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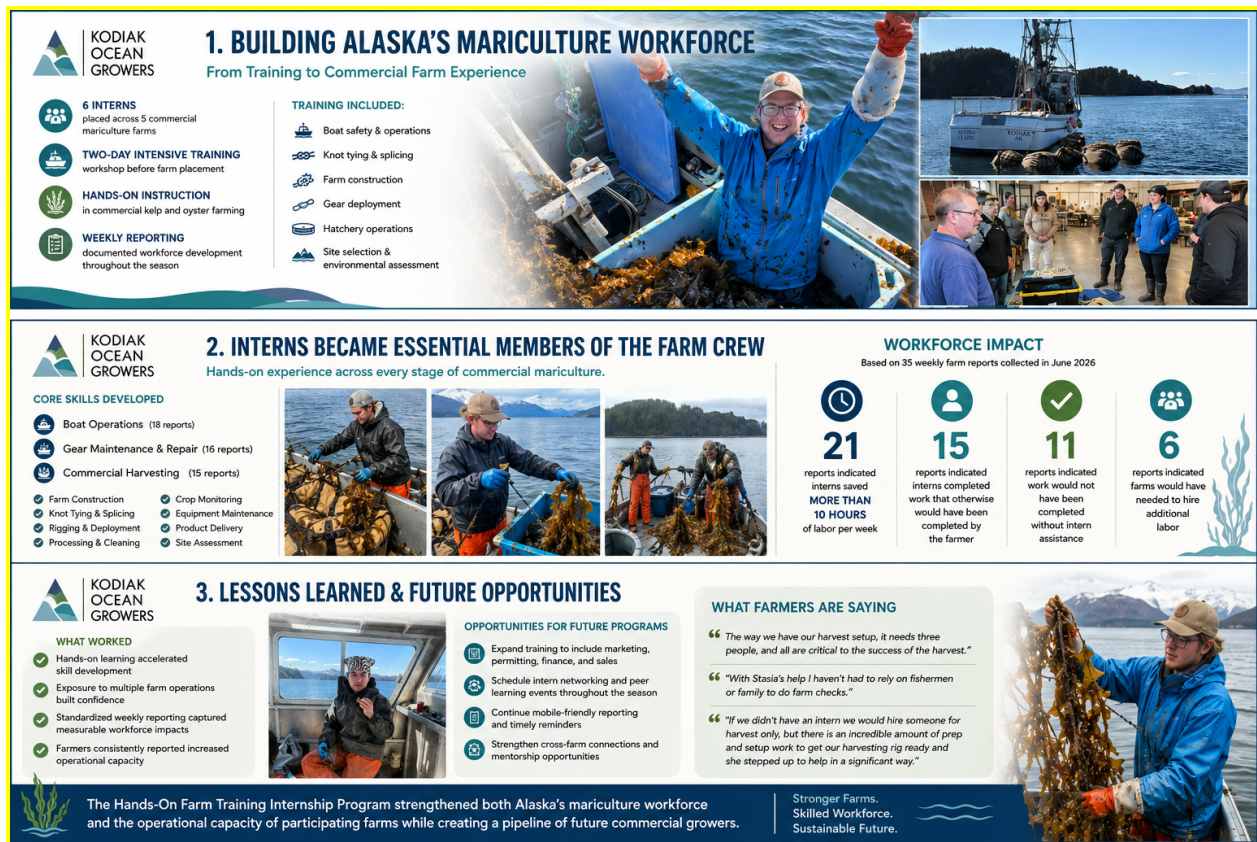
Monthly Progress Report #2

Reporting Period: June 2026

Project Overview

During June 2026, Kodiak Ocean Growers (KOG) transitioned from intern training to full implementation of the Hands-On Farm Training Internship Program. Following the May orientation workshop, six interns were placed with KOG member farms where they participated in daily commercial mariculture operations.

This reporting period focused on hands-on workforce training, intern skill development, and documenting the operational impacts of the internship program through weekly reporting from participating farms.



Intern placements included:

- **Ayden Neth** – SeaKind Ocean Farm
- **Craig Waters** – SeaKind Ocean Farm
- **Josh Desmarais** – Kodiak Island Sustainable Seaweed (KISS Kelp)
- **Preston Maroldo** – Alaska Ocean Farm
- **Autumn Fox** – Alaska Sea Greens
- **Stajia Painter** – Kodiak Island Sustainable Seaweed

Their placements provided exposure to diverse farming methods, equipment, and operational practices while allowing each host farm to tailor training to its specific production systems / harvest system.

Training Activities & Skills Learned

Weekly reporting demonstrates that interns received broad exposure to nearly every aspect of commercial mariculture production while developing both technical and operational skills.

Core Farm Operations

The most frequently reported intern activities included:

- Boat operations (18 reports)
- Gear maintenance and repair (16 reports)
- Harvesting activities (15 reports)

These activities provided interns with practical exposure to daily commercial farming operations.

