

REN-19-006: Support Efforts to Protect Herring and other Forage Fish

Sponsor: Sitka Tribe of Alaska

Summary:

- The devastation of fish stock impacts tribal communities who currently are experiencing impairment of their subsistence and commercial fishing rights.
- REN-19-006 directs NCAI to advocate for greater inclusion of tribal nations in forage fish management.

Issue:

In December of 2018, the Sitka Tribe of Alaska sued the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska Board of Fisheries for declaratory and injunctive relief as a result of defendants failure to ensure reasonable opportunity and priority subsistence uses of Sitka Sound herring roe and to enforce Article VIII of the Alaska Constitution that the herring population is managed for sustainable yield, common use, and the public trust.

Unrelated to the legal action taken by the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, on April 10, 2019, Representative Debbie Dingle (D-MI), along with fifteen co-sponsors introduced H.R. 2236, the Forage Fish Conservation Act. The Act directs the Secretary of Commerce to establish regulation guidelines to assist regional fishery management councils in 1) developing a list of unmanaged forage fish areas and prohibiting the development of any new forage fisheries until the potential impacts of such fisheries have been assessed; and 2) setting annual catch limits for forage fisheries, that assess, specify, and reduce such limits by the diet needs of fish species for which forage fish are a significant part of their diet. The Act also adds shad and river herring to the list of managed stocks for the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

As introduced, H.R. 2236 does not contain specific provisions for, or reference to, tribal nations.

Action:

Resolution REN-19-006 directs NCAI to support greater inclusion of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal nations in decisions relating to the management of herring and other forage fish.

For additional information, please contact Jacob Schellinger at jschellinger@ncai.org or Darren Modzelewski at dmodzelewski@ncai.org.

Resolution Action Plan: REN-19-006

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Action Plan:

- 30 Days:
 - Research and familiarize oneself with resolution subject area.
 - Evaluate legislative and executive branch advocacy opportunities.
 - Contact resolution sponsor to coordinate requested assistance.
 - Assess opportunities for cross-coordination with other tribal organizations on the issue identified in the resolution.
- 60 Days:
 - Evaluate if H.R. 2236 should be modified to include tribal provisions.
- 90 Days:
 - Prepare written advocacy materials, if appropriate.
 - Hill visits if appropriate.
- 120 Days:
 - Continue to evaluate opportunities for advocacy.
 - Prepare update on NCAI advocacy for Mid Year Conference.