



March 18, 2021

The Honorable Andi Story
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 403
Juneau, Alaska 99801


Dear Representative Story,

Thank you for introducing House Bill 115, "Aquatic Farming and Hatchery Site Leases." I can honestly say that I underestimated the extent of the challenges I would face when I set out to start an oyster farm three years ago. One of the biggest challenges I faced was the length of time between when I started making significant investments in permitting and infrastructure, and when I had products to sell. I was fortunate to begin to sell oysters in just my third year of operations, but I will not operate at full capacity for another two to three years.

This lag in getting to full capacity is common for aquatic farms. While some aquaculture products grow quickly, others can take three to seven years to reach maturity. Aquatic farmers in Alaska are investing for the long term but operating with ten-year leases. By allowing a one-time renewal for aquatic farm leases in good standing, HB 115 will reduce the risk to new farms, giving them the confidence to keep investing in and growing their operations.

Cooperation and community support are key to the continued growth of mariculture in Alaska, and the industry's potential is huge. Thank you for listening to the issues the industry faces and identifying this simple but meaningful change. I look forward to the passage of HB 115 and am grateful that it will enable farms like mine to keep our focus on growing high-quality, sustainable seafood.

Sincerely,



Meta Mesdag, Owner