

Representative Mary Peltola
Bycatch Reduction and Mitigation Act
One Pager

Fishermen typically target a specific species when they fish. A recreational fisherman might go out with a hook and line for black bass or catfish, while a commercial vessel may be trawling for shrimp, pot fishing for cod, or gillnetting for salmon. However, anyone who's been fishing knows you only have so much control over what you catch. Anything that isn't the target fish is called "bycatch" and is often thrown back.

Bycatch is a term that encompasses more than just fish. It includes seabirds, turtles, marine mammals, and even corals and sponges that get hooked or tangled in fishing gear. While recreational fishermen catching one fish at a time can easily throw them back, the scale of bycatch in industrial scale commercial fisheries is staggering. It can add up to millions of pounds of fish a year, a problem that demands immediate attention.

Bycatch is not just an ecological issue, but also an economic one. The animals discarded as bycatch often perish before or shortly after they're returned to the water, unable to reproduce and replenish the fish stock. This depletion over time leads to shorter fishing seasons, smaller catch limits for fishermen, and, in extreme cases, fishery closures. The consequences of bycatch are far-reaching.

Reducing bycatch is critical to the future management of our fisheries. NOAA's Bycatch Reduction and Engineering Program (BREP) provides funding to help fund projects and activities that reduce bycatch. Still, the program has never been authorized and has been flat-funded for years. Priorities for the program include technology research and adoption, reducing mortality, and avoiding critical habitat.

That's why **Representative Mary Sattler Peltola (AK-AL) is introducing the Bycatch Reduction and Mitigation Act**, would authorize BREP at \$10 million for five years. It would also establish the Bycatch Mitigation Assistance Fund. The Fund, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, would be funded by donations and used to help fishermen and vessel owners purchase new gear or technology to reduce bycatch.

Implementing the Bycatch Reduction and Mitigation Act is a crucial step towards sustainable fishing practices. It will not only benefit every fishery but also ensure consumers have access to fresh, wild-caught U.S. seafood for generations.