



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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March 3, 2017

Representative Louise Stutes, Chairman
House Special Committee on Fisheries
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: Support for HB 76 – Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund

Dear Chairman Stutes and Committee Members,

United Fishermen of Alaska is the statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 34 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state, and the federal fisheries off Alaska's coast.

UFA supports House Bill 76, which makes a change to the existing mariculture revolving loan fund within the Division of Economic Development to allow loans to hatcheries that artificially propagate aquatic plants and shellfish for sale to aquatic farms.

UFA strongly supports the division's commercial fishing and fisheries enhancement revolving loan funds. These funds have been successful in helping Alaska resident fishermen enter the fishing industry as vessel owners and skippers, and to develop hatcheries to provide common property fishing opportunity for all users. The success of these funds has spurred creation of similar programs for charter fisheries and mariculture businesses in 2012. Mariculture development has been hindered by a shortage of shellfish and aquatic plant seed consequently, there is a need for shellfish and aquatic plant hatcheries to have access to the Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund.

UFA supports the Mariculture Initiative of the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, and we see the expansion of the mariculture loan fund to include hatcheries as key to increasing the opportunity for rural and coastal residents in their communities. Passage of HB 76 will help rural and coastal residents pursue mariculture development by increasing the supply of shellfish and aquatic plant seed stock, to help secure the economic diversification and the economic viability of their communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jerry McCune
President

Mark Vinsel
Executive Administrator

CC: Representative Daniel Ortiz