



Representative Andi Story

Alaska State Legislature

House District 34

Mendenhall Valley
Auke Bay
Out the Road
Sunny Point
Juneau Airport

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 116 – Renewal or extension of aquatic farming and aquatic plant and shellfish hatchery site leases

House Bill 116 would simplify lease renewals for aquatic farms, helping small, Alaska-based businesses. Examples of aquatic farm products include oysters, kelp and other shellfish. HB116 would make aquatic farm lease renewals consistent with the renewal processes for other types of leases issued by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR). If enacted, HB116 would result in more timely lease renewals for aquaculture businesses, reduce the workload on already overburdened agency staff, and allow more time and focus on new lease applications.

Due to recent budget cuts and an increase in aquatic farm lease applications, DNR approval for an initial or renewal aquatic farm lease can take 18 months or more. This lengthy wait time impedes business start-ups and restricts the growth of this promising industry. HB116 will make aquatic farm lease renewals consistent with renewals for other DNR leases such as agricultural grazing, cabins & lodges, fish processing docks and hydroelectric facilities.

The approval process to operate an aquatic farm or an aquatic plant and shellfish hatchery in Alaska is complex, with multiple state and federal agencies involved. Approval for an initial DNR aquatic farm lease consumes the most time and resources of any of the steps in the aquatic farm or hatchery approval process. Even though lease applicants undergo stringent requirements to receive an initial lease, current law requires this same scrutiny to be repeated upon renewal, a step not required of numerous other DNR leases.

HB116 does not affect salmon hatchery leases.

I appreciate your consideration of House Bill 116 that would help small aquaculture businesses and reduce regulatory burden. I respectfully ask for your support in its passage.

Contact

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