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SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Senator Lisa Murkowski

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**RE: Support of funding for Sea Grant program**

March 29, 2017

Dear Alaska Congressional Delegation:

I am writing to express our concern regarding the President's budget related to NOAA cuts, and in particular, the zeroing out of funding for the Sea Grant program.

Southeast Conference has collaborated with Alaska Sea Grant (ASG) numerous times in the past in order to complete work that is important to Alaska's seafood industry. For example, our organizations have worked on the following areas: fishing vessel energy efficiency, maritime workforce development, full utilization of seafood resources harvested, byproduct development, and most recently, mariculture development.

I understand that Secretary Wilbur Ross expressed concern over the trade deficit that the U.S.A. has related to seafood. The only way to address this trade deficit is to increase the amount of seafood grown in the U.S.A. through mariculture advancements.

Through the leadership of Southeast Conference the most recent regional economic development strategic plan for Southeast Alaska has a priority focus on the *Alaska Mariculture Initiative*. This is an initiative that Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation is spearheading has a vision to grow a \$1 billion industry in 30 years. This is an audacious, but achievable, vision. However, we will need to align existing federal programs in order to overcome hurdles that currently block increased private investment in the opportunity of mariculture. ASG regularly receives funds from NOAA for aquaculture research and development priorities. The continuation of ASG's aquaculture/mariculture program is important to the achievement of our region's vision, which will be beneficial not only to Alaska, but will also benefit the U.S. economy and trade.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shelly Wright".

Shelly Wright  
Executive Director