

# GULF OF ALASKA COASTAL COMMUNITIES COALITION (GOAC3)

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## “THE GULF CHANNEL MARKER®”

Issue #8 “October 1, 2004

Focus on: “FEDERAL AQUACULTURE INITIATIVES”

Edited by Gale K. Vick, GOAC3 Executive Director

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### I IMPORTANT DATES<sup>1</sup>

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- **North Pacific Fishery Management Council:** Check the NPFMC for their meeting schedule and for committee meetings, etc. Next scheduled meeting begins December 6, 2004, in Anchorage. <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/> (See also *The Gulf Channel Marker #2, July 15, 2003*, for detailed information on “Getting Involved in the Council Process”)
- **Alaska Board of Fisheries – BOF**  
<http://www.state.ak.us/adfg/boards/fishinfo/bofhome.htm>  
Check the BOF or the GOAC3 web site for the BOF 2004-05 calendar. Also, check out their new newsletter
- **Gulf of Alaska Coastal Communities Coalition (GOAC3):** Next Board of Directors meeting: Sunday, December 5, 2004, Anchorage.

**CHECK OUR WEB SITE FOR A DETAILED CALENDAR OF GOAC3 AND FISHERIES RELATED EVENTS: [www.goac3.org](http://www.goac3.org)**

### II IMPORTANT TO KNOW: [National – Seafood Consumption Rose Again in 2003](#)

<sup>1</sup> For other current calendar items, check our web site @ [www.goac3.org](http://www.goac3.org)

**Reported from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric / National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA/NMFS) “Fish News” of October 1, 2004:**

“Americans ate a record 16.3 pounds of fish and shellfish per person in 2003, up from 15.6 pounds in 2002, representing a four percent increase. This figure extends an upward trend in U.S. seafood consumption. Seafood consumption was only 14.9 pounds per capita five years ago.

Of the total 16.3 pounds consumed, a record 11.4 pounds were fresh and frozen finfish and shellfish. Among the 4.7 billion pounds of seafood consumed last year in the United States was 4.6 pounds per person in canned fish, up 0.3 pounds from 2002, and a record four pounds of shrimp consumed per person, also up 0.3 pounds from 2002. “

These figures were published in NOAA’s annual report, “Fisheries of the United States”. For additional details on recent seafood consumption trends, go to <http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2004/s2322.htm>

**III MAJOR ISSUE: FEDERAL AQUACULTURE INITIATIVES AND EXPANSION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA FISH FARMS**

NOAA/NMFS is promoting offshore aquaculture and has drafted legislation authorizing experimental aquaculture in federal waters (3-200 miles) around the U.S. coast line.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has not released details of its planned legislation, expected to be presented as a bill to Congress. The legislation could be included in a reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act, the nation's primary fishing law, or it could be exempted from the act, NOAA officials said.<sup>2</sup>

This move is prompting both the Governor and our Congressional Delegation and various agencies around Alaska – including the United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) and the Alaska Marine Conservation Alliance (AMCC) – to respond by caucusing in great numbers, writing papers, holding “town” meetings, and introducing legislation.

The first town hall meeting to discuss the finfish initiatives will be at the Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle on Friday, November 12<sup>th</sup>. This is typically a time that Alaskan fishermen, both in state and Outside meet to discuss issues of common concern.

In addition, AMCC has developed a series of papers on this issue which can be accessed at their web site, <http://www.akmarine.org/>

Senator Lisa Murkowski is introducing legislation for discussion purposes to amend the

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<sup>2</sup> “United Fishermen, politicians, Native communities worry about aquaculture,” Elizabeth Bluemink, *Juneau Empire*, August 12, 2004

National Aquaculture Act of 1980 to “prohibit the issuance of permits for marine aquaculture facilities until requirements for such permits are enacted into law.

In a press release dated September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the Senator’s office issued the following:

***“MURKOWSKI MOVES TO STOP PERMITS FOR U.S. FISH FARMS UNTIL COMPLETE SCIENTIFIC REVIEWS ARE ASSURED***

*WASHINGTON, D.C.* – Saying that fish farms in the 3 to 200 mile exclusive economic zone may increase disease, threaten natural fish stocks and even produce fish that aren’t as healthful for consumers as natural fish, Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski today introduced legislation to prohibit the development of any new offshore aquaculture operations in federal waters until Congress has acted to ensure every federal agency involved does the necessary analyses in a host of areas to ensure the safety of fish farming.

