

April 6, 2019

Representative Dan Ortiz
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for HB 41

Dear Representative Ortiz:

The Steering Committee of the Alaska King Crab Research, Rehabilitation and Biology (AKCRRAB) program would like to express appreciation and support for House Bill 41.

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 is evolving from a research-oriented coalition to an 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 by a new regulatory structure.

House Bill 41 is a response to the need for new regulations for shellfish culture. The AKCRRAB Steering Committee is pleased that the Legislature is addressing this need. The continued forward progress of our efforts depends on the passage of HB 41.

We intend to participate 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,

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; Lauren Divine, Tribal Government of St. Paul.