

# Mariculture in Alaska: Oceans of Opportunity



Julie Sande, Commissioner

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Seagriculture USA 2024  
Exploring New Frontiers  
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# The Last Frontier

## Fun facts about Alaska:

- Bigger than Texas, California and Montana (combined)
- 86% of AK's communities are not on the road system
- 17 of country's tallest 20 mountains are in AK
- 3,000 Rivers and 3 million lakes
- 100s of millions of acres of wilderness and 100,000 glaciers



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# HUMP ISLAND *Oyster Company*



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# Poised for Growth

- NOAA Opportunity Areas
- Mariculture Expansion
- Evolution of the Alaska Mariculture Task Force
- Engaged & Responsive State Government
- Commitment to Growth
- Sustainability Through Innovation
- Proving Alaska's Potential



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# NOAA Opportunity Areas



Alaska State Waters

- Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) are geographic areas evaluated to be environmentally, socially, and economically appropriate to support multiple commercial aquaculture operations
- NOAA identified 10 different AOAs in Alaska, totaling over 16 million acres
- Alaska received more letters of support than any other region during the 60-day comment period



Scan for NOAA's website on  
Alaska's AOAs



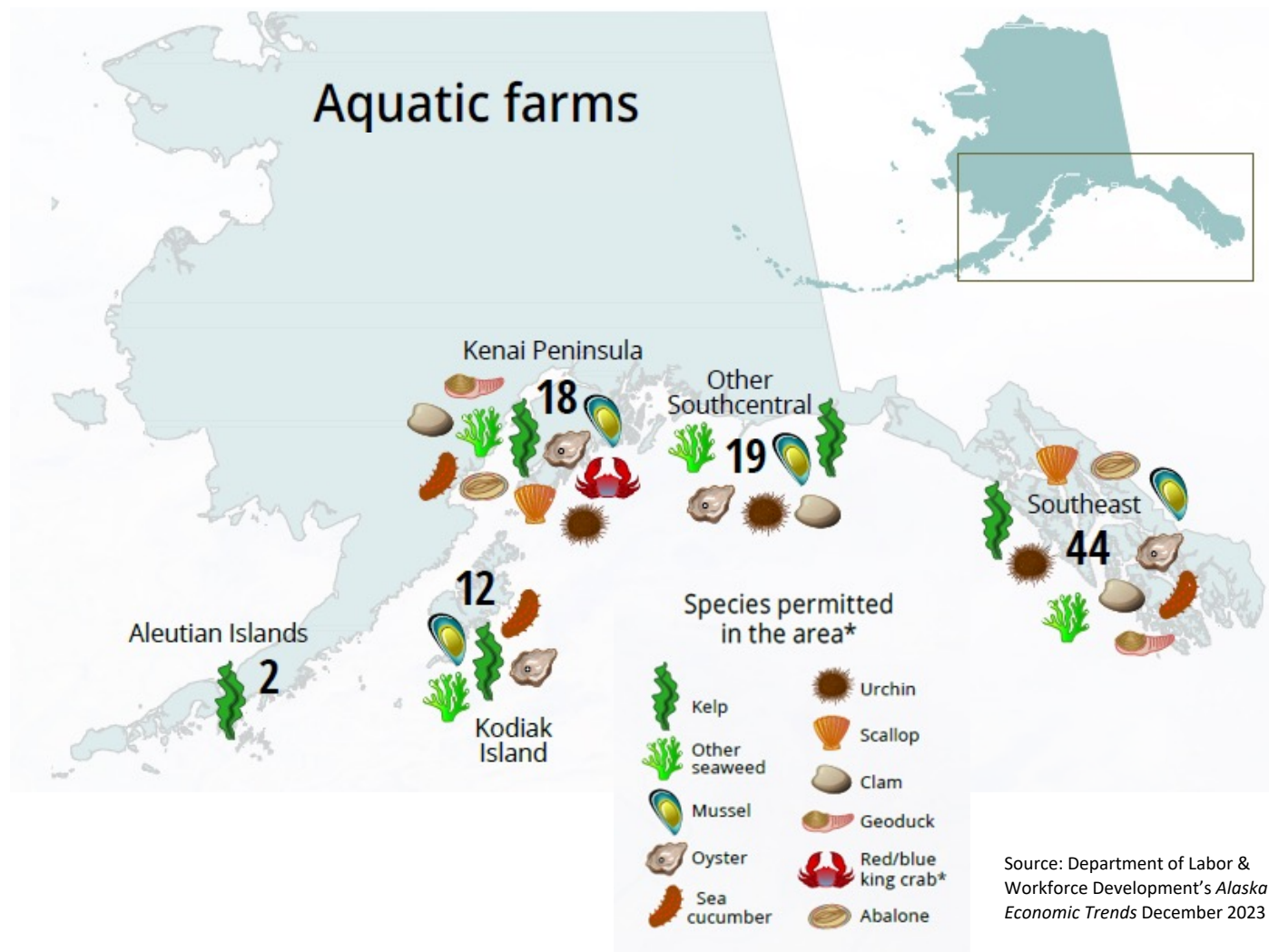
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# Mariculture Expansion

Alaska is home to the largest kelp farm in the United States, Seagroves Kelp!