Murkowski today introduced the Natural Stock Conservation Act (**S. 2859**). The bill would prohibit any planning or approvals for fish farming in the United States until agencies study disease control, engineering, pollution prevention, the biological and genetic impacts and a number of other issues which may not be as comprehensively studied under existing law.

The bill also required that federal agencies consult with the governor of any State near the aquaculture site, and that permits be approved by the regional fishery management council with jurisdiction in the region.

“It is a fact that scientists, the media and the public are gradually awakening to the serious disadvantages of fish raised in fish farming operations compared to naturally healthy wild fish species, such as Alaska salmon, halibut, sablefish, crab and many other species. There is abundant evidence that fish farming practices are deeply problematic, but still there is a small cadre of federal bureaucrats that continue to push hard for legislation to encourage the development of huge new fish farms off our coasts.

“These same people have been pushing the idea for a number of years and are closer than ever to presenting draft legislation that would vastly expand fish farming by encouraging the development of new fish farms in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone from 3 to 200 miles offshore. It is now time to rein in such efforts until the true impacts of fish farming are known. Creating such farms is an area where we can’t afford a rush to judgment. It is far too dangerous, if we make a mistake,” said Murkowski in introducing the bill.

Murkowski said she knows that it is too late in this session for this measure to pass in the last days of the 108th Congress. But she said by introducing the measure now she serves notice that fish farming is far too controversial and complex to be endorsed by federal officials without a full airing by Congress. “This bill should stimulate further debate this year and next, as Congress begins serious work on the future of our ocean programs in response to the U.S. Ocean Commission report. We all want to make sure we enjoy abundant supplies of healthy foods in the future, but not if it means unnecessary and avoidable damage to wild species, to the environment and to the economics of America’s

coastal fishing communities,” said Murkowski.

Murkowski introduced the bill in light of continuing reports that officials in the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Marine Fisheries Service are pushing to consider permitting open-water pen-rearing of fish stocks in federal coastal waters.

Murkowski, who has been urging Canadians to stop the expansion of fish farms in British Columbia waters until further environmental and biological studies are performed, has said she is concerned that farmed fish operations in that area can:

- Cause serious pollution problems because of the concentration of fish feces and uneaten food in confined areas.
- Cause increased disease concerns by concentrating fish in confined areas – fish that can then escape and transmit any diseases, threatening wild stocks.
- Cause genetic problems for wild stocks as a result of fish escapes/interbreeding.

And that fish farming can have a devastating effect on communities dependent on traditional fisheries.

“News reports are now common that cite not only the general health advantages of eating fish at least once or twice a week, but the specific advantages of fish such as wild salmon, which contains essential Omega-3 fatty acids that may help reduce the risk of heart disease and possibly have similar beneficial effects on other diseases. But educated and watchful consumers have also seen recent stories citing research demonstrating that farmed salmon fed vegetable-based foods do not have the same beneficial impact on cardio-vascular health, and that demand for non-vegetable-based food for fish farms may be decimating populations of other key fish species.

“It just makes sense that all of these issues be examined carefully before offshore fish farms are allowed to develop in this country,” said Murkowski.

In a related story, Governor Frank Murkowski is protesting the development of cod farms off the coast of British Columbia. On October 15, 2004, journalist Elizabeth Bluemink for the *Juneau Empire*, reported the following: “Gov. Frank Murkowski has joined the chorus of Alaskans and Canadians pressuring Canada to delay black cod farming in British Columbia. Considered one of the most lucrative fish by weight in Alaska, black cod, or sablefish, is being prepared for ocean net pens off the British Columbia coastline. Murkowski sent a letter to British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell on Monday asking Campbell to prevent black cod farming until the Canadian government assesses its economic, social or environmental impacts..... The governor stated in his letter that native stocks may be harmed by disease and predation from farmed black cod. Black cod migrate between British Columbia and Alaskan waters.”

