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## **Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund Sponsor Statement**

This bill amends the existing Alaska Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund to allow up to forty percent of the fund to be used for loans to permitted shellfish hatcheries for planning, construction and operation.

Alaska shellfish farms currently do not have a stable supply of seed for the propagation of oysters, and no regular, in-state source of seed for resident aquatic plants and other shellfish. A stable supply of seed is one of many hurdles the industry must overcome to grow and become a viable Alaskan industry.

This bill will amend the program to shift its focus and eligibility from individual mariculture farmers to include shellfish hatcheries that would market stock to local Alaskan mariculture farmers.

The mariculture industry in Alaska is not yet fully developed, and is extremely high risk, from a financial standpoint. These obstacles make private financing difficult to obtain, but this bill will enable Alaskans to maintain their businesses and grow Alaska's mariculture industry.