

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To establish an Alaska Salmon Research Task Force.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To establish an Alaska Salmon Research Task Force.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Alaska Salmon Re-
5 search Task Force Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. PURPOSES.**

7 The purposes of this Act are—

8 (1) to ensure that Pacific salmon trends in
9 Alaska regarding productivity and abundance are
10 characterized and that research needs are identified;

1 (2) to prioritize scientific research needs for Pa-
2 cific salmon in Alaska;

3 (3) to address the increased variability or de-
4 cline in Pacific salmon returns in Alaska by creating
5 a coordinated salmon research strategy; and

6 (4) to support collaboration and coordination
7 for Pacific salmon conservation efforts in Alaska.

8 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

9 It is the sense of Congress that—

10 (1) salmon are an essential part of Alaska’s
11 fisheries, including subsistence, commercial, and rec-
12 reational uses, and there is an urgent need to better
13 understand the freshwater and marine biology and
14 ecology of salmon, a migratory species that crosses
15 many borders, and for a coordinated salmon re-
16 search strategy to address salmon returns that are
17 in decline or experiencing increased variability;

18 (2) salmon are an essential element for the
19 well-being and health of Alaskans; and

20 (3) there is a unique relationship between peo-
21 ple of Indigenous heritage and the salmon they rely
22 on for subsistence and traditional and cultural prac-
23 tices.

1 **SEC. 4. ALASKA SALMON RESEARCH TASK FORCE.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the
3 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Commerce,
4 in consultation with the Governor of Alaska, shall convene
5 an Alaska Salmon Research Task Force (referred to in
6 this section as the “Research Task Force”) to—

- 7 (1) review existing Pacific salmon research;
- 8 (2) identify applied research needed to better
9 understand the increased variability and declining
10 salmon returns in some regions of Alaska; and
- 11 (3) support sustainable management of salmon
12 in Alaska.

13 (b) COMPOSITION AND APPOINTMENT.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Research Task Force
15 shall be composed of not fewer than 13 and not
16 more than 19 members, who shall be appointed
17 under paragraphs (2) and (3).

18 (2) APPOINTMENT BY SECRETARY.—The Sec-
19 retary of Commerce shall appoint members to the
20 Research Task Force as follows:

21 (A) One representative from each of the
22 following:

23 (i) The National Oceanic and Atmos-
24 pheric Administration who is knowledge-
25 able about salmon and salmon research ef-

1 forts in Alaska and is from the Alaska Re-
2 gion.

3 (ii) The North Pacific Fishery Man-
4 agement Council.

5 (iii) The United States section of the
6 Pacific Salmon Commission.

7 (B) Not less than 2 and not more than 5
8 representatives from each of the following cat-
9 egories, at least 2 of whom shall represent Alas-
10 ka Natives who possess personal knowledge of,
11 and direct experience with, subsistence uses in
12 rural Alaska, to be appointed with due regard
13 to differences in regional perspectives and expe-
14 rience:

15 (i) Residents of Alaska who possess
16 personal knowledge of, and direct experi-
17 ence with, subsistence uses in rural Alaska.

18 (ii) Alaska fishing industry represent-
19 atives throughout the salmon supply chain,
20 including from—

21 (I) directed commercial fishing;

22 (II) recreational fishing;

23 (III) charter fishing;

24 (IV) seafood processors;

1 (V) salmon prohibited species
2 catch (bycatch) users; or

3 (VI) hatcheries.

4 (C) 5 representatives who are academic ex-
5 perts in salmon biology, salmon management,
6 salmon ecology (marine and freshwater), or
7 comprehensive marine research planning in the
8 North Pacific.

9 (3) APPOINTMENT BY THE GOVERNOR OF ALAS-
10 KA.—The Governor of Alaska shall appoint to the
11 Research Task Force one representative from the
12 State of Alaska who is knowledgeable about the
13 State of Alaska’s salmon management and research
14 efforts.

