

Representative Andi Story
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 13
Juneau, AK 99801
Rep.Andi.Story@akleg.gov



RE: Support for HB 115 – Aquatic Farming & Hatchery Site Leases

Dear Representative Story,

March 1, 2021

On behalf of the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF), I would like to express strong support for HB 115 - aquatic farming and hatchery site leases.

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

One of AFDF's recent areas of work is the ***Alaska Mariculture Initiative***, which is meant to accelerate the development of mariculture in Alaska. As a direct result of this initiative, the ***Alaska Mariculture Task Force*** was established in 2016. The Task Force completed a statewide comprehensive plan in 2018 called the [Alaska Mariculture Development Plan](#) ***with the goal of growing a \$100 million industry in 20 years.***

A positive result of the Task Force and its work has been an increased interest by the private sector in aquatic farming in Alaska demonstrated by an increase in the number of new aquatic farm leases submitted to ADNR. In 2017 through and 2020, ADNR saw approximately 400% increase in the number of new applications, when compared with 2016 levels. This has led to a backlog of applications and a longer processing time as ADNR works through them. After 10 years, existing leases must additionally go through a renewal process that is very similar in rigor and processing time to the original application process. Consequently, this adds additional wait time for new applications.

HB 115 is important step toward efficiently developing a mariculture industry in Alaska. The main focus of the bill is to align the lease renewal process for aquatic farms and hatcheries with the lease renewal process for most other types of state leases. For leases that are in compliance, this

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change would simplify and shorten the process, reduce workload on DNR staff (allowing them to more quickly address new aquatic farm lease applications), and provide businesses with more certainty. HB 115 also includes a simple reporting requirement for DNR which will allow the Alaska Legislature to better understand the growth of the industry in the future. And finally, HB 115 explicitly designates ecotourism and educational purposes as allowable uses on aquatic farm and hatchery sites.

HB 115 has broad stakeholder support and will encourage private investment, without requirements for state financial investment. If you have any questions, I am happy to answer them. Thank you for your consideration and support of this bill.

Sincerely,



Julie Decker, Executive Director

Cc: AFDF Board of Directors
Greg Smith, Office of Representative Andi Story

Attached: ***Alaska Mariculture Development Plan – In Brief***