

Legislative action aids fishing industry

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The Alaska Legislature passed seven bills and eight resolutions pertaining to the fishing industry during the 1990 legislative session.

The fishing industry is in good shape in regard to state statutes. Over the years, the Legislature has quickly and consistently responded to fishing industry problems and concerns and has amended state law as needed.

As one can see from the resolutions, the biggest problems facing the Alaska fishing industry right now are federal government actions and decisions. In response, the Legislature can, through resolutions, express its objections and request the federal government to address the problems it has created.

The following bills and resolutions passed the Alaska Legislature in 1990:

- Senate Bill 528 — Clarifies that shellfish mariculture is an allowable activity in the Halibut Cove Lagoon area of Kachemak Bay State Park.

- Senate Bill 531 — Requires farmed salmon sold in Alaska to carry a label or be identified as farmed fish. This will allow consumers to distinguish between farmed salmon raised outside the state and natural/wild salmon caught in Alaska.

- House Bill 394 — Requires pollock flesh to be fully utilized in pollock roe stripping operations. The bill was adopted in tandem with a new North Pacific Fishery Management Council plan amendment. Both the bill and the amendment address a wanton waste problem where pollock were harvested for the roe while the flesh was discarded.

- House Bill 400 — Tightens up and clarifies state law pertaining to the collection of fisheries business taxes and establishes civil penalties for the failure to obtain a fisheries business license. The bill was amended in committee to require the commissioner of the Department of Revenue to conduct a study into revising the fish tax so that a portion of the proceeds may be shared with municipalities in which the gutting, grilling, sliming and icing — rather than the final processing — of the product occurs.

- House Bill 432 — Prohibits commercial finfish farming in Alaska. Allows exemptions for state projects, private nonprofit hatcheries and ornamental finfish for aquariums. The bill resolves the political debate in Alaska over whether Alaska should have a finfish farming industry. The commercial fishing industry strongly opposed finfish farming.

- House Bill 456 — Establishes a system for sharing with municipalities the fish taxes collected from floating processing vessels that operate outside municipal boundaries. Currently, all these funds go into the state general fund despite the impact the floating processors have on municipal services.

- House Bill 569 — Revises the statutory description of Alaska's 58-foot limit on the length of salmon seine vessels to conform to new Coast Guard regulations.

- Senate Joint Resolution 48 — Requests the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to grant shore-based processors and small coastal communities a fishery resource allocation preference.

- Senate Joint Resolution 50 — Commends the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Ser-

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vice decision to prohibit Alaska Natives from taking sea otters for use in creating and selling handicrafts and clothing.

- Senate Joint Resolution 52 — Requests the National Marine Fisheries Service to approve the University of Alaska groundfish observer training program and to establish procedures for certifying the Alaska trainees in time for this year's fall fishery.

- Senate Joint Resolution 62 — Requests the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to take action to restrict the amount of herring that can be taken as bycatch in the Bering Sea trawl fisheries.

- Senate Joint Resolution 75 — Requests the U.S. Congress — when it considers reauthorization of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and

Management Act — to give fishery management councils specific authority to allocate fishery resources between land based and offshore fishing fleets, to allow special allocations for economically disadvantaged fishing communities and to retain the current geographic composition of the North Pacific council membership. In addition, it expresses opposition to limited entry in Alaska's bottomfish fisheries.

- House Joint Resolution 27 — Requests action be taken to compensate Alaska fishermen for income lost due to the illegal high seas interception of Alaska salmon.

- House Joint Resolution 92 — Requests the National Park Service to amend its regulations to allow commercial fishing and subsistence uses to take place in Glacier Bay National Park.

- House Joint Resolution 93 — Opposes efforts by the Internal Revenue Service to seize and sell limited entry permits in order to collect tax obligations. Under state law, permits are use privileges and are not property subject to the claims of creditors. In addition, the loss of permits deprives commercial fishermen of their means of earning a living and paying their taxes.