February 5, 2010

Senator Bert Stedman  
Alaska State Legislature  
Capitol Building, Rm. 516  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Stedman,

We are writing in support of including a line item for permanent funding for the Marine Advisory Program (MAP) position in Petersburg and five other coastal Alaskan communities in the FY2011 University of Alaska operating budget.

As grant funding for these positions is coming to a close, the University of Alaska prioritized funding by including a $614,000 request for Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program (MAP) program for Economic Sustainability, Application of University Research, and Response to Community Needs in Coastal Alaska. While the Governor did not include this item in his version of the University budget, we are hopeful the legislature will act to include funding specifically for this important program.

With nearly 50% of Petersburg’s annual employment tied to the commercial fishing industry, our local MAP office is a vital resource in our community. Our MAP agent works in partnership with industry, local groups and residents on important issues including: economic development and diversification, linking research and researchers to coastal communities, building capacity in youth and adults, and connecting youth with science and educational and employment opportunities through University linkages and workforce development. Additionally, the MAP office has been instrumental in the development and success of our community cold storage, led efforts to address issues surrounding graying the fleet, and sponsored numerous local workshops and training sessions.

Lastly, we should not underestimate the importance of the link between the seafood industry and the University. A key characteristic shared by many successful firms and industries around the world is a strong connection to a University. If we expect our seafood industry to remain competitive, then we must be willing to invest in the necessary knowledge and research infrastructure provided by the Marine Advisory Program.

Thank you for your consideration and we hope we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

Liz Cabrera  
Coordinator