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February 15, 2023

## **House Joint Resolution 5 moves out of Alaska House Fisheries Committee supporting protection of Southeast Alaska's troll fishery**

Juneau, AK - On Tuesday, the Alaska State Legislature's [House Special Committee on Fisheries received testimony and passed a resolution \(HJR 5\)](#) that calls for state and federal agencies to defend Southeast Alaska's troll fishery from a potential closure this year due to a lawsuit that a Washington-based organization, the Wild Fish Conservancy (WFC), has filed against the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The lawsuit alleges that Alaska's Chinook troll fishery imperils the Southern Resident Killer Whales and aims to shut the fishery down, leaving nearly 1,500 fishermen without a job. Alaska's trollers have intervened in the case, calling attention to the WFC's misguided claims and the well-documented impacts that habitat loss, water pollution, urbanization, and vessel traffic are having on the Puget Sound's salmon and orca populations.

The resolution was introduced by freshman legislator Rep Himschoot of Sitka, a sitting member of the House Special Committee on Fisheries. During the hearing, the committee heard from local fishermen, community leaders, and fishery experts on the economic impacts of Southeast Alaska's troll fishery as well as the devastating impacts of a fishery closure to the region's economy and fishing families.

"In our community, trolling is a huge portion of our income, and in particular in the winter months when all the summer activities - all the lodges are shut down, all the sports fishermen are gone - there's nothing else," said Casey Mapes, Yakutat resident and lifelong commercial fisherman. "Out of my troll income, king salmon is probably two thirds of what I make in a year's time."

"Fishing is now the mainstay of Craig's economy since logging is all but gone on Prince of Wales Island. Commercial salmon trolling is a significant portion of our fishing fleet. Our fleet on Prince of Wales is over 100 boats with 120 charter boats also operating out of Craig each year... We stand to lose all of this if this Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit is successful," shared Tim O'Connor, Mayor of Craig and commercial fisherman.

After hearing all of the oral testimony, the House Fisheries Committee unanimously voted to move the resolution forward out of the committee; it will next be voted on by the entire House of Representatives, then referred to a committee in the Senate and the Senate Floor before becoming final. The Alaska Trollers Association and Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association celebrated the committee's vote.

“We thank Representative Himschoot and the rest of the Fisheries Committee for standing with the thousands of fishing families in Alaska who depend on Southeast Alaska’s troll fishery, which provides more jobs for Alaska residents than any other fishery and is especially important to those who live in Alaska’s smaller, remote communities. Trollers are doing everything we can to fight this misguided lawsuit and defend our state’s economy, but we can’t do it alone and hope that the State Legislature will move to pass this resolution swiftly,” said Amy Daugherty, Alaska Trollers Association Executive Director.

“The Southeast fleet is grateful to our State’s lawmakers for their leadership and for stepping up to help protect our way of life. As was discussed at length during the committee’s hearing, this lawsuit could have major implications for not just Alaska’s troll fleet, but Alaska’s seafood industry as a whole. The lawsuit discounts Alaska’s decades of sustainable fishery management and our fleet’s proven commitment to salmon conservation. We hope that the rest of the legislature will rally behind this resolution and do all that it can to ensure Alaska trollers can head out on the water this summer and continue to deliver the premium, sustainable seafood product valued by markets around the world,” said Jeff Favour, Alaska Longline Fishermen’s Association Board Member and commercial fisherman.

The House Fisheries Committee’s resolution follows a string of supportive letters, resolutions, and donations from Southeast Alaska communities, businesses, and fishing associations, including Southeast Conference, United Fishermen of Alaska, United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters Association, Southeast Alaska Seiners Association, City of Pelican, City of Craig, Port Alexander, Ketchikan, Yakutat, Seafood Producers Cooperative, Sitka Sound Seafoods, SSRAA, and AKI with more in the works from other communities and organizations. On February 14th, the City of Sitka passed a resolution of support and commitment to donate \$25,000 for the Alaska Trollers Association’s legal fund.

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