Farm Construction & Technical Skills

Interns developed specialized technical skills including:

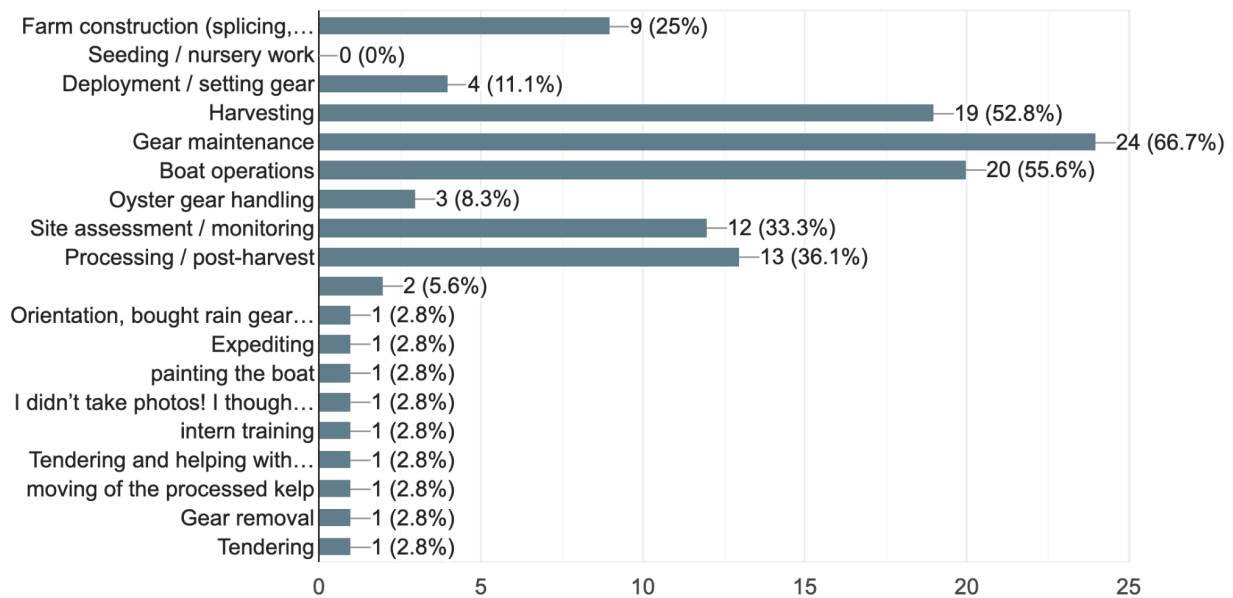
- Knot tying and splicing
- Rigging and farm construction
- Fabrication of bag ties, lift straps, and jumper lines
- Measuring, cutting, taping, and preparing farm gear
- Equipment setup and deployment

Host farmers noted that interns became increasingly proficient with these technical tasks as the season progressed, allowing them to assume greater responsibility in daily operations.

Harvest & Processing

What activities were completed this week? Select all that apply.

36 responses



Interns participated in multiple phases of the production cycle including:

- Harvest prep (IBC staging / cleaning)
- Commercial kelp harvesting
- Post-harvest cleaning
- Unspooling longlines
- Processing support
- Transporting harvested kelp to town
- Product delivery

Exposure to every stage of production provided interns with a comprehensive understanding of commercial mariculture operations.

Farm Monitoring & Equipment Maintenance

Intern responsibilities also included:

- Routine farm checks
- Monitoring crop growth and site conditions
- Cleaning Containers (IBCs)
- Trailer maintenance
- Equipment cleaning and organization
- General farm maintenance

Several farmers noted that intern assistance with routine monitoring allowed them to maintain regular farm inspections during one of the busiest periods of the season.

Logistics & Operational Support

Beyond technical farm work, interns supported overall business operations by:

- Procuring tools and replacement parts
- Assisting with deliveries and transportation
- Organizing equipment
- Preparing harvest barges
- Identifying opportunities to improve operational efficiency

Workforce & Industry Impacts

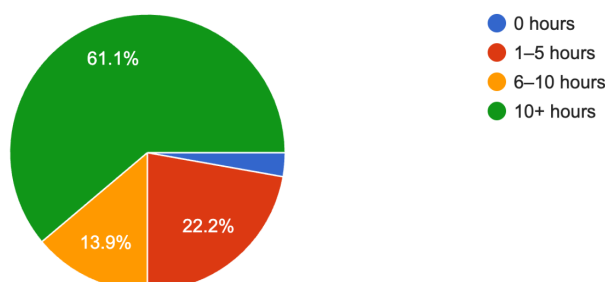
Weekly farmer reports indicate that interns made significant contributions to farm productivity while gaining workforce experience.

Workforce Capacity

Host farmers consistently reported that interns expanded the capacity of their operations during the peak growing and harvest season.

Across 35 weekly reports:

Estimate - How much time did the intern save you or your crew this week?
36 responses



21 reports indicated interns saved farmers more than 10 hours of labor per week.

