



CENTRAL COUNCIL
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Office of the President • Edward K. Thomas Building
9097 Glacier Highway • Juneau, Alaska 99801

CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TLINGIT & HAIDA INDIAN TRIBES OF ALASKA
Eighty-Ninth Annual Tribal Assembly
April 17-19, 2024
Juneau, Alaska

Resolution TA 24-17

Title: Improvements to the Definition of Pelagic Gear to Prohibit Bottom Trawling by the Pollock Industry

By: Ketchikan Tlingit & Haida Community Council

WHEREAS, the Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida) is a federally recognized tribe with more than 37,000 citizens; and

WHEREAS, the salmon, crab, halibut and other fisheries are of critical importance to the Indigenous people throughout all of coastal Alaska, as shown through the diet, artwork, dances, and other expressions of culture throughout coastal tribes in Alaska; and

WHEREAS, Tlingits and Haidas have always been fishermen and developed the marine fisheries in Southeast Alaska, harvesting salmon, halibut, and other fish present in our waters; and

WHEREAS, Tlingit and Haida economies remained linked to sea and fishing for both a way of life and for our livelihoods as shown by the high rate of participation by our tribal citizens in Alaska fisheries each year; and

WHEREAS, Alaska's commercial fisheries for salmon, halibut, and crab have historically been a major driver of the regional commercial fishing economy in large municipalities, small remote communities, and Alaska Native villages; and

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska and federal fishery laws define mid-water or pelagic trawls nets that does not contact the sea floor nor have attached to it gears or other devices that would enable seabed contact; and

WHEREAS, the current regulations for pelagic trawls used in fisheries managed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) distinguish pelagic and non-pelagic trawls based on mesh size and other components but do not prohibit contact with the sea floor; and

WHEREAS, the pollock industry's and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries' media materials claim that pollock is a "clean" fishery based on the use of "midwater" trawl nets that do not contact the sea floor; and

WHEREAS, various fishery stakeholders from commercial fishing groups, conservation organizations, and tribal government agencies and citizens throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska have had growing concerns about the extent of bottom contact by pelagic fishing gear used in the pollock fisheries; and

WHEREAS, the pollock industry's pelagic trawls contact the sea floor, on average, 40-80% of the time, with rates of up to 100% on the largest factory ships and are responsible for a significant proportion of sea floor disturbance in the North Pacific; and

WHEREAS, the pollock industry had a total of 10 killer whales caught in their nets in 2023, where the majority of them died as a result of the nets from the pollock boats; and

WHEREAS, mobile bottom contact gear disturbs and uproots habitat forming organisms, crushes crab and other species; and WHEREAS, the frequent sea floor disturbance can cause long-term damage to sensitive, slow-growing coral, habitats that are like old-growth forests of the sea which provide critical features for juvenile fish and other species, and once destroyed, take decades to recover; and

WHEREAS, there are numerous areas closed to bottom trawling in order to protect habitat, reduce bycatch, and meet other management objectives; and

WHEREAS, some of the areas impacted by pollock industry nets are near-shore, near-community areas of vital importance to Alaska Native communities; and

WHEREAS, the current definition of pelagic trawl gear allows the pollock industry to circumvent management measures meant to protect crab, halibut, other fish species, their habitats and communities from the impacts of bottom trawling;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Eighty-Ninth Tribal Assembly of the Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska convened April 17-19, 2024, hereby supports the objective of a pelagic gear definition must be to prevent trawl gear from contacting the sea floor;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Tribal Assembly requests that the National Marine Fisheries Service, North Pacific Fishery Management Council and the State of Alaska define trawls used by the pollock industry as mobile bottom contact gear and prohibit their use in areas closed bottom trawling until there is an enforceable and effective performance standard which prohibits seafloor contact.

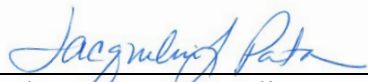
ADOPTED this 17th day of April, 2024, by the Eighty-Ninth Tribal Assembly of the Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.

CERTIFY



President Richard J. Peterson

ATTEST



Tribal Secretary Jacqueline L. Pata