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Michael Rubino, Ph.D.
Director
Office of Aquaculture
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

James W. Balsiger, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator
Alaska Regional Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PO Box 21668
709 W. 9th St.,
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

June 26, 2013

RE: Request for Support to Develop Shellfish Mariculture in Alaska

Dear Drs. Rubino and Balsiger:

Please accept this letter as a request from the Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC) for increased support from and collaboration with NOAA Fisheries' National Marine Fisheries Service to develop shellfish mariculture in Alaska. JEDC is requesting your involvement because we recognize the potential of shellfish mariculture for both the economy of rural, coastal Alaska and for the enhancement of natural ecosystems.

Since 2010, JEDC has facilitated the Ocean Products Cluster with the goal of fostering economic development in Southeast Alaska by bringing together a group of industry leaders from throughout the region to address common problems and create opportunities for business growth. One specific initiative the Ocean Products Cluster is currently pursuing is supporting the development of the mariculture industry. Through our experience with this Cluster, we can attest that the shellfish mariculture industry is important for the future economy of both Southeast Alaska and the rest of the State; a more robust and sustainable mariculture industry could provide new jobs in rural, coastal Alaska in various fields: farmers, fishermen, and those supporting the industry with research, seed supply, infrastructure, and logistics. Such an industry could also complement NOAA's strategy to maintain healthy marine species and ecosystems and economically vibrant coastal communities. However, the mariculture industry needs increased capacity in order to turn this potential into reality. A specific way in which NOAA may be of assistance in helping the shellfish mariculture industry to reach this state includes coordinating (a) scientific expertise, (b) federal policies, and (c) financial resources. For example, since 2008, NOAA has employed regional coordinators of aquaculture efforts in the Northeast,

Southeast, Southwest, Northwest, and Pacific Islands regions. Employing a similar regional aquaculture coordinator in the Alaska region may allow for better support of the shellfish mariculture industry in Alaska.

The story of the shellfish mariculture industry in Alaska has the potential to mirror that of the salmon hatcheries after the creation of the Fisheries Enhancement Revolving Loan Fund. Hatcheries are now adding hundreds of millions of dollars to Alaska's economy – a genuine success story. With the correct state and federal policies, the shellfish mariculture industry may become a similar success story for Alaska. Industry experts estimate that the shellfish mariculture industry could grow from \$7 million in production value to \$50 million if industry constraints were removed.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at a time that is convenient for you if you would like to discuss this matter. Thank you for considering strengthening your support of this nascent industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brian Holst', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brian Holst
Executive Director
Juneau Economic Development Council
bholst@jedc.org
907-523-2333

cc:

Kathryn D. Sullivan, Ph.D.
Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Samuel D. Rauch III
Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs,
performing the functions and duties of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator for the State of Alaska

Mark Begich
U.S. Senator for the State of Alaska

Don Young
U.S. Congressman for the State of Alaska

Beth Pendleton
Alaska Regional Forester
United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service