

Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association

A Resolution Supporting the *Alaska Mariculture Initiative*

(Resolution 2014-01)

- WHEREAS** Alaska banned finfish farming, but allowed for aquatic farming of shellfish and marine plants with the passage of the Aquatic Farm Act in 1988; and
- WHEREAS** Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association (SARDFA) supports Alaska's ban on finfish farming; and
- WHEREAS** SARDFA supports priority consideration of historic uses, especially anchorages, during siting of aquatic farms; and
- WHEREAS** SARDFA supports the Alaska Supreme Court's decision to deny use of significant amount of wild stocks for aquatic farming; and
- WHEREAS** SARDFA supports environmentally sound programs for the aquatic farming of shellfish and marine plants; and
- WHEREAS** Since 1988, Alaska's shellfish farming industry has struggled to grow beyond existing annual production of \$200,000 to \$600,000 and 10 to 30 commercially producing farms; and
- WHEREAS** In 2011, NOAA adopted a *National Shellfish Initiative* to increase populations of bivalve shellfish in our nation's coast through commercial production and conservation activities; and
- WHEREAS** The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations reports that, in 2010, world aquaculture production attained another all-time high (60 million metric tons worth \$119 billion) of which 20% was bivalves that were non-fed (or grown on food materials that exist naturally in their marine environment); and
- WHEREAS** British Columbia reports that the shellfish growing industry provides over 1,000 full-time jobs in rural coastal communities and produces over \$33 million in annual sales across 16,000 miles of coastline; and
- WHEREAS** the State of Washington is the largest producer of farmed shellfish in the U.S. with annual sales values which exceed \$100 million, employing directly and indirectly over 3,200 people with over \$27 million in payroll and an estimated total economic contribution of \$270 million; and
- WHEREAS** In 2011, New Zealand's annual aquaculture production reached \$400

million, and the industry goal is to reach \$1 billion by the year 2025;
and

WHEREAS NOAA recognizes the broad suite of economic, social, and environmental benefits provided by sustainably increasing shellfish, including new jobs and business opportunities, meeting the growing demand for seafood, habitat for important commercial, recreational, endangered and threatened species, species recovery, cleaner water and excess nutrient removal, and shoreline protection; and

WHEREAS Washington responded to NOAA with a *Washington Shellfish Initiative* to restore and expand shellfish resources through protection, restoration and enhancement efforts; and

WHEREAS The document titled, *USDA Investment Strategy in Support of Rural Communities in Southeast Alaska (2011-2013)*, identified mariculture as an area consistent with its goals in the Southeast region and worthy of investment; and

WHEREAS In June, 2013, the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (ADCCED) published a draft *Alaska Mariculture Development Prospectus* in an attempt to establish a formal initiative focused on expediting the development of the mariculture industry; and

WHEREAS The University of Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program consistently provides support to the shellfish farming industry through education, outreach and training; and

WHEREAS Alaska's salmon enhancement program offers a comparison of the potential for mariculture to grow the economy of coastal Alaska; and

WHEREAS In 2010-2012, the ex-vessel values of hatchery salmon commercially harvested were worth approximately \$250 million, \$110 million, and \$150 million; and

WHEREAS According to a recent economic study conducted for the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association, the rate of return on investment from hatchery salmon in Prince William Sound is 271:1 for the State and 23:1 for commercial fishermen; and

WHEREAS On September, 25, 2013, NOAA researchers achieved the first experimental release of hatchery-reared red king crabs in Alaska, as a part of the Alaska King Crab Research, Rehabilitation, and Biology Program (AKCRRAB); and

WHEREAS SARDFA is working with the Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery to spawn sea cucumbers as a part of ongoing research into production of juveniles to support enhancement of wild sea cucumber populations; and

WHEREAS shellfish enhancement programs could prove to be of value to Alaska's

seafood sector and coastal communities; and

WHEREAS In summer of 2013, NOAA was petitioned to list the pinto abalone under the Endangered Species Act and the petition is under review; and

WHEREAS shellfish restoration programs may ultimately be an effective tool to assist in the recovery of depleted wild shellfish stocks; and

WHEREAS the farming of aquatic plants could provide diverse social, environmental, and economic benefits for Alaska residents; and

WHEREAS aquatic plant culture can produce healthy foods and supplements, increase and preserve habitat for fish and invertebrates, and assist with bioremediation efforts in areas that contain excess nutrient loads; and

WHEREAS The Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) is spearheading the *Alaska Mariculture Initiative* which will expedite the development of mariculture in Alaska, including marine plants and shellfish farming, enhancement, and restoration; and

WHEREAS The *Alaska Mariculture Initiative* will complete the following objectives: broaden the vision and constituency of the mariculture industry from shellfish farming to also include enhancement and restoration; coordinate efforts to develop the mariculture industry; convene a planning conference in Alaska; develop a strategic plan; and, gain a commitment by all participating agencies and stakeholders regarding implementation of the plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association (SARDFA) supports the *Alaska Mariculture Initiative* as a method to facilitate expansion of the mariculture industry for marine plants and shellfish farming, enhancement and restoration, to increase jobs and economic opportunity for fishermen, farmers and support businesses; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

Copies of this Resolution will be sent to the Alaska Legislature, Governor Parnell, ADFG, ADN R, ADCCEED, USDA Rural Development, NOAA Fisheries, and Alaska's Congressional Delegation.