Applicant Organization: Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF)

Project Title: Alaska Mariculture Initiative – Phase 2

SK Priority #2: Marine Aquaculture

Project Location: Sitka, Kodiak, Ketchikan and other coastal communities in Alaska

Project Start Date: September 1, 2019

Amount Requested from NOAA: $287,680

Name & Title of Principle Investigator: Julie Decker, Executive Director

Species/Resources Addressed: This project will focus on mariculture species in Alaska with the most potential: Pacific oysters, kelp, mussels, geoduck, King crab, and sea cucumber.

Project Description:
This project primarily addresses S-K Program Priority #2 – Marine Aquaculture. However, it is secondarily a development project, under Priority #1 – Promotion, Development and Marketing. The project will renew support for the Alaska Mariculture Initiative, which was funded with a 2014 NOAA SK Grant, and has been extremely successful in both the completion of the work and the positive impacts. One direct result of the Initiative was establishment of the Mariculture Task Force by Governor Walker. Another result was the completion of the Alaska Mariculture Development Plan by the Task Force with a vision to “develop a viable and sustainable mariculture industry producing shellfish and aquatic plants for the long-term benefit of Alaska’s economy, environment and communities”. The Plan’s goal is to “grow a $100 million mariculture industry in 20 years”, and it provides guiding principles along with dozens of recommended actions (for more info, see this link). AFDF is proposing to continue the efforts of the Alaska Mariculture Initiative with Phase 2 and begin activities to implement the Plan. The connection between the recommendations in the Plan from Phase 1 and the objectives in Phase 2 will be called out in the full proposal. This project focuses its activities on the implementation of the Plan by selecting priority recommendations and utilizing the Mariculture Task Force. This second phase of the Initiative will also incorporate a farmer training program with the goal of increasing capacity locally within the three participating organizations to allow them to continue with training efforts after this project is over.

Fishing Community Vitality: Fishermen, seafood processors, support sector businesses and communities dependent on fisheries face significant challenges due to depressed stocks or changing ocean conditions. For instance, the Pacific cod stocks in the Gulf of Alaska are down approximately 80% and are projected to be depressed for a number of years. In order to promote sustainable uses of fishery resources, these fishing-dependent entities need supplemental sources of economic activity. The development of mariculture in Alaska will provide economic diversification for fishermen, processors, and fishing communities. Developing mariculture opportunities will enhance fishing community vitality and is woven into the Plan, and the objectives of AMI-Phase 2 which are listed below.

GOAL: The overall goal of this project is to begin implementation of the Alaska Mariculture Development Plan which will grow the mariculture industry and benefit Alaska’s economy,
environment, and communities. This goal will be accomplished through the following objectives:

- **Objective #1 – Facilitate and support the work of the Alaska Mariculture Task Force:** Convene meetings of the Task Force and Advisory Committees. Create an implementation plan. Enhance coordination between stakeholders, researchers and government agencies. Formalize an Alaska Mariculture Development Council to enable long-term industry leadership and guide future development.

- **Objective #2 – Complete statutory and regulatory review:** In coordination with the Task Force and Advisory Committees, conduct review of pertinent Alaska statutes and regulations; recommend and support adoption of amendments and/or new statutes/regulations.

- **Objective #3 – Development of hatchery capacity:** Increase capacity of shellfish and seaweed hatcheries through the development of short and long-term funding strategies, which may include tourism and other non-traditional revenue sources, facilitation of partnerships with entities that can provide tech transfer with aligned interests.

- **Objective #4 – Provide public education, training and outreach regarding mariculture:** Develop and support a community-based bridge plan which focuses on fishing communities, fishermen, processors, Alaska Natives, in Kodiak, Sitka and Ketchikan. Organize and give public presentations to target communities regarding the benefits and opportunities of mariculture; provide training and support for farm start-ups targeted toward fishermen, Alaska Natives, and fishing communities.

**Anticipated Benefits/Outcomes**

**Short-term impacts**

1) Increased number of aquatic farms, farmers, and farm production.
2) Community-based bridge plans allow for economic diversification through mariculture development within Kodiak, Sitka and Ketchikan, Alaska.
3) Continued and increased commitment from the State of Alaska for mariculture.
4) Alaska Mariculture Development Council is formed.
5) Increased hatchery production of seed and juveniles.
6) Bureaucratic barriers to industry growth are addressed, remedied and reduced; adequate state staffing exists to manage industry development.
7) Increased public awareness, interest and support for mariculture.

**Long-term impacts**

1) A mariculture industry in Alaska worth $100 million annually in 20 years.
2) Maintain and rebuild sustainable shellfish fisheries which are facing threats from ocean acidification and otter predation.
3) Coastal communities see more diversified economies, a more fully utilized ocean resource and the economic benefits from mariculture.
4) Reversal of population declines in Alaska Native coastal communities.
5) Increased economic diversity of coastal fishing communities, sustained or increased employment, and increased population.