

Introduced by: Council Member Swope
Date: May 23, 2023
Action: Passed
Vote: 5-0

CITY OF BETHEL, ALASKA

Resolution 23-10

A RESOLUTION BY THE BETHEL CITY COUNCIL DIRECTING THE CITY TO JOIN AS AMICUS OR INTERVENOR IN PENDING FEDERAL LITIGATION SUPPORTING AN UPDATED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR GROUND FISH FISHERIES OF THE BERING SEA, ALEUTIAN ISLANDS, AND GULF OF ALASKA


- WHEREAS,** the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers have long been the City of Bethel's and surrounding Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region's primary source of salmon;
- WHEREAS,** many of the City's residents rely on salmon for subsistence harvesting, and salmon are of significant cultural and nutritional value;
- WHEREAS,** City sales tax on retail sales, ranging between six and 15 percent, constitutes a major source of revenue for the City;
- WHEREAS,** subsistence and commercial fishing and its attendant sales for items such as supplies, guiding, fuel, and gear have historically contributed to the City's sales tax base;
- WHEREAS,** recent precipitous declines in the population of multiple salmon species that originate from and return to the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers have adversely impacted the City's residents and economy;
- WHEREAS,** the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recently adopted annual catch limits for the groundfish fisheries of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands without analyzing the environmental impacts of that decision in the context of the current environment;
- WHEREAS,** on April 7, 2023, the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) and the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) filed an original action in federal district court in Anchorage challenging the NMFS decision;
- WHEREAS,** salmon are anadromous fish, and dramatic changes in ocean conditions, including those related to warmer temperatures, have contributed to the reduction or collapse of multiple species of salmon stocks that originate from the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers, affecting Bethel residents who rely on a healthy marine ecosystem to support their ways of life and economy;
- WHEREAS,** thousands of salmon are caught each year as bycatch, much of it discarded, by the pollock groundfish trawl fishery and similar fisheries authorized to fish the ocean under the harvest specifications adopted by NMFS;
- WHEREAS,** NMFS' reliance on an outdated environmental impact statement for harvest specifications (2007) and groundfish fisheries management plan (2004), may violate the U.S. government's obligations under the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA);


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WHEREAS, the federal government's failure to responsibly manage commercial trawling is literally having an adverse downstream impact on the City's tax base and residents;

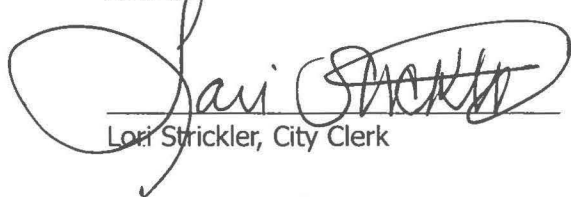
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Bethel City Council determines that the City should join as amicus or intervenor in federal litigation to remedy NMFS reliance on outdated data to manage groundfish fisheries, including the pollock trawl fisheries, because the NMFS decision impacts the City financially, and its residents nutritionally, culturally, and economically.

ENACTED THIS 23rd DAY OF MAY, BY A VOTE OF 5 IN FAVOR AND 0 OPPOSED.


Rose Henderson, Mayor



ATTEST


Lori Strickler, City Clerk