



# Alaska State Legislature

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## Official Business

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## **Senate Passes Sound Science Resolution** **HJR 10 Supports Studies of Sea Lion-Pollock Interaction**

(JUNEAU) – The Senate today passed House Joint Resolution 10, calling on federal fisheries managers to rely on sound science in making decisions balancing Steller sea lion protection and commercial fishing interests in managing groundfish in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.

The House Resources Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Drew Scalzi (R-Homer), introduced HJR 10 in response to conflicts over efforts by federal fisheries managers last year to protect declining populations of Steller sea lions by curtailing fishing of pollock and other groundfish in one of Alaska's richest fishing areas.

“There have been assumptions in the scientific community as it tried to address the problem with Steller sea lion decline, but they should rely on facts, not assumptions, before pointing to commercial fishing as the only cause,” Scalzi said. Biological opinions cited by the National Marine Fisheries Service in proposing cutbacks in commercial fishing, however, were based on unproven assumptions about how environmental, biological and other factors, in addition to fishing, might be affecting sea lions, he said.

“In this resolution we're asking for good science and good biological management, and we're asking fisheries managers to review the data they have, and come up with a better, more defensible scheme as to why commercial fisheries should be curtailed,” Scalzi said.

Groundfishing is an \$800 million industry in Alaska, and the potential damage to the state in terms of lost taxes, defaulted fishing loans, and unemployment in small fishing communities makes it imperative that reductions, if any, are firmly grounded in defensible science, he added.

Scalzi said his resolution also endorses U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens' work in providing \$40 million to fund an independent scientific review, proposed by the fisheries service, of the science underlying any proposed closure.

The resolution moves next to the governor for his signature.

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