February 5, 2010

Honorable Sean Parnell
Governor, State of Alaska
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell:

The United Fishermen of Alaska is writing to you to strongly support one part of the University of Alaska’s Draft FY11 Budget Request – funding for six coastal extension agents as part of the Marine Advisory Program. UFA represents 37 Alaska commercial fishing associations and we stand united in our support for the Marine Advisory Program.

The Marine Advisory Program has long been an important asset to the economic well being of the state’s fisheries and our fishing communities. 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 regulatory and resource issues.

During the salmon crisis in the 1990’s, when farmed salmon threatened to overwhelm our wild product, MAP was critical in enabling thousands of Alaska fishermen in both urban and rural communities to take advantage of federal trade adjustment assistance and educational funds, by being in a position to deliver the required training workshops. 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 funded only on grants.

Alaska’s fishing industry is one of the major sources of private income in our state. We need applied University programs like MAP and encourage you to support this request.

Sincerely yours,

Mark Vinsel
Executive Director

cc: Karen Rehfeld, Director, Office of Management and Budget
    Cora Campbell, Office of the Governor
    Denis Weisenberg, Dean, UAF School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences