

**CITY OF CRAIG
RESOLUTION 22-17**

A RESOLUTION ADVOCATING FOR A REDUCTION OF TRAWL BYCATCH

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

WHEREAS, in December 2021 the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council voted to allow for reductions in halibut bycatch based on biomass surveys; and,

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

WHEREAS, in June 2022 the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council again put off reducing bycatch limits in favor of more studies; 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 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-legal-sized halibut) are removed from the entire biomass forever; 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 incompatible with an overarching goal of sustainability, abundance-based bycatch management; and,

WHEREAS, tying halibut bycatch to abundance is especially important during low levels of abundance, and the halibut population is particularly vulnerable to high bycatch caps that lead to 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.

WHEREAS, Pacific halibut is important to Alaskans culturally, economically, and socially. Halibut is among Alaska's most iconic seafoods. Coastal communities rely upon the species but are sadly losing access to them.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Craig City Council strongly encourages the Alaska Governor, Alaska State Legislature and State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commissioner to take the lead in this issue. 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.


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Craig City Council encourages the Governor to extend the Governor's Fisheries Bycatch Task Force, which is due to sunset November 30, 2022 with the goal of reviewing and commenting to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council on the benefits of ABM.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution shall be provided to the Office of the Governor, the Alaska Fisheries Bycatch Task Force, Alaska Legislature and State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commissioner and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

This resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.

PASSED AND APPROVED by a duly constituted quorum of the city council this 7th day of July, 2022.


MAYOR TIM O'CONNOR


HEATHER MENDONSA, CITY CLERK