- As of November 2023, Alaska had a total of 95 active mariculture operation permits, with 25 seaweed farms
- Permitted acreage has grown from less than 350 acres in 2016 to more than 1,360 today
- The state's aquatic farms primarily grow shellfish and seaweed, but some also grow sea cucumber and urchins
- Most are located along the coastline in either Southeast or Southcentral Alaska



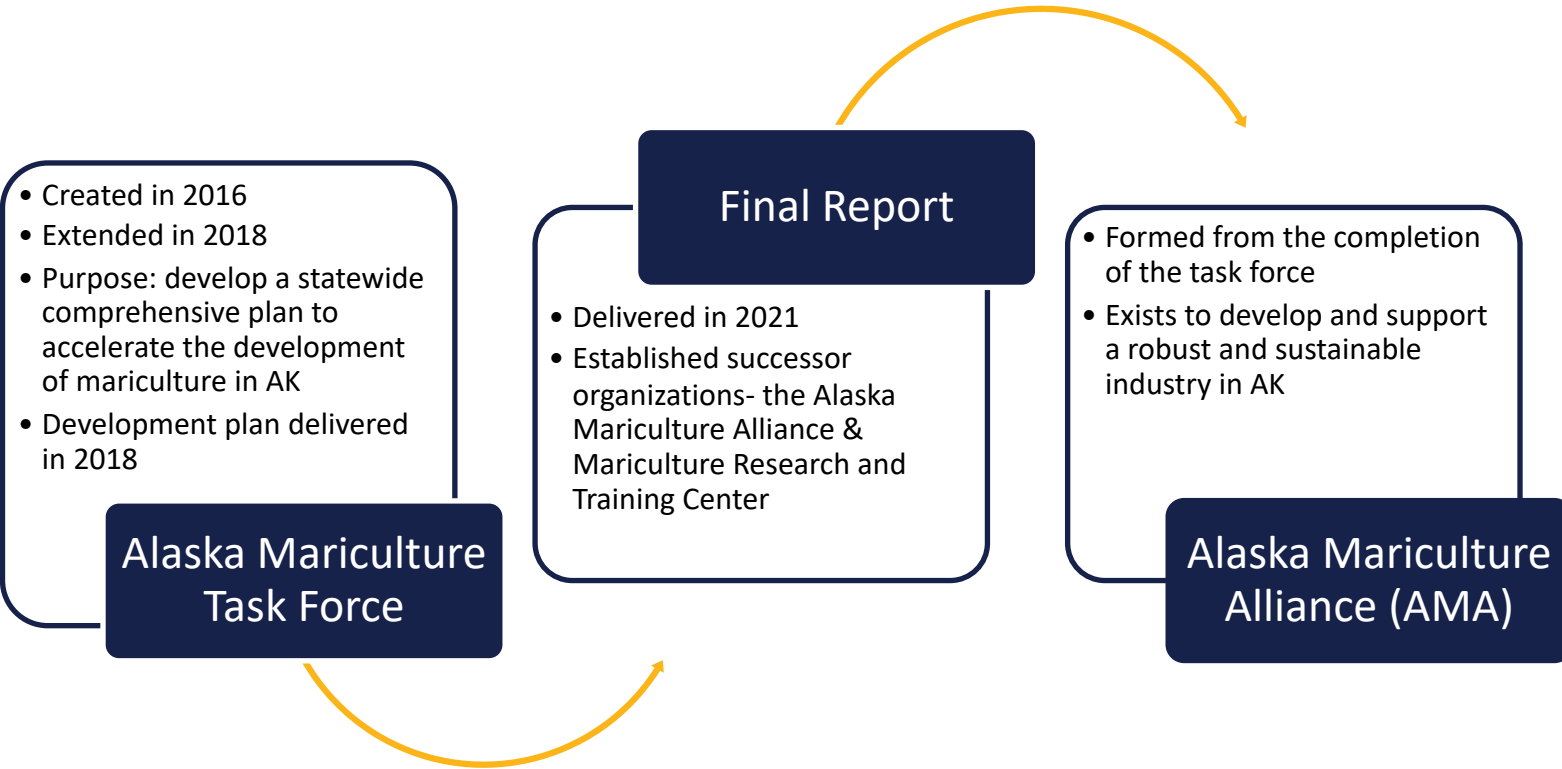
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# Evolution of the Alaska Mariculture Task Force

Alaska Mariculture Development Plan's goal: grow a \$100 million mariculture industry in 20 years



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# Engaged & Responsive State Government

2012

- Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund established

2014

- Alaska Mariculture Initiative started by Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation

2016

- Mariculture Task Force established & work on the Alaska Mariculture Development Plan began

