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Governor Bill Walker
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February 4, 2016

The Honorable Kevin Meyer
President of the Senate
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear President Meyer:

Under the authority of Article III, Section 18, of the Alaska Constitution, I am transmitting a bill relating to management of enhanced stocks of fish; authorizing the operation of nonprofit shellfish hatcheries; and application fees for salmon and shellfish hatchery permits.

The bill would authorize the Commissioner of Fish and Game to permit the construction and operation of shellfish hatcheries by nonprofit corporations for the purpose of enhancing shellfish fisheries. The bill would also make several other related amendments to State law relating to shellfish hatcheries.

The Board of Fisheries is statutorily tasked to manage fish stocks in the state; fish stocks include invertebrate species, such as shellfish. Currently, under AS 16.40.100 - 16.40.199 the Commissioner may permit the construction and operation of shellfish hatcheries for the purpose of supplying shellfish to an aquatic farm, but may not permit the construction and operation of shellfish hatcheries for the purpose of enhancing shellfish fisheries. The bill is largely modeled after AS 16.10.375 - 16.10.480, which authorizes the Commissioner of Fish and Game to permit the construction and operation of salmon hatcheries for the purpose of enhancing salmon fisheries.

The bill would also make conforming amendments to the determination of authorized gear to allow use of legal gear to harvest shellfish, to allow donations of shellfish to a food bank, and to exempt from State corporate income tax income from a nonprofit corporation holding a permit to operate a shellfish hatchery for enhancement of shellfish stock.

In addition, the bill would update the application fee for a salmon hatchery permit.

Enhancement of the State's shellfish fisheries would benefit the state's economy by providing a method to increase the available harvest of shellfish for public use in an environmentally safe manner.

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I urge your prompt and favorable action of this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bill" and last name "Walker" clearly distinguishable.

Bill Walker
Governor

Enclosure