

Alaska State Legislature

SENATOR
BEN STEVENS
716 WEST 4TH AVENUE
ANCHORAGE, AK
99501-2133
(907) 269-0200
FAX (907) 269-0204



Session:
STATE CAPITOL
JUNEAU, AK
99801-1182
(907) 465-4993
FAX (907) 465-3872

Senate District N

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 347

“An Act relating to moratoria on entry of new participants or vessels into a commercial fishery; relating to vessel permits for, and the establishment of a moratorium on entry of new vessels into, state Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries; and providing for an effective date.”

[Senate Bill 347](#) addresses two issues regarding fisheries moratoria. One section of the bill amends [AS 16.43.225](#) to allow the statute to be utilized. Because of its current inadequacies, the law has never been used to place a moratorium on a fishery. All of the moratoria implemented to date have required special legislation. The second issue addressed in the bill is the immediate need to place a moratorium on the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries.

Over the past 12 years, some members of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fishing industry have sought to rationalize the groundfish fishery. Participants want to create incentives that slow the competitive race for fish. The belief is that this will result in a more economically stable fishery that can better respond to changing economic and environmental concerns.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) has taken several steps toward rationalization over the past 12 years. The Council formed the first of three committees to address GOA rationalization in the groundfish fishery in 2000. The Council is developing several alternative approaches for new management policies to rationalize GOA groundfish fisheries resulting from four years of Council meetings and input from eight public hearings held throughout Alaska and Seattle during the summer and fall of 2002.

Rationalizing federal fisheries in the GOA could affect State of Alaska fishery management. In October 2003, the Board of Fisheries convened a committee of stakeholders with state, National Marine Fisheries Service, Board of Fisheries, Department of Law, and Council staff. It is called the GOA Groundfish Rationalization Task Force. Their mission is to pursue approaches to provide harvest opportunities under GOA rationalization in state waters that does not conflict with state law.

In February 2004, the Board of Fisheries voted 7-0: (1) to recommend pursuing legislative authority for a moratorium on all new entrants into the groundfish fisheries, excluding jig gear; (2) to recommend maintaining current state groundfish management, or alternatively, allocate a range of harvests for state management based on historic harvest patterns in state waters; and (3) direct the GOA Task Force to continue to explore ways to control harvests within state waters that meet the goals of GOA rationalization and restrictions under state law.

Senate Bill 347 will assist the Department of Fish and Game and the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission in meeting the objectives outlined by the Board of Fisheries for the development of state water groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska.