

March 24, 2016

Representative Louise Stutes, Chair
House Fisheries Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for HB 300

Dear Representative Stutes and Committee members:

The Steering Committee of the Alaska King Crab Research, Rehabilitation and Biology (AKCRRAB) program would like to express appreciation and support for House Bill 300, version W.

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.

House Bill 300, as aligned with the recent Senate Resources Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 172, is a response to the need for new regulations for shellfish culture. The AKCRRAB Steering Committee is pleased that the Administration and the Legislature are addressing this need. In a preliminary review of the proposed legislation, the original version of Senate Bill 172, we identified several areas of concern for AKCRRAB program participants. We were pleased that our concerns, and those of others, were addressed in the Committee Substitute.

We intend to participate fully in further discussions and hearings on this important legislation. 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,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Ginny L. Eckert' and the signature on the right is 'Heather McCarty'. Both signatures are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Ginny Eckert, 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.