

Senator Gary Stevens  
Alaska State Legislature  
State Capitol Room 429  
Juneau, AK 99801  
[Senator.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov)



**Re: Support for SB 89 – shellfish enhancement**

Dear Senator Stevens,

March 27, 2017

The Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) would like to express support for SB 89 which creates a framework to manage and develop shellfish fishery enhancement which will benefit the state's economy by providing a method to increase the available harvest of shellfish for public use in an environmentally safe manner.

AFDF's membership is comprised of seafood harvesters, seafood processors, and support sector businesses. Founded in 1978, AFDF's mission is *to identify problems common to the Alaska seafood industry and develop efficient, sustainable solutions that provide benefits to the economy, environment and communities.*

One of AFDF's recent areas of work is spearheading the *Alaska Mariculture Initiative*, which is meant to expedite the development of mariculture in Alaska with the vision to grow a \$1 billion industry in 30 years. Many organizations across the state have endorsed this initiative (i.e. Alaska Chamber, Alaska Shellfish Growers Association, Southeast Conference, SE AK Regional Dive Fisheries Association, Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference, United Fishermen of Alaska, and others).

As a direct result of this initiative, Governor Walker established the **Alaska Mariculture Task Force** by [Administrative Order #280](#). The purpose of the Task Force is to provide recommendations for a comprehensive plan to develop a viable and sustainable mariculture industry producing shellfish and aquatic plants for the long-term benefit of Alaska's economy, environment, and communities.

**SB 89 plays an important role in the development of mariculture in Alaska.** SB 89 creates a regulatory framework with which ADF&G can manage shellfish fishery enhancement, restoration and shellfish hatcheries. This will allow interested stakeholders to either continue or begin enhancement and/or restoration of species such as King crab, sea

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cucumber, geoduck, abalone, scallops or razor clams.

I would like to briefly address concerns of the potential for negative impacts to wild shellfish from hatchery shellfish. AFDF is the Client for seafood sustainability certification programs such as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) program. As the Client and facilitator for these certification programs, AFDF has a unique viewpoint on this issue. As a part of these certifications, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game's (ADF&G) management of the salmon fishery (including salmon enhancement) is reviewed every year by independent third-party experts to determine whether it meets internationally accepted standards for sustainably managed fisheries. ***Alaska salmon maintains the Alaska RFM certification, because ADF&G's management incorporates a precautionary approach that prioritizes wild fish and minimizes adverse impacts to wild stocks.*** ADF&G has extensive enhancement policies which protect wild stocks (e.g. genetics, marking, and disease). Given these policies, AFDF and independent third-parties experts have confidence that ADF&G is fulfilling its constitutional mandate to manage the State's fishery resources for sustainability. ***AFDF is confident that ADF&G will manage shellfish enhancement with the same priority to wild stocks, therefore, AFDF support SB 89 which will give ADF&G the authority and regulatory framework to manage shellfish enhancement.***

Another benefit of developing shellfish fishery enhancement is the important role that shellfish hatcheries can play in adapting to ocean changes and acidification. As we develop shellfish hatcheries and techniques, we also learn more about the effects of ocean acidification and our abilities to mitigate these effects in a hatchery setting (e.g. adjusting pH levels at critical stages of survival). Shellfish hatcheries can play a critical role in the future and position Alaska to better protect its wild stocks.

***Shellfish enhancement can diversify and expand opportunities in coastal communities and increase the resiliency of Alaska's wild shellfish.***

If there are any questions, I am happy to answer them. Thank you for your consideration and support of this bill.

Sincerely,

  
Julie Decker, Executive Director

Cc:

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair, Senate Resources Committee: [Senator.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)  
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