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LOSS OF COASTAL PROGRAM OPENS **DOORS TO OFFSHORE FISH FARMING** *Coastal Management Program Critical to Keeping Out Fish Farms*

A state law banning finfish farming will be rendered useless in offshore waters if Alaska does not restore its coastal management program. Representative Paul Seaton (R-Homer), a long-time advocate for Alaska's commercial fishing industry, says if voters do not approve the coastal management initiative, the state would be powerless to stop development of fish farms in federal waters. "We've outlawed fish farms in Alaska waters," Rep. Seaton said. "The last thing we want to do is open the door to fish farms offshore. That would be devastating to our fishing industry."

The federal Offshore Aquaculture Act enables establishment of fish farms in the 3- to 200- mile zone of federal waters. "Since that federal law specifically does not supersede the Coastal Zone Management Act," Seaton said, "the best way to keep fish farms – which are banned in Alaska – from developing off our shores is to reinstate the coastal management program to the Jay Hammond form."

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The Alaska Sea Party: Restoring Coastal Management
Bruce Botelho, Chair - 217 Second St., Ste. 200, Juneau, Alaska 99801 - (907) 500-7925
Top contributors: North Slope Borough (Barrow, Alaska); Bristol Bay Native Corporation (Anchorage, Alaska); Alaska
Conference of Mayors (Juneau, Alaska).

Ballot Measure 2 reestablishes the policy board and the coastal districts of the original Hammond-era program, which received federal and state approval.

An August 2010 Congressional Research Service report on the Open Ocean Aquaculture Act makes clear states with approved coastal management plans have the upper hand in permitting offshore fish farms. “Without a coastal management program,” Rep. Seaton said, “we risk all our good work in protecting our wild fisheries.”

According to that report, “For aquaculture projects in offshore federal waters, the lead federal permitting agency must assure consistency with approved programs in adjacent states under the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. §§1451, et seq.). In addition, state waters would be traversed both to operate open ocean aquaculture sites and to bring harvested fish ashore for processing. States with approved Coastal Zone Management plans may veto federal permits for activities that are inconsistent with the state’s federally approved plan. This oversight ensures that operations in federal waters will neither harm the state’s interests nor be inconsistent with state policies.”

Without a coastal management program in place, the fate of offshore finfish farm development is in the hands of the federal government, multinational corporations, and lawyers, not Alaskans. “Our only chance to take back control for Alaskans,” Rep. Seaton said, “is to pass Ballot Measure 2 and let the Legislature fine-tune it when they reconvene.”

“Alaskans should vote YES on the coastal management issue to preserve the significant local voice on coastal projects in their region, Seaton said. “Without the local coastal plan to address the physical differences between the regions, big government agencies make all the decisions on the one-size-fits-all basis of either nationwide or statewide standards, which by definition, does not deal with the regional differences.”

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The coastal management initiative is sponsored by the Alaska Sea Party, a group of municipal officials, local leaders, and interested voters committed to restoring Alaska's voice in coastal development decisions. Top contributors are the North Slope Borough, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, and the Alaska Conference of Mayors. More than 33,000 Alaska citizens signed a petition to place the issue before voters statewide. Voters will decide on Ballot Measure No. 2 at the Alaska Primary Election on August 28, 2012.