March 16, 2010

Senator Donald Olson
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 514
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Northwest Alaska Marine Advisory Program (MAP) Agent

Dear Senator Olson,

As the President and the Chief Executive Officer of Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC), we would like to express our support for the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Agent Program’s (MAP) request for funding. Several years ago NSEDC committed financial support to a local MAP agent for three years as a program trial; the trial period ended just two weeks ago.

Nearly every community in Norton Sound was served by the Marine Advisory Program. NSEDC utilized the program to train workers to use sanitary methods in fish processing, improve cod and halibut processing, and assist in developing markets for those fish.

Several communities utilized the program to develop their water quality monitoring programs, work toward a regional watershed management council, and to learn better diving techniques.

The MAP agent is able to provide customized instruction in a small flexible class for the adult working population. Individual local fishermen took courses in vessel safety, cold water survival, and fishing business management. In addition to providing easily accessible education to non-traditional students, the MAP agent collaborated with Northwestern Alaska Career Technical Center (NACTEC) staff to hold several science camps which encourage high school students to consider natural sciences as a career.

Considering commercial fishing employs more people than any other industry in the state, the per capita benefit of this program is one of the best economic choices in education available. Local residents and NSEDC have found the Marine Advisory Program to be a great resource and feel it has served the region well.

Sincerely,

Dan Harrelson
President

Janis Ivanoff
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Paula Cullenberg, Interim Director, Alaska Sea Grant
Representative Neal Foster

NSEDC will participate in the Bering Sea fisheries to provide economic development through education, employment, training and financial assistance to our member communities.

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