

March 4, 2016

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair
Senate Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for SB 172

Dear Senator Giessel and Senate Resources Committee members:

The Steering Committee of the Alaska King Crab Research, Rehabilitation and Biology (AKCRRAB) program would like to express appreciation and support for Senate Bill 172.

The AKCRRAB program is a coalition of university, federal and stakeholder groups, formed in 2006 with the goals of adding to the scientific understanding of crab life history and ecology, as well as the eventual rehabilitation of depressed king crab stocks in Alaska. AKCRRAB is developing scientifically sound strategies for hatching, rearing and outplanting king crab in Alaska, in order to help restore populations to self-sustainable levels.

In phase one, from 2006 to 2011, AKCRRAB researchers made significant accomplishments in developing and improving methods of hatchery rearing of larval and juvenile king crab from wild-caught broodstock, to the point where large-scale production is feasible. Parallel field and laboratory studies of crab ecology and population genetics were also conducted during this time.

In the second and current phase, hatchery studies have been complemented by studies essential to understanding optimal release strategies, appropriate habitat, and potential impact on existing ecosystems. This research is providing the science necessary for informing the responsible release of hatchery-reared animals. Increased knowledge will allow scientists and managers to assess the feasibility of ecologically sound rehabilitation of depressed stocks, with potentially substantial benefits to Alaska.

In the third and final phase, AKCRRAB intends to evolve from the current, research-oriented coalition, to a formal entity focused on transitioning hatchery techniques and outplanting technologies to communities and industry as part of statewide efforts to help rehabilitate depleted king crab stocks. As phase three develops, the program will require support and guidance from the State of Alaska, as the transition from feasibility to implementation will need to be guided with a new regulatory structure.

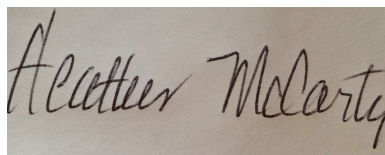
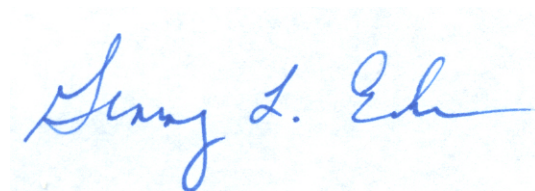
Senate Bill 172 is a response to the need for new regulations for shellfish hatcheries. The AKCRRAB Steering Committee is pleased that the Administration and the Legislature are addressing this need. In a preliminary review of the proposed legislation, we have identified several areas on which AKCRRAB program participants would like to work with

the Committee as the bill moves forward. We would be pleased to identify those areas at the appropriate time.

The overarching concern we have is that the bill combines new enabling language for shellfish hatcheries with references to salmon hatcheries. We believe it would be more practical and efficient to separate the two elements, and ask that the committee consider doing so before moving forward.

We intend to participate fully in further discussions and hearings on Senate Bill 172. The AKCRRAB Steering Committee stands ready to interact with Committee members and staff as needed. Please let us know how we can be of help.

Best regards,



Dr. Ginny Eckert, PhD, School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, UAF, Juneau Division
Heather McCarty, Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association
AKCRRAB Steering Committee Co-chairs

Steering Committee members:

Jeff Hetrick, Alutiq Pride Hatchery, Seward

Jeff Stephan, United Fishermen's Marketing Association, Kodiak

Dr. Bob Foy, NMFS, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Kodiak

Chris Mierzejek, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Community Development Association, Anchorage

Gale Vick, Fairbanks

Ruth Christiansen, Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers

Lauren Divine, Tribal Government of St. Paul