And, Commissioner Kevin Duffy, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, on August 21, 2004, further declared his concern over the expansion of salmon farms in British Columbia close to the Alaska border.<sup>3</sup> The Commissioner's remarks were in response to news that Panfish Canada and the Kitkatla First Nation received final approval to begin farming salmon at Anchor Anchorage, British Columbia. At approximately 42 miles south of the Alaska-Canada boundary line, this farm will be British Columbia's northernmost fish farm. Although Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) approved the final permit on July 21, Panfish Canada acknowledged for the first time Friday that it has the necessary approval to move forward.

"I am concerned about the potential danger that farmed Atlantic salmon present to Alaska's wild salmon stocks," said Commissioner Duffy. "Alaska's economy relies heavily upon wild salmon and we need to make sure that our neighbor's activities do not have an adverse impact on Alaska's fisheries."

The Commissioner encouraged British Columbia to delay permitting any salmon farms along the border with Alaska until

- the Canadian fish farming industry develops and employs the technology necessary to prevent escapes from fish pens; and
- DFO conducts adequate baseline surveys to determine the industry's potential impacts on marine environments and fishery resources.

"This fish farm is so close to Alaska that an escaped farmed Atlantic salmon could invade Alaskan waters in a matter of hours," said ADF&G Director of Commercial Fisheries Doug Mecum. "Atlantic salmon, when released into Alaska's fresh and salt waters, are an invasive species. They can compete with our abundant salmon stocks and threaten them with disease. Atlantic salmon do not belong in Alaska's waters."

ADF&G intends to pursue the issue of fish farming along the Alaska-Canada boundary line at the federal level to ensure the protection of Alaska's wild salmon stocks.

A future issue of *The Gulf Channel Marker* will discuss the initiatives in more detail.

#### **IV JOIN US: SOMETHING YOU CAN DO NOW**

**As you can see, the marine-related issues facing our coastal communities are multiple and complex. The Gulf of Alaska Coastal Communities Coalition (GOAC3) is a 501(c)6 non-profit, working hard to protect and regain Gulf of Alaska communities' *sustainable* access to adjacent marine resources in perpetuity. Our funding comes through membership and a grant from the National Marine Fisheries Service.<sup>4</sup>**

**Our membership is extremely important in many ways. If you are a resident of a coastal community in the Gulf of Alaska and you are not currently a member, please join us in our efforts. Contact us directly or through our web site at [www.goac3.org](http://www.goac3.org). Eligible VOTING**

<sup>3</sup> Press Release, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, August 21, 2004

<sup>4</sup> Our many thanks to Senator Ted Stevens, Senator Lisa Murkowski and Congressman Don Young for their continued support.

**members of the GOAC3 include Gulf of Alaska boroughs, cities, ANCSA regional and village corporations and tribal councils. NON-VOTING membership is open to everyone for an annual fee of \$100.00.**

## V ADDENDUM

### GLOSSARY

CQE	Community Quota Entity
EA/RIR	Environmental Assessment / Regulatory Impact Review
IFQ	Individual Fishing Quota
IPHC	International Pacific Halibut Commission
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NPFMC	North Pacific Fishery Management Council
RAM	Restricted Access Management (NMFS)
QS	Quota Share
QSP	Quota Share Pool
TAC	Total Allowable Catch

## VI ARCHIVES

Key items in past issues of *The Gulf Channel Marker* include:

Issue 1	July 1, 2003	Introductory and General Information
Issue 2	July 15, 2003	Getting Involved in the Council Process Fisheries Law and Oceans Commission updates
Issue 3	August 1, 2003	Fisheries Market Information Community Spotlight: The Chigniks
Issue 4	August 20, 2003	TAA – Trade Adjustment Assistance
Issue 5	September 5, 2003	Amendment #66, Community Purchase of Halibut and Sablefish – Pending Final Rule
Issue 6	August 1, 2004	Implementation of Amendment #66
Issue 7	September 1, 2004	Groundfish Rationalization in the North Gulf Of Alaska

**ALL PAST AND CURRENT ISSUES OF *THE GULF CHANNEL MARKER* ARE AVAILABLE TO GOAC3 MEMBERS ONLY. IF YOU ARE NOT CURRENTLY A MEMBER, PLEASE CALL THE GOAC3 OFFICES AT 907-561-7633 OR E-MAIL US @ [goaccc@alaska.net](mailto:goaccc@alaska.net)**