



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development

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Op/Ed National Fisherman, Northern Lights
By Commissioner Susan Bell

Seafood is an Alaska Highliner

If Alaska were an independent country, it would rank among the top 15 seafood producers in the world. More than 5.4 billion pounds of seafood were harvested from Alaska waters in 2011. Eleven Alaska communities rank among the top 50 U.S. ports for seafood volume and value. Alaska produces more than half of all domestic seafood production in the United States.

As Alaska's largest private sector employer, the seafood industry contributes an estimated \$5.8 billion and 53,000 jobs to our economy. It generates \$100 million in annual tax revenues for state and local governments. Seafood is so important to Alaska's economy and quality of life, our state constitution mandates the resource be sustainably managed.

Management of Alaska's seafood resources serves as a model for the world. The state invests more than \$50 million annually in the scientific management of our fisheries. We also facilitate and expand the industry through investments in infrastructure, marketing, financing, and workforce education and training. Alaskans are committed to ensuring success in seafood harvesting and processing.

Marine, aviation, and surface transportation infrastructure is needed to move seafood products to market at the highest possible value. Governor Sean Parnell and the Alaska Legislature granted \$174 million in the current budget for community docks, harbors, ports, travel lifts, hatcheries, and other infrastructure. Another \$125 million for port and transportation projects could be invested in the next year, pending ratification and sale of general obligation bonds. The Department of Transportation creates intermodal connections through airports, roads, and state ferries. Alaska's premium seafood products reach domestic and international markets efficiently via the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, the fifth largest air cargo hub in the world.

The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, a public-private partnership between industry and the state, promotes our wild and sustainable seafood products worldwide. With ASMI's marketing prowess, the seafood industry has successfully increased demand for Alaska shellfish and finfish. Investments in product quality and infrastructure, coupled with effective promotion, are paying off, and demand is strong. In fact, the overall harvest has grown to more than \$2.2 billion in 2011, increasing revenue to private and public sectors alike, and keeping Alaska's economy strong.

For more than 40 years, the state's Commercial Fishing Revolving Loan Fund has provided long-term, low-interest loans to promote the development of resident fisheries, engine efficiency, product quality improvements like refrigerated seawater systems, and continued maintenance of commercial fishing vessels and gear. The Fisheries Enhancement Loan Program (providing loans for planning, permitting, construction, and operation of fish hatchery facilities) contributed \$109 million to the common property fishery in 2012.

This fall, the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development introduced three new loan funds for the seafood industry; the mariculture revolving loan fund, community quota entity revolving loan fund, and the commercial charter fisheries revolving loan fund. Governor Parnell and legislators worked together to help Alaskans participate in existing and emerging opportunities in the fishing industry.

University of Alaska President Pat Gamble is leading the charge to address the industry's workforce development and training needs, thanks to the generosity of the Rasmuson Foundation.

With our long history as a premium and productive seafood province, the state of Alaska and the seafood industry can realize new growth and opportunities through ongoing collaboration and partnerships.