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AFDF Seeks Proposals for Alaska Mariculture Initiative

The Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation is seeking proposals for its Alaska mariculture initiative, an economic analysis to inform a statewide strategic plan for enhancement, aquatic farming and restoration of shellfish and marine plants. According to AFDF, the economic impact of mariculture could grow to \$1 billion in Alaska by 2045, given a coordinated effort, a public-private partnership, and a strategic plan designed to reach this goal.

The deadline for proposals is Sept. 19.

Proposals will be judged on knowledge and understanding of the project, experience with similar projects, demonstration of capacity to complete everything within the required time, and cost, said Julie Decker, executive director of the organization.

AFDF will fund the project with a \$216,000 grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

AFDF notes that the ex-vessel value of Alaska seafood in 2012 was some \$2 billion, and of that salmon hatcheries contributed roughly \$100 million to \$300 million, depending on the year.

Challenges acknowledged by AFDF include the fact that they will be dealing with extremely remote sites which increase costs and logistics, infrastructure investment, lack of organizational capacity, lack of workforce which will require recruitment and training, regulatory hurdles and environmental issues, including sea otter predation and ocean acidification.

An example of success in wild fishery enhancement, shellfish farming and restoration operations has been found in several areas of the world, from New Zealand, to British Columbia, as well as Washington state and Alaska, AFDF said.

In Washington state alone, 3,200 people are employed with \$27 million in payroll, more than \$100 million in annual sales, providing a total economic contribution of \$270 million, the report said. In Alaska, meanwhile, salmon enhancement has produced millions of dollars in ex-vessel value each year since 201, and hatcheries have repaid most initial loans to the state with interest, the report said.

More information on the project is at www.afdf.org.

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