January 28, 2010

Sen. Bert Stedman
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

This letter is to make you aware of the importance of the University of Alaska’s Marine Advisory Program (MAP) to our marine safety training efforts and their funding request in the University of Alaska’s FY11 Operating Budget Priority Program Requests entitled: “Economic Sustainability: Application of University Research, and Response to Community Needs in Coastal Alaska (MAP)” for $614,000.

The Marine Advisory Program was one of our critical founding agencies when we organized in 1985 to address the high rate of drownings and vessel fatalities. For the last 25 years MAP agents in key coastal communities with high drowning rates have assisted AMSEA with teaching, coordination, facilitation, and the sharing of resources. This in turn has made possible the training of thousands of commercial, recreational and subsistence boaters since 1985. Independent studies (Perkins, Lincoln) have demonstrated that those who have taken this training have lower rate of fatalities. The most effective and productive MAP agents that have been AMSEA trained and provide education to the public, are the ones who will lose their position without your support. These MAP agents have been a critical part of AMSEA’s statewide training network. Their loss would be a critical setback in AMSEA’s efforts to bring hands-on training specific to the Alaska environment to vital Alaska boating communities.

The budget amount requested will represent a commitment by the University to MAP offices in six communities/regions of the state that are currently funded solely by short-term grants. These sites include: Cordova, Nome, Dillingham, Unalaska and Petersburg. The sixth position is for a MAP agent in Kodiak, which has not been filled for the past 13 years due to lack of funds. These positions represent 50% of all of MAP’s coastal offices. Each is a one-person, solo office. Without these funds, the MAP office in that community may close.

The University of Alaska, through MAP salaries, provides the match required by NOAA Sea Grant allowing $1.6 million a year to come to UA for research, education and extension. These positions thus leverage other outside grant funds - in 2009, MAP was able to leverage funds to more than double their state budget through outside funding. We strongly urge you to seriously consider their request. Thank you.

Jerry Dzugan,
Executive Director

c.c. Governor Parnell, Senator Lyman Hoffman, Representatives Mike Hawker & Bill Stoltze.