February 3rd, 2010

Senator Bert Stedman
Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Via email: Senator_Bert_Stedman@legis.state.ak.us

Dear Senator Stedman,

The Petersburg Vessel Owners Association (PVOA) is a diverse group of 100 commercial fishermen and businesses operating primarily in Southeast Alaska. Our members provide millions of meals to the public annually by participating in a variety of fisheries statewide including salmon, herring, halibut, cod, crab, and shrimp. Many PVOA members are also active sport, personal use, and subsistence fishermen who have depended on information provided by the Petersburg Marine Advisory Program (MAP) office for the past 25 years.

We are pleased to take this opportunity to provide public comment in favor of permanent funding for the MAP. Petersburg is fortunate to have a local Sea Grant office with an extremely competent Marine Advisory Agent, Sunny Rice. The MAP provides critical support to Petersburg, and Alaska’s coastal residents.

PVOA has had the pleasure of working with and observing Petersburg’s MAP on many projects. Our most recent partnership with MAP is on the Southern Southeast Alaska Sea Otter Population and the Effects on Fisheries project. The collaborative effort on this project will provide valuable information regarding the effects of an expanding population of sea otters in an area where coastal residents are dependent on shellfish for food, sport, and livelihood.

PVOA had the pleasure of working along side the Petersburg Marine Mammal Center, local fishermen, and MAP to host whale disentanglement workshops and develop a wheelhouse guide for preventing whale encounters. We have also sponsored participants for all three MAP Young Fishermen Summits and have observed the hard work and dedication of the MAP team in arranging workshops to provide critical mentoring opportunities for the next generation of fishermen.
MAP involvement with the Alaska seabird avoidance program has produced very positive results. Research conducted and presented to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council has influenced policy regarding seabird avoidance, and continuing research has been encouraged. PVOA members and small boat fishermen have directly benefited by MAPs involvement with this issue.

The local Petersburg office and staff has been instrumental in arranging workshops, facilitation, and providing information to local residents including Board of Fisheries preparation, Halibut Commission, Department of Transportation, salmon quality handling, onboard freezing, refrigeration, fish business management, and loans and grants.

We appreciate your consideration of providing permanent funding for the Marine Advisory Program. Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of any further assistance regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

Juliannne Curry
Executive Director

CC: Governor Sean Parnell
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Bill Thomas
Representative Kyle Johansen
Representative Bill Stoltze
Representative Mike Hawker