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Sponsor Statement

House Bill 41

Shellfish Enhancement Projects; Hatcheries; Fees

Enhancement of Alaska's shellfish industry holds the potential of expanded economic opportunities in Alaska's coastal communities and increased resilience of the State's fisheries portfolio.

To tap this potential House Bill 41 allows qualified non-profits to pursue enhancement and/or restoration projects involving shellfish species including red and blue king crab, sea cucumber, abalone, and razor clams.

The bill creates a regulatory framework with which the Department of Fish & Game can manage shellfish enhancement projects and outlines criteria for issuance of permits. It sets out stringent safety standards to ensure sustainability and health of existing natural stocks. The commissioner of ADF&G must also make a determination of substantial public benefit before a project can proceed.

In addition, the bill allows the Department of Fish & Game to set the application fee for a shellfish enhancement project permit and grants the similar authority over the application fee for a salmon enhancement project permit. This bill also amends the statutes governing the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute's to allow ASMI to market aquatic farm products including oysters and kelp until July 1, 2025.

House Bill 41 plays an important role in the development of mariculture in Alaska by providing a method to increase the available harvest of shellfish for public use in an environmentally safe and responsible manner.