January 19, 2010

The Honorable Senator Bert Stedman
Alaska State Capitol Building Room 516
Juneau, AK 99811-1182

RE: Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program Funding

Dear Senator Stedman;

Southeast Conference supports full funding for the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program (MAP). We respectfully request the $614,000 in the FY11 Operating Budget for the University of Alaska remain in the budget to fund the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program (MAP).

This amount is to provide permanent funding for 6 positions. Five of the positions will be out of funding in the next year since they are currently paid solely with grant funds. They include: Nome, Dillingham, Unalaska, Cordova and Petersburg. The sixth position requested is for a coastal MAP agent in Kodiak, an office that has been empty for 13 years.

The Petersburg office, which covers Petersburg, Wrangell and Kake, as well as a number of statewide projects, has been supported through grant funds for the last five years which run out in June of 2010. Throughout Southeast, MAP agents work on economic development projects and important resource issues such as the development of the Petersburg community cold storage, assistance with shellfish farming operations, support of planning in the community of Pelican and other locations, and researching deterrents to prevent unwanted fisheries and whale interactions. MAP also works with our youth, encouraging them to pursue fisheries through the Alaska Young Fishermen's Summit and or careers in science or other coastal opportunities.

MAP is a unique partnership between the University of Alaska and coastal communities. This is an effort to secure a permanent and stable source of funding through the University for the region. Another MAP agent position, a statewide business specialist based in Juneau, also serves our region but is not included in this budget request. We do support that position and encourage consideration of funding for that position as well.

Southeast Conference is a broad based association of communities in Southeast Alaska with a mission of undertaking and supporting activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities and a quality environment throughout the region. In furthering that mission we believe the request for $614,000 for the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program will promote economic sustainability through research and response to community needs in Coastal Alaska.

We feel that this program is an important investment by the University in our state. Southeast Conference strongly supports the Legislature grant this funding request for the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program.

Sincerely,

Maxine Thompson
President
CC: Senator Bert Stedman
      Senator Lyman Hoffman
      Senator Albert Kookesh
      Senator Dennis Egan
      Representative Mike Hawker
      Representative Bill Stoltze
      Representative Bill Thomas
      Representative Peggy Wilson
      Representative Kyle Johansen
      Representative Cathy Munoz
      Representative Beth Kerttula
      Governor Sean Parnell
      Alaska Sea Grant Advisory Program