



April 22, 2021

Senator Gary Stevens
State Capitol Room 103
Juneau AK, 99801

Representative Dan Ortiz
State Capitol Room 513
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Support for SB 64 and HB 41- Shellfish Projects; Hatcheries; Fees

Dear Senator Stevens and Representative Ortiz,

The Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers (ABSC) is a non-profit trade association representing harvesters of king, snow, and tanner crab in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands region. We are actively involved in fisheries management, policy development, scientific research, and marketing. ABSC would like to express our support for SB 64 and HB 41 (*An Act relating to management of enhanced stocks of shellfish; authorizing certain nonprofit organizations to engage in shellfish enhancement projects; relating to application fees for salmon hatchery permits and shellfish enhancement project permits; allowing the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute to market aquatic farm products; and providing for an effective date*).

ABSC recognizes Alaska's interest in developing mariculture to support the state's economy and coastal communities. We support mariculture with proper oversight and to the extent that it can be done safely without risk to wild stocks.

As Alaska's iconic king crab stocks are in decline or depleted, we see the value in continuing to research the potential for enhancement or rehabilitation of king crab stocks. We need to be considering all of the tools in the management toolbox given the status of Alaska's king crab stocks to help them recover, including bycatch reduction by all gears, updated protected areas and essential fish habitat to build climate ready fisheries, and enhancement projects. The Alaska King Crab Research, Rehabilitation, and Biology (AKCRRAB) project, that has been ongoing for 15 years, shows promise for future enhancement of king crab stocks. AKCRRAB has been instrumental in better understanding rearing of king crab in tanks and the habitat needs for different life stages of king crab. However, for king crab enhancement projects to move beyond proof of concept and scale up, they need this legislation which creates a funding mechanism and permitting system.

While ABSC has several questions and concerns on shellfish mariculture, above all we support this legislation moving forward so that we can work on answers to those questions with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. We intend to be engaged for any Bering Sea crab enhancement projects that develop. We support shellfish mariculture in concept to supplement Alaska's economy and coastal communities in these changing times and to help bring back Alaska's iconic king crab stocks. We urge you to pass this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jamie Goen
Executive Director
Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers
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