



A Statement from Nonpartisan Candidate Al Gross On Trawl Bycatch and Other Threats to Fishery Sustainability

Trawl bycatch is a tremendous threat to the sustainability and economic viability of Alaska's crab, salmon, halibut, herring, and sablefish fisheries. Alaska's leaders must stand up and take action to eliminate or reduce trawl bycatch to levels which ensure sustainability for generations to come.

Despite many Alaskan chinook runs being decimated, trawlers in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea continue to work under bycatch caps which are too high (the trawl fleet wasted over 45,000 chinook as bycatch in 2021). Sablefish and crab bycatch in the Bering Sea and the GOA has increased rapidly in recent years with no ceiling in sight. A high proportion of bycatch includes juvenile fish, which directly threatens fishery sustainability.

I support a rulemaking revision to the Department of Commerce National Standard 9 guidelines of the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act to eliminate language about moderating bycatch "to the extent practicable." We must lower bycatch limits to ensure the sustainability of sport, commercial, and subsistence fishing in Alaska. I also support science-based limits for trawl gear bycatch based on current populations not those based on numbers 20 or more years old.

I will support robust federal funding to conduct marine sampling research of fish populations, will prevent overfishing, and will work hard for species preservation, including funding to research mitigate, and reverse the collapse of the Yukon and Kuskokwim king and chum salmon runs.

Alaskans across our state rely on our fisheries for economic, cultural, and recreational purposes. For many, their way of life is at stake. Alaska's leaders must stand up and take action to limit trawl bycatch to where it doesn't threaten the sustainability of our fisheries. The issue is pressing, and just like Pebble Mine, must be given the attention it deserves as a threat to the future of Alaska's fishing industry. This is a clear and present threat that is actively hurting the sustainability of our fisheries. As Alaska's next congressman, I will be a strong advocate for sustainable fisheries, and will do everything I can to get this terrible problem under control. The NPFMC is the process by which this must get done, and as your congressman, I will work with them to expedite the process.

I will always work to support Alaska fishermen and women financially with loans, refinancing, start up support, unemployment insurance, and federal fisheries disaster assistance when needed.

Alaska currently faces a commercial threat from Russian attempts to expand their fishing zones in the Bering Sea. Russian crabbing in Alaskan waters is particularly egregious: Data suggest that illegal crabbing from Russian boats is greater than the entire legal trade in the United States. As your congressman, I will go to Washington to represent Alaska's interests and will push back on the challenge of Russian aggression. And we must permanently stop importing illegally caught Russian crab which has been flooding our markets. I believe in free market capitalism and this has been a bad deal for Americans.