



Press Release

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Contact: Linda Mattson
Commissioner's Office
Office (907) 465-2500
linda.mattson@alaska.gov

Alaska's Mariculture Task Force Moves Forward with Economic Analysis, Tribal Collaboration and Outreach

Recommendations for a comprehensive plan will be delivered March 2018

(Juneau) The Alaska Mariculture Task Force is moving forward with several advisory committees (AC) focused on research, development and environmental information, regulatory issues, investment and infrastructure, workforce development, public education and marketing.

Formed by Governor Walker by Administrative Order 280, the Alaska Mariculture Task Force is focused on developing a viable and sustainable Alaska mariculture industry to contribute to the expansion of the State's economy. The task force just completed its fifth meeting this week.

The Task Force defines mariculture as aquatic farming of shellfish and aquatic plants in Alaska waters, as well as enhancement of wild fisheries. The farming of finfish is not legal in the State of Alaska. The mission of the Task Force is to provide recommendations to develop the mariculture industry in Alaska for the long-term benefit of the state's economy and environment.

"Mariculture represents a tremendous opportunity to grow and diversify our state's economy, strengthen our coastal communities, and provide healthy food to the world using sustainable methods that are an extension of Alaska's successful fishery management practices," said Governor Walker in creating the task force.

Recommendations for a comprehensive plan will be delivered to Governor Walker by March 2018. The recommendations are to address public and private investment, regulatory issues, and research and development needs. The members are also focusing on workforce development, public education and marketing, and environmental considerations.

"Each of the Task Force members brings unique experiences and knowledge to the challenge of growing this new industry. The Task Force represents interests of Alaskans from the Aleutian Islands to Southeast Alaska," said Governor Walker. "These Alaskans are committed to finding solutions to hurdles in the development of mariculture for the long-term benefit of Alaska's economy, environment and communities."

Chris Hladick, the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, is the Chairman of the Task Force. The members are Paula Cullenberg, Julie Decker (Vice-chair), Angel Drobnic, Jeff Hetrick, Heather McCarty, Sam Rabung, Mike Stekoll, Kate Sullivan, Chris Whitehead and Eric Wyatt. Additional information on the members is provided on the Mariculture Task Force webpage, at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=amtf.main>.

The mariculture of various shellfish species and seaweed has the potential to provide jobs and commerce in coastal communities compatible with their culture and skills, while also increasing access to local foods. Culture of shellfish and aquatic plants also carries environmental benefits, improving the local ecosystem by habitat improvement and carbon removal.

“We are working to develop a mariculture industry for shellfish and seaweed that is environmentally sound and respectful of traditional uses. We understand the importance of traditional hunting, fishing and gathering practices by the first people of these lands. This development opportunity will not deter, but enhance what resources are available for customary and traditional use,” said Gov. Walker.

The Chairs and members of each AC members are listed on the webpage. Those interested in receiving future public meeting notices and other information related to the Alaska Mariculture Task Force via email, please sign up for the ListServ on the webpage. The meetings of the Task Force are publicly noticed on the State of Alaska webpage, and open to the public in person and by telephone.

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For more information contact Linda Mattson at the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development at 907-465-2500 or linda.mattson@alaska.gov.

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