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GROUP, LLC

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To: Alaska Mariculture Cluster

From: McKinley Research Group and Pacific Shellfish Institute

Date: June 2026

Re: Alaska Mariculture Industry Update, Spring 2026

The Alaska Mariculture Cluster (AMC) contracted with McKinley Research Group and the Pacific Shellfish Institute to provide AMC and the broader mariculture industry with current information about economic topics including oyster and seaweed harvest, farm utilization, seed supply and quality, and growing techniques. For more information, see the project website.

This memo updates 2025 and 2026 harvest estimates and forecasts, based on 2025 farm annual report data published by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in spring 2026. The memo also summarizes information about 2026 aquatic lease applications and oyster seed imports.

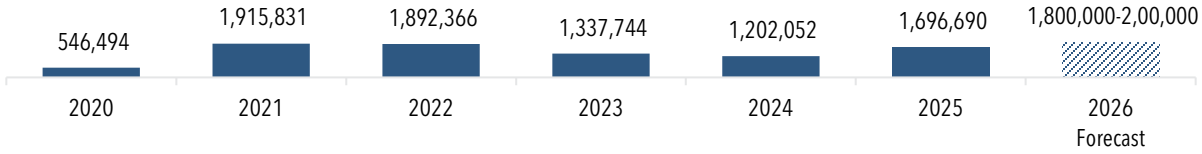
Harvest Update

Alaska's oyster and kelp harvests increased in 2025 and are both forecasted to increase again in 2026, as described below.

OYSTERS

Alaska's oyster farmers sold about 1.7 million oysters in 2025, the most since 2022.[1] Interviews in fall 2025 indicated capacity to harvest a record 2 million or more oysters in 2026, but market conditions may limit the number of oysters harvested this year.

Figure 1. Alaska Oyster Harvest (by count) 2020-2025 and 2026 Forecast



Source: ADF&G and McKinley Research Group based on industry interviews.

[1] These figures are for farm sales for consumption and exclude farm-to-farm oyster transfers that were included in state oyster sale records prior to 2020.

National context

A difficult consumer environment shaped by inflation, rising gasoline prices, weaker consumer sentiment, and the earlier timing of Easter disrupted normal seafood purchasing patterns and reduced Lent-related seafood sales volume in 2026.[2] These conditions are especially relevant for oysters because they are generally marketed as a premium shellfish product, making them especially vulnerable when households trade down, delay discretionary purchases, or shift toward lower-cost proteins.

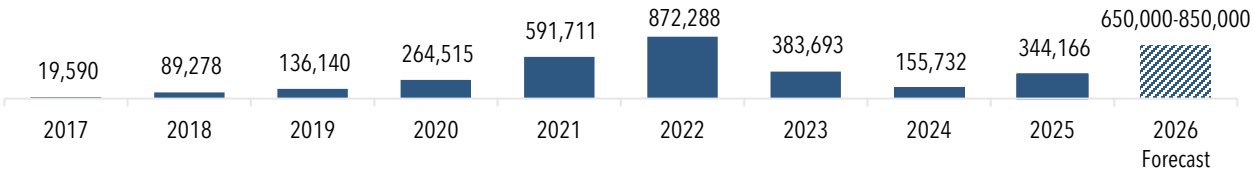
SEAWEED

Alaska's seaweed farmers grew more than 344,000 pounds of seaweed in 2025. This was a more than 100% increase from the low 2024 season, but still well below 2021-2023 harvests. The peak of seaweed growth in 2021 and 2022 was generated in large part by federal grant-funded seaweed farm scaling "proof of concept" research for the federal Advanced Research Projects Agency–Energy. Compared to 2022, in 2025 Alaska seaweed has more marketable applications, including biostimulants and food and beauty product ingredients, although grant funding remains important to seaweed farm operations.

ADF&G began to report seaweed sales volumes in addition to harvest volumes in 2024. That year, sales totaled 73,256 pounds, or 47% of harvest. In 2025, sales totaled 57% of total harvest. The volume of seaweed harvested but not sold includes seaweed that is donated, held in storage, or discarded.

The statewide 2026 harvest is estimated to be 650,000 to 850,000 pounds, based on seaweed hatchery data described under Alaska Seed Sales and Yields below, as well as 2025 interviews, and preliminary information from the 2026 season. The 2026 harvest is expected to be significantly larger than 2025 because of a combination of increased out-planting at existing farms, new farms, and (potentially) higher average yields.

Figure 2. Alaska Seaweed Harvest (wet pounds), 2017-2025 and 2026 Forecast



Source: ADF&G and McKinley Research Group, based on industry interviews.

National Context

The *GreenWave's State of the Kelp Industry: A Decade in Review and the Road Ahead* was published in February 2026 and provides details on Alaska seaweed farming operations in comparison to other North American operations.