2018

- Mariculture Task Force extended to 2021
- AK Mariculture Loan Fund amended to include hatcheries & enhancement

2019

- Mariculture Task Force approved 5-year action plan to develop the industry & remove structural barriers

2021

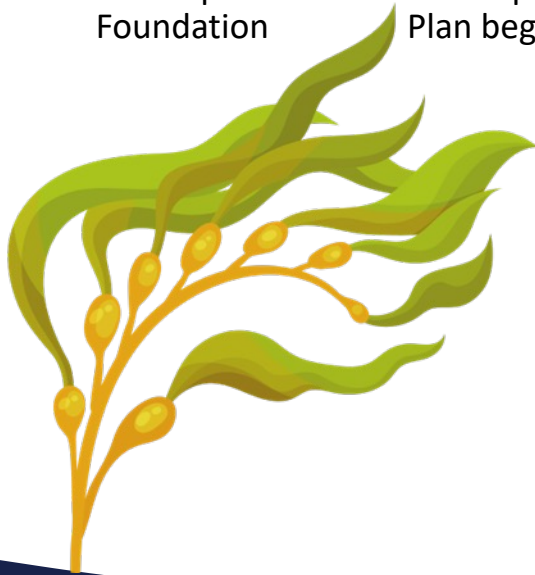
- HB 115 improved lease process for aquatic farms
- Task Force Final Report submitted to Governor
- Alaska Mariculture Alliance formed
- New State positions funded
- Permitting Portal created

2022

- HB41 allows mariculture enhancement
- Build Back Better Regional Challenge Grant awarded
- \$5 million state appropriation for matching grant program

2024

- HB329 simplifies mariculture leases and extends limits to 20 years



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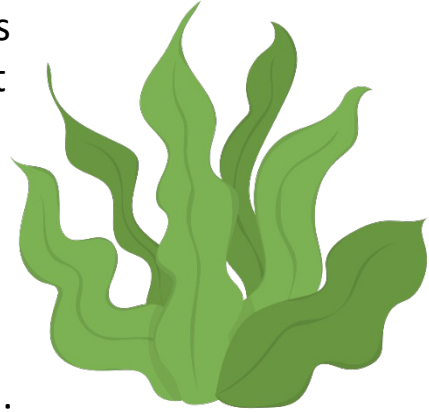


# Commitment to Growth

The State of Alaska participated in obtaining more than \$100 million in grant funding for developing the mariculture industry in Alaska. DCCED is a member of the Alaska Mariculture Cluster and provided support to receive almost \$50 million in Build Back Better grant funding.

These grants are used for:

- Direct assistance to farmers
- Technological development
- Training
- Workforce development
- Marketing
- Research



University of Alaska System:

- Alaska Sea Grant
- Alaskan Mariculture Occupational Endorsement
- Alaska Aquaculture Semester-Sustainable Ocean Farming

DCCED Division of Investments:

- Working on financing package for a drying system in Kasilof capable of mass-producing dried seaweed for wholesale and retail

Southeast Conference:

- Developing a shared use processing facility in Craig to support mariculture farmers and manufacturers of all sizes



Photo credit: UAS Alaska Aquaculture Semester, Sustainable Ocean Farming website



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# Sustainability Through Innovation

Alaska is committed to responsible development, as we have proven across industries like mining, oil & gas, and now mariculture.

## Alternative Energy Development in Alaska:

- Wind
- Solar
- Geothermal
- Hydro
- Mariculture for Biofuel

## The University of Alaska is actively researching:

- Study of seaweed for Rare Earth Element concentrations
- Scalability of macroalgal farming seaweed for biofuel



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# Proving Alaska's Potential



- Founded in 2016 by Matt Kern and Lia Heifetz
- Started small selling kelp salsa and kelp pickles through farmers markets and a tiny store front in the tourism district of downtown Juneau
- Has now grown to serve 1000+ customers a month & work with over 1500 retailers around the country



- Founded in 2017 by Jenn Brown
- Crafts salsas, pickles, and sauces using wild-foraged Alaskan superfoods like bull kelp and sea asparagus



- In 2018, Meta Mesdag decided that she wanted to start a new business that would allow her to work outside with her three kids, so she started Salty Lady Seafood Co. to grow world-class oysters in Juneau, AK



- Fishes & Dishes is a food trailer in Ketchikan that began with sisters Tomi & Kiyo Marsh with Jon Hurley and team of April Wyatt & Ricky Voelz
- Operates on a value system of supporting the local seafood community; entertaining/educating visitors to choose Alaska seafood when they return home; raising funds for the local high school; and supporting mariculture by showcasing delicious pairings of Alaska seafood, sea vegetables, and shellfish



- Seagrove is an Alaskan company run by locals who value hard work, determination, and resilience
- They support regional communities by investing in sustainable employment and mariculture and actively participating in local ventures
- The mariculture site is 100 acres of pristine ocean space in Doyle Bay, Alaska



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Scan the QR code for the Alaska Mariculture Alliance's member directory. Here you will find additional industry resources.

