



Southeast Soil and Water Conservation District

Greetings

As you know, the Southeast Soil & Water Conservation District has three key focus areas in Southeast Alaska: Food Security, Mariculture, and Invasive Species Management. There has been a great deal of activity in these three areas in the region, and we are sending a three part newsletter series to get you caught up. Here is the latest on:

Southeast Alaska Mariculture



Photo by Margo Reveil

Southeast Alaska has some of the richest, highest-quality, most sustainable commercial fisheries in the world, and mariculture is poised to play an increasingly important role in the region's seafood industry. The protected and undeveloped shoreline of Alaska's Panhandle provides the opportunity to host hundreds of shellfish farms. Here in Southeast Alaska the mariculture industry is still in its

infancy. Oysters are the primary specie produced, but shellfish farmers in the region are also beginning to develop other species such as littleneck clams, geoduck, and mussels.

[Read more here...](#)

The Alaska Mariculture Initiative

Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation's (AFDF) Executive Director Julie Decker

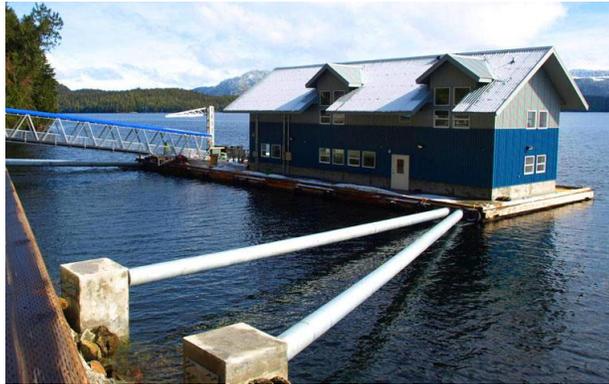


To better understand Southeast Alaska's opportunities for mariculture development, the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF), under the direction of its Executive Director, Julie Decker, has launched the [Alaska Mariculture Initiative](#). The end goal of this effort is to expedite the development of the mariculture industry. While this initiative focuses on Alaska as a whole, much of the development will be centered in Southeast Alaska.

"Could Alaska's mariculture industry grow to \$1 billion in thirty years? Absolutely." Julie explained. "With a coordinated effort, a partnership of stakeholders, and a strategic plan designed to reach this goal, the promise of this industry is enormous. Just look around the world. Chile has a billion dollar mussel industry; France produces over \$600 million in oysters and mussels, and Japan produces oysters valued at nearly \$400 million. New Zealand's mussel production is valued at over \$150 million. In the U.S., shellfish production in Puget Sound alone is valued at over \$100 million. These statistics suggest that, from a market perspective, Southeast Alaska has plenty of room to grow."

The Alaska Mariculture Initiative is an important effort to coordinate the policies and actions of varied government, private sector, and non-profit stakeholders important to mariculture development in Alaska. Developing these partnerships is important Julie explains. "Everyone supports mariculture development, but we need active engagement by all the stakeholders in order to create a strategic plan that has the momentum to move it forward. The key is that people are working together and agreeing on the path forward." The next step in this effort is phase one of a three-phase economic analysis to better inform the stakeholders' decisions in the strategic plan. [To find out more, go to http://www.afdf.org/](http://www.afdf.org/)

Shellfish Seed & Ketchikan's OceansAlaska



Similar to agriculture enterprises, oyster and geoduck farmers need seed to produce a harvest-in this case the seed is baby shellfish. Shellfish hatcheries are a basic piece of required infrastructure in order for the fledgling Southeast Alaska mariculture industry to become successful.

However, suppliers in Oregon and Washington-where the seed had traditionally been procured-are facing shortages due to ocean acidification, pollution, and increased local demand. With outside suppliers unable to meet their own internal needs, let alone those of others, independent shellfish farmers in Southeast Alaska found it necessary to come up with a regional strategy to circumvent these problems and produce the seed locally.



OceansAlaska in Ketchikan is a non-profit shellfish hatchery working to provide oyster and geoduck seed to shellfish farmers in Alaska. OceansAlaska currently operates a small floating shellfish hatchery. In 2014, OceansAlaska completed an operational review of its facility by a hatchery expert with the support of the Alaska Department of Commerce, Division of Economic Development. Based on the analysis, OceansAlaska has revised its business plan accordingly.

Tomi Marsh, OceansAlaska's president, says that the shellfish hatchery plans to produce 10 million oyster seed and 400,000 geoduck seed next year and ramp up to full production of 15 million oyster and 1 million geoduck seed within the next five years. Based on this new business plan, the Ketchikan Gateway Borough recently agreed to a long-term loan to OceansAlaska which will provide the support the facility needs while the organization and the industry grows to a level at which the seed sales will sustain the facility and pay back the loan. This is an example of a public-private partnership in which the public funds some of the costs of the infrastructure needed to grow private business, and the private businesses pay the loan back



over time.

Southeast Soil & Water Conservation District Project:

Shellfish Farming Workshop in Kake



In May of 2014, the Southeast Soil and Conservation District partnered with the Organized Village of Kake, and the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program to host a shellfish farming workshop in Kake. Other participating organizations included the Hoonah Indian Association, Haa Aani, LLC, Division of Economic Development, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

[Click here to see the entire photo essay.](#)

Haa Aani Mariculture Initiative

According to Haa Aani, oyster mariculture is a lifestyle-compatible economic opportunity in the region's traditional villages. Their role is to act as a catalyst for growth in the industry by focusing on:

- Oyster seed production to support seed supply for farms.
- Start-up financing for new oyster farms.
- Supply chain management of market-sized oysters.



Anthony Lindoff, mariculture program manager for Haa Aani, teaches volunteers how to shuck oysters.

[Photo by KTOO.](#)

[Read more here...](#)

Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program



A handful of oyster spat are the right size for shipment to a shellfish farmer. Spat are delivered to the nursery from a hatchery when only 3 mm in diameter. Once grown to 12-25 mm, they are ready for purchase by farmers to grow to maturity. About two months at the nursery saves a year of growth at the farm. Photo by Ray RaLonde.

Aquaculture Specialist for the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program Raymond RaLonde will be traveling through Southeast Alaska in October and in his travels will give a presentation entitled: "Shellfish Aquaculture: A Community Development Opportunity."

- Juneau Centennial Hall, Hickel Room October 17, 2014 8:00 - 9:00 PM

[Read more here...](#)

About the Southeast Soil and Water Conservation District

The Southeast Soil and Water Conservation District (SE SWCD) assists Southeast Alaskans by promoting best management practices for the wisest and best use of natural resources and also helping community members make sound land use and development decisions that take into consideration traditional knowledge and lifestyles. The SE SWCD works as a community-based organization, serves as a non-regulatory agency, maintains strong partnerships with other agencies and becomes involved only at the land users' request. The main purpose of the District is to support private landowners throughout the region.

Southeast Soil and Water Conservation District Elections

The SE SWCD is holding annual elections this fall and has **4 seats open** for the Board of Supervisors.

- To serve on the District's Board of Supervisors, you must first [join the organization as a Cooperator.](#)
- Then you must complete the [Call for Nomination Form](#) and submit it to the Department of Natural Resources by November 14th, 2014.
- The election period will be conducted until December 31, 2014.

Call for Volunteers & Local/Regional Partners

Do you have an interest in sustainable agriculture, natural resource conservation, and developing the potential of the Southeast Soil and Water Conservation District? Do you have an idea for sustainable project or program in your community? Contact the District to see how we can work together to develop collaborative solutions that address our shared goals!

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