Senate Concurrent Resolution

No. 85

Introduced by Senators Kuehl, Migden, and Wiggins
(Coauthors: Assembly Members DeSaulnier, Feuer, Jones, and Saldana)

February 26, 2008

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

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

SCR 85, as introduced, Kuehl. Pacific bluefin tuna.

This measure would seek the assistance of the Governor, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Ocean Protection Council in initiating, at the highest international level, the cessation of illegal, unreported, and unregulated bluefin tuna overfishing, the creation of marine protected areas, and the imposition and enforcement of catch limits for countries fishing for Pacific bluefin tuna in the Exclusive Economic Zone.

Fiscal committee: yes.

WHEREAS, The Pacific bluefin tuna is rapidly approaching the fate of the collapsed Atlantic bluefin tuna population, which has diminished by 90 percent in the Atlantic Ocean and in the Mediterranean Sea, due to overfishing and the lack of effective conservation and protection efforts; and

WHEREAS, The coastal economic losses for California 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 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 of the Pacific bluefin tuna, sparked by increasing demand by countries around the world, poses an imminent threat to California's coastal economy that has created a need for global solutions to preserve the population of the species for California; and

WHEREAS, The 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, Without the abundance of the Pacific bluefin tuna serving as predators along California's coastline, an environment is provided for the Humboldt squid (Dosidicus gigas) to invade and devour marine life, 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, that allow modern fishing nets to scoop up entire schools of bluefin tuna, threatening the survival of the bluefin tuna population and significantly facilitating overfishing of the bluefin tuna; and

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

WHEREAS, The Pacific bluefin tuna is endangered 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, The Pacific Fishery Management Council, which manages fisheries that include highly migratory species, like tunas, in the Exclusive Economic Zone, three to 200 miles off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California, has difficulty enforcing the federal Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and
Management Act and other laws that affect fisheries management and which dictate catch limits of the Pacific bluefin tuna; and

WHEREAS, Research institutions that support and promote bluefin tuna protection through governance stewardship include the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute of Science and Engineering, the Blue Oceans Institute, the National Environmental Trust, the World Wildlife Fund, the Tuna Research and Conservation Center, Hopkins Marine Station of Stanford University, the Ocean Conservancy, the California Coastal Commission, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the National Marine Fisheries Service; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the state Legislature acknowledges the devastation to the pelagic community off California’s coast from the mismanagement of the seriously imperiled 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 Department of Fish and Game, and the Ocean Protection Council, to seek their assistance in initiating, at the highest international level, the cessation of illegal, unreported, and unregulated bluefin tuna overfishing, the creation of marine protected areas, and the imposition and enforcement of catch limits for countries fishing for Pacific bluefin tuna in the Exclusive Economic Zone.