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September 26, 2013

**RE: Letter of Support for S-K Grant titled, *Alaska Mariculture Initiative***

Dear Mr. Carey,

I am writing to express my support for the Saltonstall Kennedy grant proposal from the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) titled, *Alaska Mariculture*. The Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) is spearheading the *Alaska Mariculture Initiative* which will complete the following objectives: broaden the vision and constituency of the mariculture industry from shellfish farming to also include restoration and wild fishery enhancement, coordinate efforts to develop the mariculture industry, convene a strategic planning conference in Alaska, develop a strategic plan, and gain a commitment by all participating agencies and stakeholders regarding implementation of the plan

I am writing on behalf of my company and my family, who have been residents and involved in Alaska resource issues since 1949. I am an active commercial dive harvester, participating in the sea cucumber and geoduck fisheries and I serve as a board member of Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association (SARDFA).

The mariculture industry has tremendous potential to provide new jobs in Alaska's coastal communities for farmers, fishermen, and those supporting the industry with research, seed supply, and infrastructure. Increased mariculture production is not only economically beneficial to these communities, but also ecologically beneficial to the marine habitat. I support the *Alaska Mariculture Initiative* as a coordinated strategic planning effort with a sound methodology, clear objectives and a reasonable expectation that it will facilitate expansion of the mariculture industry, leading to increased jobs, increased seafood sales, economic growth, and a resilient industry

Sincerely,  
  
Greg Cushing