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SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

January 26, 2018

RE: Support for Development of Aquatic Farms in Southeast Alaska

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Southeast Conference (SEC) to generally support aquatic farm applications submitted in the Southeast Alaska region. SEC is the state's regional development organization and federally recognized economic development district for southeast Alaska. Our mission is to support activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities and a quality environment in the region.

In the regional comprehensive economic development strategy, titled "Southeast Alaska 2020 Economic Plan", **Mariculture Development** (including aquatic farming of shellfish and seaweed) was established as a priority initiative for the region in the seafood sector.

Southeast Conference has also supported and collaborated with the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) to spearhead the **Alaska Mariculture Initiative** with a vision to "grow a \$1 billion industry in 30 years".

Southeast Conference has further supported and collaborated with Governor Walker's **Alaska Mariculture Task Force** (Task Force) established in 2016 by [Administrative Order #280](#). AO#280 details the benefits to Alaskans which could be provided by a fully developed mariculture industry:

- Economic – providing jobs and commerce in coastal communities;
- Environmental – improving the local ecosystem in various ways, such as providing habitat improvement, carbon removal, or countering ocean acidification;
- Cultural – compatible with traditions, cultures, and skills in rural communities;
- Industrial – complements and expands our existing renewable seafood industry, which is Alaska's largest private sector employer;
- Food Security – increases access to local foods for Alaskans.

Given SEC's **mariculture development priority initiative**, the **Alaska Mariculture Initiative** and the work of the **Alaska Mariculture Task Force** established by Governor Walker, Southeast Conference supports the aquatic farm applications and amendments submitted in the Southeast Alaska region as an example of the type of development necessary to reach a fully developed mariculture industry.

Thank you for your consideration and fullest support possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Venables". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Robert Venables
Executive Director
Southeast Conference
www.seconference.org