



**Kachemak**  
Shellfish Growers  
Cooperative

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January 27, 2013

**Attn: Alaska Senate Resource Committee Members**

CHAIR: Senator Giessel

VICE-CHAIR: Senator Dyson

MEMBER: Senator Micciche

MEMBER: Senator Bishop

MEMBER: Senator McGuire

MEMBER: Senator Fairclough

MEMBER: Senator French

**Subject: Oyster farmer's concerns about SB29/HB80**

Dear Senators,

We would like to express our concerns regarding the rollback of the 2006 legislation requiring cruise ships to meet water quality standards for waste discharge. We are an association of small oyster farms in Kachemak Bay, some of which have recently experienced the direct impacts of weak legislation contributing to pollution problems (<http://homertribune.com/2013/01/two-sunken-boats-to-be-raised-at-jakolof-bay/>). Before voting on this legislation, as president of the association I ask you to reflect:

- Know that each time a cruise ship passes our coves and bays, a town over a third the size of Homer is sailing by. M/S Amsterdam has 1,380 passengers and 615 crew, a total of 1,995 people. That's 39% of Homer's 2011 population of 5,085. These vessels are in a class of their own when it comes to dilution of wastewater, they in no way compare to other small passenger vessels Navigating Alaska's waters and should be held to higher standards. They also do not have a clean pollution record (including felony convictions for routine illegal dumping and falsification of records according to news media)
- Consider that effluent from these ships will likely include potentially harmful chemicals from cleaning and sanitizing efforts as well as undigested medications (given the demographics, likely at higher rates than an average Alaska town). Even if crew are careful about what they put down a drain, passengers, behind closed doors may not be so conscientious. Imagine the variety of contaminants a passenger might dispose of: nail polish remover, bleach, medications, detergents etc.
- While an unbiased science panel should address these concerns, it sounds like the cruise ship science panel may have excluded potentially contrary opinions (see [http://www.vancouversun.com/travel/Alaska\\_governor\\_proposes\\_changes\\_wastewater\\_from\\_cruise\\_ships/7866082/story.html](http://www.vancouversun.com/travel/Alaska_governor_proposes_changes_wastewater_from_cruise_ships/7866082/story.html))
- If you love seafood, please take a moment to consider the impact of this rollback to the reputation of Alaska's seafood industry - a reputation built entirely on pristine waters. Picture slurping an oyster, a kiss of the sea, close your eyes and imagine the sweet glacial waters and huge Pacific Ocean that nourished that oyster and gave it its sweetness; now picture a cruise



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ship sailing by on a rising tide, 2000 people on board, Uncle Joe spilling his meds in the sink (or worse), an engineer hitting the macerator switch too early, an employee pouring on some extra bleach to clean the bathroom of an intoxicated passenger - now picture swallowing that kiss of the sea. Even if the science panel and DEC are 100% accurate in their assessments, it's a hard rollback to swallow for the already embattled seafood industry. And even if you don't love seafood, headlines like that Vancouver Sun article are not healthy for Alaska business - tourism or seafood.

While we strongly encourage lawmakers to vote no on SB 29 and HB80, you may already be committed to these rollbacks, if that's the case we would like to respectfully request that legislators consider two amendments to this bill:

1. Protection of Critical Zones: An amendment to protect zones of aquaculture, mariculture, critical habitats, and sensitive estuaries with the more restrictive 2006 provisions could alleviate the impact of this legislation in the more sensitive coastal areas.
2. Contribution to Water Monitoring: Kachemak Bay has DEC certified pristine waters. Oyster farmers pay fees for this certification (costs of which are going up 10x this year) - despite the fact that many of the 14 monitoring sites are not even near oyster farms, and despite the fact that the farmers themselves do not contribute pollution, but help clean these bays and coves. If cruise ship companies and the State of Alaska have such high confidence that Alaska waters will not be contaminated, they should welcome the opportunity to participate in the funding of this assurance. We would like to propose that responsibility for these water monitoring costs shift to the cruise ship industry. Knowing that the impact of their presence in our bays is being directly measured and independently monitored may provide an additional economic incentive to act responsibly.

Cruise ship companies would also benefit from a reputation for clean pristine waters in Alaska. They should be going above and beyond any state statutes for meeting water quality standards; given the historic absence of water quality stewardship on the part of cruise ship companies, they must be held to higher regulatory standards.

Sincerely,

Sean Ruddy ,

Kachemak Shellfish Mariculture Association