

Seven Groups Bring Collective Voice to the SE Oyster Industry

Juneau, Alaska— On Friday November 13, 2009, seven groups will participate in a signing ceremony solidifying their common interest of creating new economic opportunities in Southeast.

The Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Shaan Seet, The Organized Village of Kake, Yak-Tat Kwaan, OceansAlaska Marine Science Center, Alaska Oyster Cooperative, and Sealaska Corporation will sign an MOU recognizing mutual interests in developing an Oyster Farming Coalition. By forming an alliance the coalition will be able to exercise joint efforts in education and training, procurement, marketing and eliminating impediments to a successful farming industry in Southeast Alaska. This will include education and training of new farmers, reducing costs of entry into the industry and guiding federal and State agencies on how they can best help this emerging industry.

The long-term relationships that are being fostered by the MOU will strengthen the collaboration among the diverse participants in the industry.

The shellfish industry is a great opportunity to create a new sustainable industry in Coastal Alaska with \$30-50 million in potential annual sales and hundreds of year-round jobs. “It will take a focused, concerted effort of public policy and private sector investment,” said John Sund, project manager for OceansAlaska.

Central Council and Sealaska are excited about continuing mutual work and better serving tribal member shareholders. Together with Sealaska, Central Council will pursue grants to expand training and provide startup capital to members interested in employment or business enterprise in the industry. “Oyster farming will empower members and shareholders to earn good living wages in their home communities,” said Central Council President Bill Martin. “Both agencies are working diligently to create jobs.”

This new coalition will grow the economic opportunity and jobs particularly in rural communities by growing oysters and also processing marketing, distribution and manufacture of equipment required for farming.

This partnership is bringing together groups that typically might not work together. All parties understand the potential of sustainable job creation within the shellfish industry.

“This MOU will open doors for greater collaboration in the region,” said Sealaska President and CEO Chris McNeil. “This is a small example of the potential that exists when we work together on common interests including sustainable rural economies.”

Reporters are invited to learn more about the coalition following a meeting with the Governor’s office. Those wanting to listen in via teleconference should contact Sealaska.

When: Friday November 13, 2009
Where: Sealaska Plaza 2nd Floor Conference Room
Time: Approximately 3:30 pm

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