



Alaska State Legislature

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Shellfish Farming Measure Passes House **HB 208 Would Encourage Oyster, Clam Farms on Alaska Coast**

(JUNEAU) – The House today unanimously approved a measure requiring state fish and environmental agencies to help lay the groundwork for a shellfish mariculture industry in coastal Alaska.

Shellfish farming is the practice of growing oysters, scallops, clams, geoducks or other shellfish in enclosed pens or open waters along the seacoast. With its clean, nutrient-rich marine environment and vast coastline, Alaska offers an attractive environment for the industry, Scalzi said.

“The mariculture industry has the potential to increase the availability of fresh seafood to Alaskans, strengthen the competitiveness of Alaskan seafood products in the world marketplace and provide a premium product year-round,” said Rep. Drew Scalzi (R-Homer), a member of the House Special Committee on Fisheries, which sponsored House Bill 208.

Scalzi said that the interlocking regulations of numerous state agencies with oversight over Alaska’s environment and fish and game has inhibited the industry from taking hold here since the Legislature first authorized shellfish farming in 1988. Would-be shellfish farmers have complained that restrictive and unreasonable state restrictions have actively discouraged the industry in Alaska.

HB 208 would address the situation by requiring the Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Natural Resources to survey and identify 60 sites suitable for shellfish farms: 60 sites suitable for oyster farms, 20 for clam farms, and 10 for geoduck farms, in addition to those few sites that have already won permits under existing state law.

Under the bill, the new sites would be available for 10-year leases, and any naturally occurring shellfish on the sites would be made available for public harvest prior to the start of farming operations. Farmers would be held to sustainable yield management principles in harvesting wild stock, Scalzi said.

“HB 208 is the means for encouraging the state to develop another resource that will add economic diversity to our coffers -- while protecting the right of Alaskans to harvest a common property resource,” Scalzi said.

[HB 208](#) moves next to the Senate for consideration.

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