



Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association (APICDA)

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March 29, 2017

Senator Gary Stevens
State Capitol, Room 429
Juneau, AK 99801
Senator.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov

RE: Support for SB 95-Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund
Support for SB 89- Shellfish Enhancement

The Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association (APICDA) appreciates the introduction of SB 95 and SB 89. We believe these bills are complementary and advancing both will be necessary to support a viable and sustainable mariculture industry in Alaska.

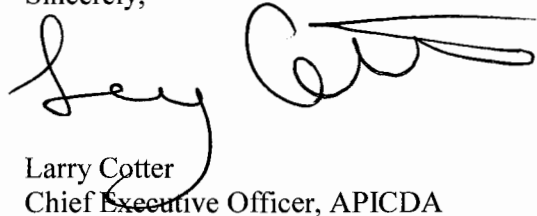
APICDA is a Community Development Quota (CDQ) organization that works with six remote coastal communities to support long term economic sustainability through increasing direct participation and local investment in fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. For over 25 years, we have worked in partnership with our communities to invest in shore-side processing plants, vessels, quota purchases, local support infrastructure, workforce development and scholarship programs. These investments have resulted in meaningful employment and social programs in areas where very limited economic opportunities exist.

Our constituents, as well as many other stakeholders, both new and already heavily involved in the seafood industry have expressed interest in investing in or diversifying their existing operations to include mariculture projects. Many have recognized gaps in funding and limitations in seed availability as barriers to entry. HB 95 simply increases the eligibility of an existing, dedicated loan fund to allow for the funding of hatchery operations. This bill would fill a critical gap in capital needs for the development of the infrastructure needed to support mariculture farming operations. We believe that any modifications to the Mariculture Revolving Loan fund should provide enough flexibility to respond to the unique characteristics of hatchery operations to successfully increase the accessibility of the program and advance the industry.

SB 89 will provide an important framework for agencies to permit and manage shellfish enhancement projects. Any future enhancement programs will be consistent with Alaska's sustainably managed fisheries and will have to comply with the same stringent regulatory and environmental requirements as the state's healthy and well established salmon enhancement programs. These programs have significant oversight to protect wild salmon runs and have provided hugely successful economic benefits to Alaska's commercial salmon fleets and important revenue streams back to communities. We believe the passage of SB 89 is essential in order for Alaska to meaningfully explore the full potential of a mariculture industry to provide new economic generation during a critically important time for the state.

Advancing environmentally sound mariculture projects will provide an additive economic branch to Alaska's robust commercial fisheries and could provide important future monitoring tools and adaptive measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change. We believe that the passage of these bills will result in substantial benefits to coastal fisheries dependent communities and we fully support moving both forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Larry Cotter', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Larry Cotter
Chief Executive Officer, APICDA