



Rep. Sarah Vance  
State Capitol Room 118  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Rep. Rebecca Himschoot  
State Capitol Room 409  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Rep. Dan Ortiz  
State Capitol Room 500  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Rep. Sara Hannan  
State Capitol Room 400  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

February 14, 2023

**Re: Comments regarding HJR 5**

Dear Representatives, Himschoot, Hannan, Vance and Ortiz:

Please accept these comments from SalmonState in support of House Joint Resolution 5:

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

At issue is a lawsuit filed by Seattle based non-profit the Wild Fish Conservancy, alleging impacts of Southeast Alaska's commercial hook and line commercial Chinook fishery on the health and survival of Southern Resident Orca; a population whose numbers have dwindled and whose future is in jeopardy. While the situation is deeply disturbing, the simple fact is, Alaska's troll fishery is not a material factor in the decline of the Orca in and around Puget Sound.

In our experience Southeast Alaska's fishing families are some of the most committed and invested stewards of wild salmon and marine ecosystems, Southeast's trollers have a long record of advocating for wild salmon and their habitat in both Southeast Alaska (e.g., the Tongass National Forest, Transboundary Mines) and the Pacific Northwest (e.g., the Snake River in the Columbia Basin).

The troll fleet is the second largest fleet in Alaska and the largest fleet in Southeast Alaska, with 85% of troll permit holders residing in Southeast Alaska. Approximately 1,450 fishermen earn income directly from the fishery, including skippers (permit holders) and crew. The troll fishery provides more jobs for Alaskan residents than any other fishery and is especially important to those who live in smaller, remote communities; roughly one of every 50 people in Southeast Alaska works on a trolling boat.

Trolling is essentially a year-round salmon fishery, providing fishermen with year-round revenue and high-quality fresh fish to markets during months when fresh salmon is not typically available. The troll fishery, along with other salmon fisheries in Southeast Alaska, is sustainably managed under strict annual limits negotiated through the Pacific Salmon Treaty. In-season harvest is carefully managed by Alaska Department of Fish and Game, who has a long history of sustainable salmon management.

The SE troll fishery is consistently in the top 3 most valuable fisheries in Southeast Alaska, the troll fleet has a total economic impact in Southeast Alaska of approximately \$85 million annually, as measured in terms of total output and about Approximately 44% of that total is derived from Chinook harvest.

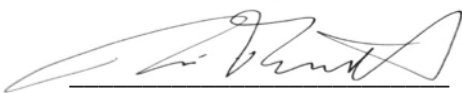
Maintaining access to this fishery is critical for the well-being and continued diversification in Southeast Alaska's economy. The troll fishery is a lifeline for rural livelihoods across this region where hundreds of small-boat fishermen take great pride in the high-quality food product they provide to consumers across America.

Over the past few decades Southeast Alaska's trollers have limited their harvest to aid in maintaining sustainable populations of Northwest Chinook. However, the data clearly shows limiting the Alaska troll harvest is not enough to restore those salmon runs. Rather, chronic habitat problems in Washington [State of Washington's State of the Salmon](#) and nearby Southern British Columbia are the root cause of the sharp decline in the Southern Resident Orca's primary food source, Chinook salmon. Shutting down troll operations and putting Alaska fishing families on the beach will solve nothing.

In fact, in 2001, I worked as the Alaska Field Representative for the Seattle based Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition. The goal was to build a critical mass of social and political support for what the science was telling us, that one of the most impactful initiatives needed to rebuild depleted Washington Chinook Salmon runs was the partial removal of four dams on the Lower Snake River in Eastern Washington. Many Alaskan communities passed resolutions and hundreds of thousands of Washington residents weighed in supporting decommissioning these four dams. But here we are, more than two decades later and those Chinook killing dams are still standing and the Wild Fish Conservancy has decided to try and place the blame far to the north in an attempt to distract the public from the tough and politically difficult choices that need to be made much closer to their Seattle area homes.

While SalmonState supports the goals of the Endangered Species Act, we condemn the Wild Fish Conservancy's lawsuit which is little more than a massive distraction that diverts attention from the core challenges facing salmon and divides groups that should be working together for the future of wild salmon all along the Pacific Coast of North America. Thank you for introducing this resolution and thank you for the opportunity to register our support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Bristol', written over a horizontal line.

Tim Bristol  
Executive Director  
SalmonState  
Homer, Alaska