

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 85

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 106

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 85—Relative to the Pacific bluefin tuna.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 7, 2008.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 85, Kuehl. Pacific bluefin tuna.

This measure would seek the assistance of the Governor, the Fish and Game Commission, the Department of Fish and Game, the Ocean Protection Council, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Council to work with the Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and other appropriate authorities to achieve the cessation of illegal, unreported, and unregulated bluefin tuna overfishing, the implementation of a robust stock assessment of Pacific bluefin tuna to evaluate and enhance conservation efforts for the status of this highly valuable resource, and the imposition and enforcement of catch limits for Pacific bluefin tuna in the United States Exclusive Economic Zone.

WHEREAS, The Pacific bluefin tuna is rapidly approaching the fate of the collapsed Atlantic bluefin tuna population, which has declined by more than 80 percent since 1975, due to overfishing and the lack of effective conservation and protection efforts; and

WHEREAS, The economic losses for California coastal communities as a result of the diminishing bluefin tuna population in the Pacific Ocean include decreased security of the pelagic (open ocean) seafood market and fishing industry, decreased reliability and productivity of coastal goods and services, and depletion of jobs and income for those communities and stakeholders involved in the pelagic seafood fishing industry; and

WHEREAS, The populations of all other bluefin tuna species, except Pacific bluefin tuna have been declared overfished and have been designated as “endangered” or “critically endangered” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); and

WHEREAS, Complete information on the status of the Pacific bluefin tuna requires further study while emerging data suggests the fishing pressure on this species is likely to increase due to the high worldwide demand for bluefin tuna and the decreased supply from Atlantic and Southern bluefin tuna populations; and

WHEREAS, The commercial catch of Pacific bluefin tuna for California's coast from 1950 to 1998 averaged 11,434,390 pounds per year; however,

since 1999, the average catch has spiraled down to an average of 294,544 pounds of tuna per year, a devastating drop; and

WHEREAS, Overfishing has caused dramatic shifts in bluefin tuna populations that have pushed the species closer to extinction on a global scale; and

WHEREAS, The potential crisis facing the Pacific bluefin tuna population could portend future oceanic ecological losses because of the loss of habitat and the inability of the ocean environment to recover from a biological disruption of such significance that could adversely affect the sustainability of current marine life; and

WHEREAS, The declining tuna population off California's coast is one of several factors accounting for the rising numbers of its prey, the Humboldt squid (*Dosidicus gigas*), which can invade and devour marine life in the tuna's absence, thereby drastically altering the composition and structure of the pelagic community for the coast of California; and

WHEREAS, Tuna swim in enormous schools, often numbering in the thousands, which allows the capture of entire schools of bluefin tuna, threatening global bluefin tuna populations and significantly facilitating overfishing of the bluefin tuna; and

WHEREAS, The Pacific bluefin tuna is a slow growing, long-lived endothermic fish that migrates thousands of miles across the open ocean to feed and spawn; and

WHEREAS, The Pacific bluefin tuna is caught by the fishing fleets of nations that capture the tuna at their spawning areas near Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines before they have a chance to spawn, which further decimates the Pacific bluefin tuna population; and

WHEREAS, Research institutions, agencies, and organizations that support and promote bluefin tuna protection range from local research institutes and state agencies, to federal organizations and nonprofits, to international councils and committees; and

WHEREAS, The current national and international regulatory structure of undeclared fishing stocks is failing to provide prospective management and protection for the Pacific bluefin tuna population against growing pressures due to a lack of sufficient data which would allow full analysis of current and future threats throughout the migratory range of the species and help to prevent the collapse of the Pacific bluefin tuna as has been found in other bluefin tuna populations; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the state Legislature acknowledges the potential devastation to the Pacific bluefin tuna species, and supports efforts to recover and preserve the population; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the Governor, the Fish and Game Commission, the Department of Fish and Game, the Ocean Protection Council, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Council to seek their assistance in working with the Pacific

Regional Fishery Management Council and other appropriate authorities for the cessation of illegal, unreported, and unregulated bluefin tuna overfishing, the implementation of a robust stock assessment for Pacific bluefin tuna to evaluate and enhance conservation efforts for the status of this highly valuable resource, and the imposition and enforcement of catch limits for Pacific bluefin tuna in the United States Exclusive Economic Zone.

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