskans; and

WHEREAS, Chinook and chum salmon is a significant source of food in both the subsistence and recreational fisheries and a key component of the State's commercial and charter fisheries; and

WHEREAS, these species of salmon are caught and discarded in the Pollock fisheries in the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska and other trawl fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska; and

WHEREAS, bycatch by the trawl fleets can be regulated to protect the mortality of this extremely valuable resource; and

WHEREAS, the prohibited species catch (PSC) cap, which includes Chinook and chum salmon, in the Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery is set at between 45,000 and 60,000 PSC depending on the Chinook Salmon abundance numbers provided by the State of Alaska using the 3-system index for western Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the non-pollock Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries currently operate under no bycatch limit; and

WHEREAS, recently the U.S. Secretary of Commerce found that multiple fisheries across the state met the requirements for a fishery disaster determination, including Upper Cook Inlet East Side Set Net (2018) and Upper Cook Inlet salmon fisheries (2020) Copper River Chinook and sockeye salmon fisheries (2018), Prince William Sound salmon fisheries (2020), Copper River Chinook, sockeye, and chum salmon fisheries (2020), Alaska Norton Sound, Yukon River, Chignik, Kuskokwim River, and Southeast Alaska salmon fisheries (2020), Pacific cod in the Gulf of Alaska (2020), Yukon River salmon fishery (2021); and

WHEREAS, NOAA Fisheries recently denied a request for emergency action to eliminate Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery and implement a hard cap on chum salmon bycatch; and

WHEREAS, according to NOAA, Alaska produces more than half the fish caught in waters off the coast of the United States, with an average value of nearly \$4.5 billion a year; and

WHEREAS, it is important that federal fishery management agencies and the State of Alaska recognize that NOAA and NPFMC, despite previous efforts, needs to do more to manage and protect our sport, subsistence, and commercial halibut and salmon fisheries from closure and low return numbers;

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

SECTION 1. That the Assembly urges the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) to adopt and implement management measures that significantly reduce the halibut and salmon species in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) trawl fisheries by setting more restrictive limits and by considering new approaches such as increased incentives, offsets, cap-and-trade, reduction rewards, and other methods.

SECTION 2. That the Assembly urges NPFMC to lower the existing halibut and salmon species bycatch limits in the GOA and Bering Sea pollock fisheries, for salmon species, to at least half the current limits.

SECTION 3. That the Assembly urges the NPFMC to further reduce Chinook bycatch in any catch share program.

SECTION 4. That the Assembly urges NPFMC to require 100 percent observer coverage in all trawl fisheries in the GOA to provide accurate estimates of bycatch.

SECTION 5. That a copy of this resolution shall be provided to Governor Dunleavy and all legislators representing the Kenai Peninsula Borough and all members of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

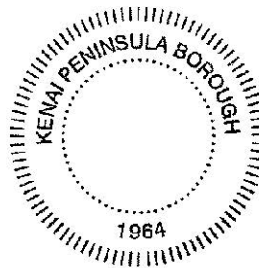
SECTION 6. That this resolution is effective immediately upon its adoption.

ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH THIS 17TH DAY OF MAY, 2022.


Brent Johnson, Assembly President

ATTEST:


John Blankenship, MMC, Borough Clerk



Yes: Bjorkman, Chesley, Cox, Derkevorkian, Ecklund, Elam, Tupper, Johnson
No: None
Absent: Hibbert