

Testimony of Jay Stinson before the Alaska House of Representatives Fisheries Committee  
February 21, 2017

Madam Chair, Members of the Fisheries Committee:

Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to speak regarding the University of Alaska Kodiak Seafood and Marine Science Center and the continuing need for Applied Fisheries and Seafood Research.

In 1981 the Alaska legislature created the Fisheries Industrial Technology Center, FITC, now renamed the Kodiak Seafood and Marine Science Center.

It was given 5 directives:

1. Provide training opportunities to the citizens of the state on the most efficient and appropriate technologies for harvesting, processing and conservation of Alaska's fisheries resources;
2. Provide information and technical assistance on the adaptation of existing and new technologies;
3. Provide research and development activities to adapt existing technologies to enhance the economic viability of the industry;
4. Create new technologies that will enhance the effectiveness of the fisheries and provide economic benefit to the citizens of the state;
5. Encourage joint projects between industry and government that will enhance the productivities of the industry.

These directives are more critical for the Alaska fishing industry of today than ever before.

However, due to state and University budget cuts UAF has given the industry and the coastal communities of Alaska notice of their intent to shut in the facility! This will be a significant blow to the largest employment sector of the state.

Seafood and Fisheries technology has changed immensely in the 36 years since the Alaska legislature saw the need and potential bring Alaska into the forefront of global fisheries.

Fishermen don't steer by compass these days;

First, they turn on 4 or 5 or 6 computers that plot the course, chart the bottom, report their position to the NMFS, provide satellite communications with the processing plant or home office, log hold temperatures and fish quality assessments, the list goes on.

For Alaska fishermen now, the priority is not developing technology to catch fish; but to develop technology on how **not** to catch certain fish, while improving the value and full utilization of those species that we target.

Seafood process workers now need to do more than just take weights from a scale or work the slime line. The current generation of processing plants is computerized from the time the offloading pump first goes into the fish hold, until the finished product is identified with a computerized tracking chip and robotically packaged and palletized, and loaded into the shipping container.

Workers need to be able to program and operate fully automated processing through-put systems, operate computerized freezer systems and robotic packaging equipment.

**Regulatory compliance and food safety are huge! Processing plants must comply with ADEC, FDA, and retail process auditors, such as the British Retail Consortium.**

**Quinton Fong, Brian Himelbloom, and Chris Sannito are fully engaged and have more work than they can effectively handle.**

KSMSC is the only state-recognized Process Authority in Alaska.

The faculty assists with HACCP plans, marketing, microbiology, food safety, ...the list goes on.

Last summer Kodiak had a local Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning incident. Kodiak Center faculty has been engaged coordinating information and public awareness releases. She is also working with Harmful algal blooms and seafood toxins which affect nearshore crab stocks, marine mammals, and potentially critical fisheries resources.

1. Faculty from KSMSC in engaged with seaweed farming entrepreneurs in business and marketing plan development - funded Sea Grant aquaculture extension work.
2. They will also be working with local sea weed farmers on processing techniques and product development.
3. Contact has also been made with Paul Anderson, U of Maine Sea Grant Director for future collaboration. U of Maine has received \$ 24 million for their EPSoR program to develop the Sustainable Ecological Aquaculture Network (SEANET) to gain understanding of how social-ecological systems interact with sustainable ecological aquaculture in coastal communities and ecosystems.

The State of Alaska in conjunction with AFDF is developing a Shellfish Mariculture Program. The Kodiak Center has a long history of collaborative work with AFDF and ADFG and is well positioned to continue this type of work. We have access to filtered and unfiltered saltwater as well as an onsite seawater tank.

**However, KSMSC is now operating below human critical mass.**

The number of personnel here has been significantly reduced: Scott Smiley, Chuck Crapo, Kate Wynn have retired without replacement. Dr. Foy, Dr. Sathival, Dr. Buck, Dr. Olivera, Dr Choudhury all moved on without replacement.

Associated personnel like Jerry Babbit, who retired from NMFS and Peter Bechtel whose ARS program was curtailed are both greatly missed.

In August of 2015, Dr. Joan Braddock, interim Dean of SFOS, informed the SFOS Advisory Committee that Chancellor Rogers had initiated discussions for possible transfer of this building and the potential closure of Kodiak Center.

**Now**, the University of Alaska is facing even deeper budget cuts.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks has released a **Request for Information** for the process of learning what options may be available for a non-University of Alaska organization to manage and operate the Kodiak Seafood and Marine Science Center.

A group of concerned folks, many of whom are here now, have been discussing options in response to the University of Alaska's Request for Information. We have filed a research and education 501c3 with the State Alaska with the idea of developing a Private-Nonprofit/ University partnership.

**The name of the new 501c3 organization is the Alaska Research Consortium (ARC).**

The intent is to develop a Public Private Partnership that can better assess and respond to the workforce training and education needs of the Alaska seafood industry in a cost effective manner, and to continue to engage in related applied fisheries and marine science at this facility as directed by state statute.

There are several conceptual strategies at this point.

But it is critical that we build a research and service model that supports the needs of the industry while maintaining the training, outreach, applied research and education Mission of the Alaska Sea Grant and Marine Advisory Programs.

In order to utilize directed Alaska Education Tax Credits, we need to be partnered with a qualified educational facility. Sea Grant meets those requirements.

I envision **The Kodiak Seafood and Marine Science Center as a private-nonprofit/University partnership** that continues to meet the current and future needs of the Alaska Fishing Industry.

There has been significant dialogue concerning the shift in needs to more certificate training as opposed to the classic academic degree track. The concept of **modular training certificate programs** that can be used for accreditation with **high school or AA degrees** would be more responsive to Alaska's work-force development requirements.

Partnerships and collaborations with coastal communities and Native Organizations need to be part of this strategic plan.

Thank you.