November 19, 2009

Governor Sean Parnell  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 110001  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell:

The Bering Strait region is fortunate to have the Northwest College in Nome, providing courses, degree programs and training, needed by our constituents to make progress in their careers and positively impact their lives.

A recently acquired program at the campus is the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program (MAP) program which has brought educational opportunities to our region. Heidi Herter, the MAP agent developed the program for our region, with help from her supervisor, Paula Cullenberg and input from region residents. Heidi has done a tremendous job addressing the interest areas and needs for our rural communities through the MAP program. Some of the projects within our region include:

- 2 years of summer science camps with fellow Northwest College professor, Claudia Ihl, which is made available to high school students in Nome and surrounding communities. Students spend their time near Salmon Lake and learn the biology of big land mammals: caribou, reindeer, moose, musk ox and learn the vegetation requirements and composition of their feed. They receive University of Alaska credit for the camp which is helpful when they go to college.

- Heidi coordinated the Western Alaska Interdisciplinary Science Conference (WAISC) conference in 2008, again with Claudia Ihl and input and commitments from regional organizations.

- In 2007 she collaborated and coordinated, with Kawerak, daylong presentations by scientists from the research vessel Osami Mura during their lay over in Nome. The cruise scientists were looking at possible impacts from climate change in the Bering Sea.

- She organized a series of speakers to come to Nome and also to speak to our villages via video conference. The speakers focused on important science and cultural issues and had over 700 people attend.

- MAP program provided training and practice for students and adults in putting on marine survival suits in Nome, Teller, White Mountain, Savoonga and other villages.

You notice many of the projects are done in collaboration and coordination with fellow educators and regional organizations which results in projects relevant to the local people. Collaboration also makes the funding go farther, as the high cost of doing business here in rural Alaska is always a
barrier. Heidi’s position has been paid for these last three years by the local CDQ group, the Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation.

We like what the MAP agent has done and want to see the program continue in our region. Therefore we ask that you review and approve the UA operating request for $614,000 within the draft FY 11 University of Alaska Operating Budget Request titled: “Economic Sustainability, application of University Research, and Response to Community Needs in Coastal Alaska (MAP).”

The funds would support 6 positions throughout Alaska including Nome’s agent. These agents are solo offices within a college campus. Of the 16 MAP agents located in 10 coastal communities, we are fortunate to be included.

The Marine Advisory Program staff are faculty members in the UAF School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences. MAP is the extension arm of Alaska Sea Grant which is a partnership between NOAA and the University of Alaska. 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. The positions also leverage other grant funds - in 2008, MAP was able to leverage state funds to more than double their budget through outside funding. You may review other specific examples, review the MAP website www.marineadvisory.org

Again we ask you to seriously consider the request to fund MAP agents; we want to see their program efforts continue, as the program provides educational benefits our region.

Sincerely,
KAWERAK, INC.

Loretta Bullard, President

CC: Karen Rehfeld, Director
   Office of Management and Budget

   Cora Campbell, Office of the Governor