[2] Seafood Source, 2026. "US Lent seafood sales volume drops; retailers and restaurants hopeful for Easter spend."

GreenWave's report found that, compared to other regions, Alaska had below-average seaweed yields at 0.9 pounds per foot of seed line compared to 2 to 3 pounds in most other regions. This yield data was based on 2023-2025 averages and does not take into account improvements in hatchery and farm operations reported in Alaska's 2026 harvest season. The report found Alaska was near the regionwide midpoint for average farm size (25 acres) and utilization (1,883 feet out-planted per acre of farm).

Table 1. North American Kelp Farming Regions by Highest Reported Landings

Region	Permitted Farms	Permitted Acreage	Average Farm Size (acres)	Seedstring Out-Planted (ft/acre)	Average Yield 2023–25 (lbs/ft)	Highest Reported Landings (lbs)
Gulf of Maine	104	534	8	2,132	2.7	1,503,758
Alaska	**50**	**1,272**	**25**	**1,883**	**0.9**	**872,288**
British Columbia	20	1,090	54	1,879	2.9	>165,000
SNE*	42	255	8	1,833	3.3	>152,000
Atlantic Canada	27	3,086	137	**	**	<110,000
U.S. West Coast	5	19	4	733	3.8	**
Regionwide Benchmark	248 (Total)	6,256 (Total)	32 (Average)	1,800 (Average)	2.14 (Average)	

Source: GreenWave
*Southern New England
**Not enough data to report

The report also opportunities and challenges in the North American market for kelp. It cited a GreenWave survey that found 27% of kelp farmers reported profitability in 2025.

GreenWave described the regionwide industry as still being nascent, but an "inflection point," with volumes scaling up for three key markets:

> *"As of 2025, three market segments account for a growing share of contracted volume: agriculture, biomaterials, and functional ingredients for food and personal care. This demand is driven by real problems faced by real industries: detoxifying ingredients in food and cosmetics, helping land-based farmers adapt to extreme weather and rising fertilizer prices, and reshoring supply chains with domestically produced raw materials*

> *"Now well beyond the hype, kelp is hitting its stride: moving towards productivity by relieving specific pain points within various market sectors, and generating impact by embedding itself in the value chains that underpin our daily lives."*

Oyster Seed Imports

Oyster seed import data from ADF&G shows a peak of 30.8 million in 2022, which dropped in 2023, recovered to 27.1 million in 2024, then fell sharply to 9.2 million in 2025.

Table 2. Alaska Oyster Seed Imports by Type (millions), 2021-2025

Year	Eyed-Larvae	Juvenile	Total Oyster Seed Imports
2021	21	7.4	**28.4**
2022	21	9.8	**30.8**
2023	14	9.7	**23.7**
2024	14	13.1	**27.1**
2025	3	6.2	**9.2**

Source: ADF&G

Some of this decrease is explained by eyed larvae imports, which were only 3 million in 2025. Eyed larvae are sold exclusively to three Alaska facilities able to handle this small size. Prior spikes in eyed larvae sales have been associated with research projects and grants to two Alaska facilities, and only one of these received eyed larvae in 2025. The third facility, the Kachemak Shellfish Mariculture Association (KSMA), consistently purchases eyed larvae, but did not purchase in 2025 due to planned replacement of an aging FLUPSY. The original FLUPSY was taken off-line in 2025, creating a pause in KSMA's need for eyed larvae while a new FLUPSY is being built and installed.

Juvenile oyster seed (3mm – 12mm) imports to Alaska also decreased sharply in 2025, to 6.2 million. Based on conversations with hatchery managers who supply Alaska oyster seed, this decrease was due to a gap in production during a critical period for Alaska seed imports, in spring and early summer 2025, resulting in numerous Alaska farms receiving partial seed orders.

This production gap may cause a slowdown in Alaska planting activity and a temporary adjustment in production plans but should not affect upcoming harvest totals because Alaska farmers had inventory of various sizes available and hatcheries plan to increase their seed sales to Alaska in 2026. Currently, all hatcheries who supplied juvenile oyster seed to Alaska in 2025 are operating successfully and have renewed their Shellfish Importation Certification with ADF&G for 2026.[3] Of note is that two out-of-state hatcheries are permitted for oyster species other than Pacific oysters, specifically Kumamoto oyster (*Crassostrea sikamea*) and Eastern oyster (*C. virginica*).

