February 4, 2010

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair  
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
Juneau, AK 99811  

RE: Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program (MAP) FY2011 Operating Budget Request  

Dear Senators Hoffman, Stedman, and committee members:  

The Alaska Trollers Association (ATA) strongly supports the Alaska Sea Grant program and encourages you to provide for the University of Alaska's FY11 budget request of $614,000. This increment is necessary to secure five active marine advisory programs, in addition to re-establishing the office in Kodiak.  

MAP agents are well-known for their expertise, professionalism, assistance, and responsiveness to the needs of fishing communities. Importantly, they strive to provide practical and meaningful programs and services to meet the needs of working fishermen and the resources upon which we rely. I have found this to be true in my dealings with MAP agents around the state.  

ATA's most direct involvement with Sea Grant was through a 15 year logbook program we administered for the State of Alaska. This cooperative effort involved Alaska Department of Fish & Game, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the University of Alaska in a unique data collection program for the Southeast Alaska troll fishery.  

I have also worked with Alaska MAP employees as a former commissioner on the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and as a member of the Pacific Salmon Commission. Sea Grant staff who provide support to these forums do not fail to bring a high level of technical skill and sound advice to the table.  

For many years, MAP agents have provided a wide range of service to fishermen and communities through programs aimed at safeguarding fish, wildlife and habitat, improving seafood quality, research and advice on vessel modifications to increase fuel efficiency, helping to maneuver complex and often cumbersome statutes and regulations, and assisting fishermen in business plan development.  

MAP staff members understand that there are significant challenges ahead for Alaska's fishing workforce and they are encouraging us all to help secure the tools necessary to keep fishermen on the water and provide for our state and communities in the coming years.  

Recently, MAP agents have begun directing efforts on the next generation of commercial fishermen and fisheries professionals through the Young Fishermen Forums and educational offerings aimed at
sparking an interest in the natural sciences. These programs are highly rated by those who have participated and will no doubt help encourage Alaska's young people to look for jobs here at home.

ATA understands the significant budgetary issues you are facing this year, but we ask that you keep in mind the importance of fishing to Alaska. Money spent studying and managing our fisheries resources is proven to pay dividends to the state. Additionally, working to ensure that educational programs bolster professionalism and create a business community that is creative and nimble in the face of economic challenges is an integral piece of the jobs and communities puzzle. Sea Grant's MAP program is crucial to this process. We hope you will agree and support the necessary funding.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if ATA can be of assistance on this or other issues of importance to commercial fishermen.

Best regards,

[Signature]

Executive Director