5 reports reported savings of 6–10 hours per week.

8 reports reported savings of 1–5 hours per week.

Only one report indicated no measurable labor savings.

Farm Operations Support

Farmer responses also demonstrated the direct operational value of the internship program.

Of the weekly reports submitted:

- 15 reports indicated interns completed work that otherwise would have been completed by the farmer.
- 11 reports indicated interns completed work that otherwise would not have been completed due to limited labor availability.
- 6 reports indicated farms would have needed to hire additional labor had interns not been available.

These findings infer the internship program both trained future mariculture professionals and provided meaningful workforce support during one of the industry's busiest periods.

Farmer Feedback

Host farmers consistently described intern contributions as essential to maintaining efficient farm operations.

Representative comments included:

"If we didn't have an intern we would hire someone for harvest only, but there is an incredible amount of prep and setup work to get our harvesting rig ready and she stepped up to help in a significant way."

"The way we have our harvest setup, it needs three people, and all are critical to the success of the harvest."

"With Stasia's help I haven't had to rely on fishermen or family to do farm checks."

"I'm not sure I would have been able to get out to the farm without Stasia as many times as we did this week because all my normal help is either fishing or preparing to go fishing."

These testimonials illustrate the significant role interns played in addressing seasonal labor shortages while allowing host farmers to maintain production during peak harvest activities.

Building Alaska's Mariculture Workforce



In addition to supporting farm operations, interns developed practical experience across nearly every aspect of commercial mariculture, including vessel operations, harvesting, farm construction, equipment maintenance, processing, monitoring, and logistics.

By providing real-world experience alongside experienced growers, the internship program strengthened the pipeline of skilled workers entering Alaska's expanding mariculture industry while increasing awareness of long-term career opportunities within the sector.

Program Administration & Implementation

During this reporting period, KOG:

- Continued coordinating intern placements with participating farms.
- Maintained weekly communication with host farmers and interns.
- Collected standardized weekly reporting documenting activities, skills developed, workforce impacts, and photographs.
- Monitored intern progress and addressed logistical needs throughout placements.
- Continued development of project documentation for final reporting requirements.

The standardized reporting system developed during the first reporting period has produced consistent, measurable data that documents both workforce outcomes and intern skill development while minimizing administrative burden on participating farms.

Several important lessons emerged during the first month of active farm placements that will help strengthen future workforce development programs.

As expected during peak harvest season, weather conditions and rapidly changing harvest schedules required flexibility from both host farms and interns. While these changing conditions occasionally affected planned activities, they also provided interns with valuable experience adapting to the realities of commercial mariculture operations, where weather and environmental conditions often dictate daily priorities.

Farmers consistently reported that assigning interns to a wide variety of operational responsibilities accelerated learning and increased engagement. Repetition of technical skills such as rigging, splicing, harvesting, gear maintenance, and vessel operations allowed interns to quickly build confidence and assume greater responsibility as the internship progressed.

Lessons Learned and Challenges Encountered:

One challenge encountered was maintaining consistent weekly reporting from participating farms. During the busiest weeks of the harvest season, reporting was often submitted at varying times as farmers prioritized time-sensitive harvest work and getting the data submitted required reminding.. While participation remained strong, establishing standardized reporting deadlines and automated reminders may improve consistency and simplify data collection for future programs or having more in person touchpoints..

Another lesson learned was that the internship experience was naturally weighted toward on-farm operations. Because the internships occurred during the peak production season, interns gained exceptional hands-on technical experience but had limited exposure to the business functions that are equally critical to operating a successful commercial mariculture enterprise. Activities such as customer

development, sales, marketing, financial management, regulatory compliance, permitting, grant administration, bookkeeping, and production planning largely occur outside of daily farm work or outside the harvest season. Future iterations of the program could incorporate supplemental workshops or virtual sessions covering these topics to provide interns with a more comprehensive understanding of the business of mariculture and offer a more well rounded member of the workforce. A thought suggested by a KOG member was having a 2.0 version of this program to include those aspects.

Finally, after completing the initial two-day training workshop, interns had few structured opportunities to reconnect with one another during the internship and learn from each other. There was limited interaction across farms to share experiences, compare operational practices, or build a broader professional network. Future programs could benefit from scheduling periodic group check-ins, field days, or virtual discussions throughout the internship season to encourage peer learning, strengthen professional connections, and reinforce the collaborative nature of Alaska's mariculture community.

Progress Toward Deliverables

Completed During This Reporting Period

- Six interns began work with KOG member farms.
- Weekly workforce impact reporting implemented.
- Host farm feedback collected.
- Training activities and skills documented.
- Workforce impact metrics collected.
- Photo documentation continued.

In Progress

- Collection of intern testimonials.
- Final Farmer testimonials
- Photo and video archive development.
- Final program evaluation

Attachments / Supporting Materials

- [Workforce impact metrics / activity summaries from survey](#)
- [Photo documentation](#)