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Alaska Ocean Cluster merges with AFDF and rebrands as a startup accelerator

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

AFDF Startup Accelerator advancing sustainable economic development in the 'blue economy'

The Bering Sea Fishermen's Association (BSFA) and the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) this week announced the transfer of the Alaska Ocean Cluster from BSFA to AFDF and its subsequent rebranding to the AFDF Startup Accelerator.

"The largest component of Alaska's Blue Economy is the seafood industry, which has many research and development needs, particularly related to technology. The Alaska Ocean Cluster has developed a creative approach to support early-stage companies as they grow, partner with industry, and help realize the potential of our maritime industries. AFDF believes that by combining our efforts and expertise, we can unlock more benefits for the seafood industry and coastal communities," said Julie Decker, executive director of AFDF, a collaboration of harvesters, processors and support sector businesses.

"We are excited to integrate the program with AFDF and look forward to working closely with our members to strengthen and build upon what's been started," Decker continued.



The Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation will now oversee the Alaska Ocean Cluster, which has a new name: the AFDF Startup Accelerator. Photo courtesy of Blue Ocean Gear.

Founded in 2017 by the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association with support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Alaska Ocean Cluster is one of a dozen programs around the country advancing sustainable economic development in the "blue economy," including Washington Maritime Blue, SeaAhead and Gulf of Maine Ventures.



(<https://events.globalseafood.org/responsible-seafood-summit>).

Revitalized as a startup accelerator in October 2020 by managing directors Garrett Evridge and Taylor Drew Holshouser, the program has supported more than 16 startups, facilitated multiple deployment projects, and built a globe-spanning network of early-stage founders, investors, philanthropists, and strategic partners.

Some of the projects the cluster was involved in include salmon bycatch reduction technology, shellfish byproduct usage, a sea ice forecasting model, crab offloading and more.

The AFDF Startup Accelerator will be guided by an Industry Advisory Committee to align priorities for technology, research and development in Alaska seafood. Garrett Evridge has joined AFDF as director of the AFDF Startup Accelerator.

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