

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## INTERIM

50 Front St.  
Suite #203  
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901  
Phone: (907) 247-4672  
Fax: (907) 225-8546



## SESSION

Suite 416  
State Capitol Building  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
Phone: (907) 465-3424  
Fax: (907) 465-3793

## REPRESENTATIVE JIM ELKINS

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CONTACT: Representative Jim Elkins (907) 465-3424

### **Legislation Promoting Shellfish Farming** **Moving Forward**

(JUNEAU) – House Bill 198, a bill related to aquatic farming, unanimously passed the House Floor today. “HB 198 will finally produce a viable shellfish farming industry in Southeast Alaska,” said Representative Jim Elkins (R-Ketchikan). “This bill is a compromise between the state and the industry and will help open the doors for geoduck farming in the Ketchikan area.”

House Bill 198, sponsored by Representative Elkins, and Senate Bill 126 sponsored by Senator Bert Stedman (R-Sitka) would amend the state’s Aquatic Farming Act to allow aquatic farms to continue to operate in compliance with a recent Supreme Court decision. In order to be implemented, a change in statute is required, HB 198 will amend the Aquatic Farming Act to allow shellfish farmers to harvest and sell “insignificant populations” of wild shellfish stocks on their aquatic farm sites.

Recently, the Department of Fish and Game opened a commercial dive fishery on designated mariculture sites to remove the commercially significant population of wild geoducks from these small areas. This fishery has been open to all commercial divers in Southeast Alaska, preparing these sites for aquaculture.

Representative Elkins stated, “This legislation, the product of industry members and the administration working to find a compromise, will help ensure the future of this new fishery in Southern Southeast Alaska for years to come.” HB 198 is on its way to meet Senator Stedman’s legislation SB 126, which is scheduled for a hearing today in Senate Resources and then heading to the Senate Rules Committee.

“This legislation is important to the people of Southeast Alaska. Representative Elkins and I are working hard to get this important legislation done by session’s end to ensure that shellfish farmers will be able to start work this spring,” said Senator Stedman.

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