January 13, 2010

Southeast Legislators
Senate Finance Committee, Chair
House Finance Committee, Chair

Southeast Alaska Fishermen’s Alliance (SEFA) is a multi-gear, multi-species group representing our membership involved in salmon, crab, shrimp, and longline fisheries of Southeast Alaska.

We are writing you to support funding for the six coastal extension agents as part of the Marine Advisory Program that was included in the University of Alaska Draft FY 11 budget request sent to the Governor.

The Marine Advisory Program has long been an important asset to the economic well being of the state’s coastal communities and fishing industry. MAP agents live and work in coastal Alaska and provide training and assistance in areas such as financial management of fishing businesses, quality handling of seafood, marine safety training, and help with important regional resource issues.

MAP agents played a significant role during the 1990 with the Federal Trade Adjustment Assistance Program in providing training and education to fishermen. From that grew a recognition by MAP of the need for leadership training for the next generation of fishermen - the Alaska Young Fishermen’s Summit. In many cases, MAP agents are the face of the University in fishing communities and provide our state’s fishermen with access to information and training that is so important in keeping competitive.

Without support of this budget request, MAP could lose 50% of its coastal offices - in Petersburg, Cordova, Nome, Dillingham and Unalaska - offices that are currently filled with excellent MAP faculty who are now relying solely on grant funding.

Alaska’s commercial fishing industry is one of the largest private employers of the state. We need applied University programs like MAP and encourage you to support this request.

Sincerely yours,

Kathy Hansen
Executive Director

cc: Alaska SeaGrant Marine Advisory Program