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## HB 128 Shellfish Enhancement Sponsor Statement

Enhancement of Alaska's shellfish industry holds the potential of expanded economic opportunities in Alaska's coastal communities and increased resilience of the State's fisheries portfolio.

To tap this potential HB 128 allows qualified non-profits to pursue enhancement and/or restoration projects involving shellfish species including red and blue king crab, sea cucumber, abalone, and razor clams.

The bill creates a regulatory framework with which Alaska Department of Fish & Game can manage shellfish enhancement projects and outlines criteria for issuance of permits. It sets out stringent safety standards to ensure sustainability and health of existing natural stocks. The Commissioner of ADF&G must also make a determination of substantial public benefit before a project can proceed.

In addition, the bill sets the application fee for a shellfish enhancement project at \$1,000 and amends the application fee for a salmon hatchery permit, increasing the fee from \$100 to \$1,000.

HB 128 plays an important role in the development of mariculture in Alaska by providing a method to increase the available harvest of shellfish for public use in an environmentally safe manner.