

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair
Senate Resources Committee
senator.cathy.giessel@akleg.gov

March 9, 2018



Re: Support for SJR 13 - Urging Co-Management Plan For Sea Otters

Dear Senator Giessel and Members of the Senate Resources Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) to support SJR 13 – Urging Co-Management Plan for Sea Otters.

Established in 1978, AFDF works on behalf of the seafood industry, and is dedicated to identifying problems common to the Alaska seafood industry and developing efficient, sustainable solutions that provide benefits to the economy, environment and communities.

In 2014, AFDF began work on the Alaska Mariculture Initiative, with a intention of accelerating the development of a mariculture industry in Alaska. However, enhancement and farming of shellfish in Alaska requires management of both shellfish and sea otters (apex predators of shellfish).

The current interpretation of the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Alaska Constitution (which requires sustainable management of all species, including shellfish) are in conflict. This conflict needs resolution in order to protect and manage sea otters, but also shellfish. The current predation of shellfish by, and expansion of, sea otters is not sustainable.

SJR 13 encourages the establishment of an otter management plan that will maintain a balance between sustainable human harvest of shellfish and the region's exponentially expanding otter population. The resolution also urges consideration of how the plan may expand and enhance small businesses and provide other economic opportunities for Alaskans. In context with this resolution, the Alaska Mariculture Initiative's efforts to develop shellfish enhancement (including support for the bill HB128) fall in line with the resolution, however, those efforts will be greatly inhibited, if a management plan for otters is not adopted.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Julie Decker, Executive Director

Cc: Senator Bert Stedman

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