

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. J. RES. 17

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 5, 2007

Referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

JOINT RESOLUTION

Directing the United States to initiate international discussions and take necessary steps with other Nations to negotiate an agreement for managing migratory and transboundary fish stocks in the Arctic Ocean.

Whereas the decline of several commercially valuable fish stocks throughout the world's oceans highlights the need for fishing nations to conserve fish stocks and develop management systems that promote fisheries sustainability;

Whereas fish stocks are migratory throughout their habitats, and changing ocean conditions can restructure marine habitats and redistribute the species dependent on those habitats;

Whereas changing global climate regimes may increase ocean water temperature, creating suitable new habitats in areas previously too cold to support certain fish stocks, such as the Arctic Ocean;

Whereas habitat expansion and migration of fish stocks into the Arctic Ocean and the potential for vessel docking and navigation in the Arctic Ocean could create conditions favorable for establishing and expanding commercial fisheries in the future;

Whereas commercial fishing has occurred in several regions of the Arctic Ocean, including the Barents Sea, Kara Sea, Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, and Greenland Sea, although fisheries scientists have only limited data on current and projected future fish stock abundance and distribution patterns throughout the Arctic Ocean;

Whereas remote indigenous communities in all nations that border the Arctic Ocean engage in limited, small scale subsistence fishing and must maintain access to and sustainability of this fishing in order to survive;

Whereas many of these communities depend on a variety of other marine life for social, cultural and subsistence purposes, including marine mammals and seabirds that may be adversely affected by climate change, and emerging fisheries in the Arctic should take into account the social, economic, cultural and subsistence needs of these small coastal communities;

Whereas managing for fisheries sustainability requires that all commercial fishing be conducted in accordance with science-based limits on harvest, timely and accurate reporting of catch data, equitable allocation and access systems, and effective monitoring and enforcement systems;

Whereas migratory fish stocks traverse international boundaries between the exclusive economic zones of fishing nations and the high seas, and ensuring sustainability of fisheries targeting these stocks requires management sys-

tems based on international coordination and cooperation;

Whereas international fishing treaties and agreements provide a framework for establishing rules to guide sustainable fishing activities among those nations that are parties to the agreement, and regional fisheries management organizations provide international fora for implementing these agreements and facilitating international cooperation and collaboration;

Whereas under its authorities in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council has proposed that the United States close all Federal waters in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas to commercial fishing until a fisheries management plan is fully developed; and

Whereas future commercial fishing and fisheries management activities in the Arctic Ocean should be developed through a coordinated international framework, as provided by international treaties or regional fisheries management organizations, and this framework should be implemented before significant commercial fishing activity expands to the high seas: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives*
 2 *of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
 3 That—

4 (1) the United States should initiate inter-
 5 national discussions and take necessary steps with
 6 other Arctic nations to negotiate an agreement or
 7 agreements for managing migratory, transboundary,
 8 and straddling fish stocks in the Arctic Ocean and

1 establishing a new international fisheries manage-
2 ment organization or organizations for the region;

3 (2) the agreement or agreements negotiated
4 pursuant to paragraph (1) should conform to the re-
5 quirements of the United Nations Fish Stocks
6 Agreement and contain mechanisms, inter alia, for
7 establishing catch and bycatch limits, harvest alloca-
8 tions, observers, monitoring, data collection and re-
9 porting, enforcement, and other elements necessary
10 for sustaining future Arctic fish stocks;

11 (3) as international fisheries agreements are ne-
12 gotiated and implemented, the United States should
13 consult with the North Pacific Regional Fishery
14 Management Council and Alaska Native subsistence
15 communities of the Arctic; and

16 (4) until the agreement or agreements nego-
17 tiated pursuant to paragraph (1) come into force
18 and measures consistent with the United Nations
19 Fish Stocks Agreement are in effect, the United
20 States should support international efforts to halt
21 the expansion of commercial fishing activities in the
22 high seas of the Arctic Ocean.

Passed the Senate October 4, 2007.

Attest:

NANCY ERICKSON,

Secretary.