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Governor Bill Walker

STATE OF ALASKA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 280

I, Bill Walker, Governor of the State of Alaska, under the authority of Article III, Sections 1 and 24 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska, and in accordance with AS 44.19.145(c), establish the Alaska Mariculture Task Force.

FINDINGS

In 1988, Alaska allowed for farming of shellfish and aquatic plants with the enactment of AS 16.40.100 -16.40.199. Since 1988, Alaska's aquatic farming industry has struggled to grow with annual production values through 2013 below \$1,000,000.

The potential for increased and sustained economic development from mariculture of shellfish and aquatic plants in coastal communities is significant. Alaska has over 30,000 miles of coastline with clean, pristine, nutrient-rich water. Alaska produces over 50 percent of the seafood of the United States and is a leader in sustainability principles related to its responsible management of these resources. Shellfish and aquatic plants have historically been crucial to the subsistence and livelihoods of many Alaskans. Mariculture also offers the potential to provide resiliency to shellfish resources facing future environmental threats. Industry and policymakers acknowledge the importance of determining what is needed to fully develop this potential into a reality. Shellfish restoration programs are underway in other states and may ultimately be an effective tool to assist in the recovery of depleted wild shellfish stocks in Alaska. Due to ocean acidification and sea otter predation, the resiliency of shellfish resources in Alaska may become even more dependent upon the development of mariculture research, techniques, and enhancement efforts.

Research projects are underway in Alaska with respect to mariculture development. In 2013, NOAA researchers achieved the first experimental release of hatchery-reared red king crab in the state, as a part of the Alaska King Crab Research, Rehabilitation, and Biology Program. The Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association is working with the Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery to spawn sea cucumbers as a part of ongoing research into production of juveniles.

The farming of aquatic plants could provide diverse social, environmental, and economic benefits for Alaska residents. 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 carbon loads. Invertebrate culture can also assist with water filtration and removal of excessive nutrient loads.

Alaska's salmon fishery enhancement program offers a model of the potential for mariculture to grow the economy of coastal Alaska while applying sustainable management practices. The development of the mariculture industry in the state will provide the following benefits to Alaskans:

- (1) economic – providing jobs and commerce in coastal communities;
- (2) environmental – improving the local ecosystem in various ways, such as habitat improvement, carbon removal, or countering ocean acidification;
- (3) cultural – compatible with traditions, cultures, and skills in rural communities;
- (5) industrial – complements and expands our existing renewable seafood industry, which is Alaska’s largest private sector employer;
- (6) food security – increasing access to local foods for Alaskans.

PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this Order is to establish the Alaska Mariculture Task Force (Task Force) to provide recommendations to develop a viable and sustainable mariculture industry producing shellfish and aquatic plants for the long-term benefit of Alaska’s economy, environment, and communities.

The Task Force shall present recommendations for a final comprehensive plan for the development of Alaska’s mariculture industry to the Governor by March 1, 2018.

The Task Force will use the following guiding principles in the development of its recommendations:

- (1) For the purposes of the task force, “mariculture” is defined as enhancement of wild fisheries and aquatic farming of shellfish and aquatic plants. Mariculture does not include finfish farming, which is not legal in Alaska.
- (2) The development of the mariculture industry will:
 - (A) be compatible with Alaska’s reputation as a world leader in responsible and sustainable management of its seafood resources;
 - (B) be stakeholder-driven;
 - (C) coordinate and integrate with those entities conducting ocean monitoring in order to inform research and management of changing ocean conditions; and
 - (D) include analysis of successful models that may be applicable to Alaska.
- (3) The comprehensive recommendations of the Task Force shall address, at a minimum:
 - (A) public and private investment;
 - (B) regulatory issues;
 - (C) research and development needs;
 - (D) environmental changes;
 - (E) public education; and
 - (F) workforce development.
- (4) The Task Force may establish advisory committees to assist in addressing the previously stated essential elements of the recommendations.

COMPOSITION AND CHAIR

The Task Force consists of eleven members who are appointed by the Governor and serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

The members of the Alaska Mariculture Task Force shall include the following:

- (1) the Commissioner of Fish and Game, or the Commissioner’s designee;

- (2) the Commissioner of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, or the Commissioner's designee;
- (3) a representative from the University of Alaska;
- (4) the Director of the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, or the Director's designee;
- (5) seven members of the public whose experience may include aquatic farming, seafood harvesting, seafood processing, nonprofit hatcheries, community sustainability, Alaska Native corporations, community development quota groups, tribal governments, or seafood marketing.

A chair and vice chair shall be selected annually by the Task Force from among its membership.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The Office of the Governor and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor shall provide necessary administrative support.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Consistent with law and available appropriations, each designated State agency shall use existing personnel and monetary resources to comply with this Order.

Task force members receive no compensation or other remuneration from the State as members of the Task Force.

The Task Force will meet quarterly and may meet more frequently if determined by the Task Force. The Task Force may use teleconferencing or other electronic means, to the extent practicable, in order to gain the widest public participation possible at minimum cost.

Meetings of the Task Force shall be conducted, and notice of regular meetings provided, in accordance with AS 44.62.310 - AS 44.62.319 (Open Meetings Act). A majority of the members of the Task Force constitutes a quorum for conducting business. Records of the task force are subject to inspection and copying as public records under AS 40.25.110 - 40.25.220.

The Alaska Mariculture Task Force expires on June 30, 2018.

This Order takes effect immediately.

Dated at Anchorage, Alaska, this 26 day of February 2016.



Bill Walker
Governor