15 (c) DUTIES.—

16 (1) REVIEW.—The Research Task Force
17 shall—

18 (A) conduct a review of Pacific salmon
19 science relevant to understanding and managing
20 salmon returns in Alaska, including an exam-
21 ination of—

22 (i) traditional ecological knowledge of
23 salmon populations and their ecosystems;

24 (ii) marine carrying capacity and den-
25 sity dependent constraints, including an

6

1 examination of interactions with other
2 salmon species, and with forage base in
3 marine ecosystems;

4 (iii) life-cycle and stage-specific mor-
5 tality;

6 (iv) genetic sampling and categoriza-
7 tion of population structure within salmon
8 species in Alaska;

9 (v) methods for predicting run-timing
10 and stock sizes;

11 (vi) oceanographic models that provide
12 insight into stock distribution, growth, and
13 survival;

14 (vii) freshwater, estuarine, and marine
15 processes that affect survival of smolts;

16 (viii) climate effects on freshwater and
17 marine habitats;

18 (ix) predator/prey interactions be-
19 tween salmon and marine mammals or
20 other predators; and

21 (x) salmon productivity trends in
22 other regions, both domestic and inter-
23 national, that put Alaska salmon popu-
24 lations in a broader geographic context;
25 and

1 (B) identify scientific research gaps in un-
2 derstanding the Pacific salmon life-cycle in
3 Alaska.

4 (2) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the
5 date the Research Task Force is convened, the Re-
6 search Task Force shall submit to the Secretary of
7 Commerce, the Committee on Commerce, Science,
8 and Transportation of the Senate, the Committee on
9 Environment and Public Works of the Senate, the
10 Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and
11 Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropria-
12 tions of the Senate, the Committee on Natural Re-
13 sources of the House of Representatives, the Sub-
14 committee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Re-
15 lated Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations
16 of the House of Representatives, and the Alaska
17 State Legislature, and make publicly available, a re-
18 port—

19 (A) describing the review conducted under
20 paragraph (1); and

21 (B) that includes—

22 (i) recommendations on filling knowl-
23 edge gaps that warrant further scientific
24 inquiry; and

1 (ii) findings from the reports of work
2 groups submitted under subsection
3 (d)(2)(C).

4 (d) ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS.—

5 (1) CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON.—

6 The Research Task Force shall select a Chair and
7 Vice Chair by vote from among the members of the
8 Research Task Force.

9 (2) WORK GROUPS.—

10 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Research Task
11 Force—

12 (i) not later than 30 days after the
13 date of the establishment of the Research
14 Task Force, shall establish a work group
15 focused specifically on salmon returns in
16 the AYK (Arctic-Yukon-Kuskoskim) re-
17 gions of Western Alaska; and

18 (ii) may establish additional regionally
19 or stock focused work groups within the
20 Research Task Force, as members deter-
21 mine appropriate.

22 (B) COMPOSITION.—Each work group es-
23 tablished under this subsection shall—

24 (i) consist of not less than 5 individ-
25 uals who—

1 (I) are knowledgeable about the
2 stock or region under consideration;
3 and

4 (II) need not be members of the
5 Research Task Force; and

6 (ii) be balanced in terms of stake-
7 holder representation, including commer-
8 cial, recreational, and subsistence fisheries,
9 as well as experts in statistical, biological,
10 economic, social, or other scientific infor-
11 mation as relevant to the work group's
12 focus.

13 (C) REPORTS.—Not later than 9 months
14 after the date the Research Task Force is con-
15 vened, each work group established under this
16 subsection shall submit a report with the work
17 group's findings to the Research Task Force.

18 (3) COMPENSATION.—Each member of the Re-
19 search Task Force shall serve without compensation.

20 (4) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.—The Secretary
21 of Commerce shall provide such administrative sup-
22 port as is necessary for the Research Task Force
23 and its work groups to carry out their duties, includ-
24 ing support for virtual or in-person participation and
25 travel expenses.

1 (e) FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT.—The
2 Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not
3 apply to the Research Task Force.