



February 14, 2011

Governor Sean Parnell
Alaska State Capital Building
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Re: Support of HB 121/SB 67

The legislation to promote mariculture through a State loan program is fully supported by OceansAlaska. OceansAlaska supports mariculture to create an economically viable, environmentally feasible way to provide jobs to coastal communities throughout Alaska. OceansAlaska is developing a Mariculture Research, Development and Training Facility that will provide a geoduck nursery, education and training, applied research and technology development to benefit new and existing entrepreneurs in the industry. This bill will work in conjunction with our efforts at getting more entrants into the industry and expanding existing farmers' operations. The success of this loan program and OceansAlaska can expand mariculture industry throughout Alaska.

The kind of terms provide the farmer with the ability of getting the farming operation going and build sales revenues before interest begins accruing and have to be made. The loan program in the bill is crafted in a manner that will allow for increased profitability and financial viability of individual farms. Success of the mariculture industry in coastal Alaska will not only benefit the individual farmers, but also the many businesses that it will sustain, and help reverse the trend of population loss in coastal communities.

Alaska has the potential to develop a major shellfish aquaculture industry that provides the seafood market with safe, premium quality, and sustainable farmed oysters, geoducks and other products. OceansAlaska has worked with the mariculture industry in producing strategic planning for Alaska, and one of the highlighted barriers to entry is lack of capital for mariculture activities. This bill helps address this issue of financing for mariculture farms, and OceansAlaska enthusiastically supports the Mariculture Loan program.

Sincerely,


David Mitchel
General Manager
OceansAlaska