Seaweed Seed Supply and Yields

ALASKA SEED SALES AND YIELDS

Following the sale or transfer of 233,100 feet of seeded line in 2024, more than 344,000 pounds of seaweed were harvested in 2025 for a statewide implied yield of 1.8 pounds per foot of seeded line.[4] In 2025, ADF&G reported Alaska hatcheries sold or transferred 353,930 feet of seeded line, the most on record. If 2026 yields are similar to 2025 yields, this would result in a harvest on the order of 650,000

[3] ADF&G, 2026. *Certified Out of State Providers*.
[4] This measure is an "implied" yield because of several factors: Not all seeded line sold is necessarily used, resulting in actual yield of out-planted seed above this estimate of implied yield. Yields vary by species, and yield variation may be a reflection of changing species mix. While most seeded line is sold one year before the harvest year, some line is sold late and harvested on the same calendar year that it was purchased. Mor precise Alaska yield data from GreenWave described below show implied yields were similar to actual yields in the 2023-2025 period.

pounds, although as noted above, preliminary harvest information indicates potential for a higher average yield in 2026.

Table 3. Alaska Seeded Line Sales, Seaweed Harvests and Implied Yields (2021-2026 Forecast)

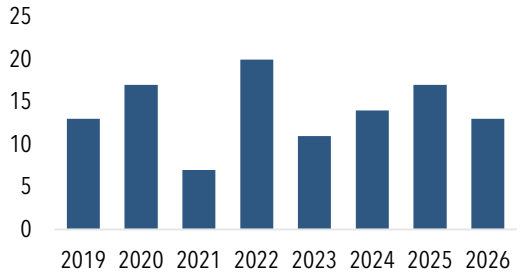
Year	Feet of Line Sold/Transferred in Previous Year	Pounds of Seaweed Harvested	Implied Yield: Pounds Harvested per Foot of Line Sold in Previous Year
2021	260,350	591,711	2.3
2022	247,200	872,288	3.5
2023	321,600	383,693	1.2
2024	233,100	155,732	0.7
2025	192,440	344,166	1.8
2026	353,930	650,000*	

Sources: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (seaweed and line production through 2024), McKinley Research Group. *Conservative MRG estimate for potential 2026 harvest based on 2025 line sales, using the 2025 implied yield as a baseline.

Alaska Aquatic Farm Lease Applications

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) received 13 applications from eight applicants for new aquatic farm leases by April 30, 2026, the calendar year 2026 application deadline .[5] This is a similar number of applications as recent years, although the average lease size was smaller in 2026. No applications for leases larger than 30 acres were received in 2026.

Figure 3. New Alaska Aquatic Farm Lease Applications by Year, 2019-2026 (2024-2026 details)



Year	Applications	Unique Applicants	Acres	Average Acres Per Lease
2024	14	6	680	49
2025	17	8	608	36
2026	13	8	193	15

Source: Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Of the 13 new lease applications in 2026, 10 are kelp farms in Southeast Alaska. The remaining three of a mix of kelp and shellfish farms in Southcentral Alaska.

[5] Aquatic farms in Alaska usually use state tidal or submerged lands and require a lease from DNR to use this public resource. Most hatchery and nursery facilities are land or dock-based and do not require a DNR lease, although they (like aquatic farms) need a permit to operate from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Table 4. New Alaska Aquatic Farm Lease Applications, 2026

Region	Nearest Community	Primary Business Name	Contact	Total Acres	Site Name	Type of Farm**
SC	Kodiak	Molly's Oyster Farm	Mike Borlet	1	Anton Larsen Bay	oysters
SC	Nenwalek	English Bay Corporation	Stephen Vogler	22.9	Dogfish Bay	kelp
SC	Seward	Cameron Jardell	Cameron Jardell	5.72	Humpy Cove	oysters + other
SE	Juneau	Heather Evoy	Heather Evoy, Keolani Booth	20	Stephens Passage	kelp
SE	Juneau	Jacob Hotch	Jacob Hotch, Keolani Booth	20	Stephens Passage	kelp
SE	Kasaan	Organized Village of Kasaan	Keolani Booth	20	Kasaan Bay 1	kelp
SE	Kasaan	Organized Village of Kasaan	Keolani Booth	16.07	Kasaan Bay 2	kelp
SE	Kasaan	Organized Village of Kasaan	Keolani Booth	20	Kasaan Bay 3	kelp
SE	Kasaan	Organized Village of Kasaan	Keolani Booth	20	Kasaan Bay 4	kelp
SE	Kasaan	Organized Village of Kasaan	Keolani Booth	5	Kasaan Bay 5	kelp
SE	Sitka	People of the Tides	Alana Peterson, Keolani Booth	20	Aleutkina Bay	kelp
SE	Sitka	People of the Tides	Alana Peterson, Keolani Booth	20	Promisla Bay	kelp
SE	Sitka	UAS Sitka	Brenna Haakinson	2.74	Sitka Sound	kelp + other

Source: Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Compiled by McKinley Research Group.
*Based on species listed in lease application. Leases can be amended during the life of an aquatic farm.