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SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

January 21, 2019

Senator Gary Stevens
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Senator.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov

Re: Support for SB 22 – Shellfish Enhancement

Dear Senator Stevens:

On behalf of the Southeast Conference, I would like to express support for SB 22 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.

Southeast Conference is a state and federally designated regional economic development organization for Southeast Alaska. For nearly 60 years, Southeast Conference has served as the collective voice for advancing the region's economy. Southeast Conference has over 200 members from organizations representing business and governments from 32 regional communities. The mission of Southeast Conference is to undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska.

SB 22 plays an important role in the development of mariculture in Alaska. It 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 cucumber, geoduck, abalone, or razor clams.

Another benefit of developing shellfish fishery enhancement is the important role that shellfish hatcheries can play in adapting to ocean changes and acidification, and the ecosystem services that shellfish provide to the marine environment.

Shellfish enhancement can diversify and expand opportunities in coastal communities and increase the resiliency of Alaska's wild shellfish. The Southeast Conference supports SB 22 and appreciates your work to provide additional economic opportunities in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Robert Venables
Executive Director
Southeast Conference