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Member of the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties

The Honorable Lyman Hoffman
Senate Finance Subcommittee: DF&G
Alaska State Legislature

February 10, 2021

Senator Hoffman,

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game maintains an active and comprehensive management and research program to ensure fish and wildlife populations are “utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle,” in accordance with Alaska’s Constitution. The research information provided by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game helps managers make science-based decisions to ensure sustainable animal populations for fisheries, wildlife, subsistence hunting, and the health of the habitat and lands animals rely upon. A robust research program supports a robust economy.

Research conducted by the Department contributes significantly to fisheries and the fishing industry in Alaska. The fishing industry is one of the state’s largest private employers, with an average of approximately 58,700 direct workers in the seafood industry, including roughly 32,000 fishermen, and an additional 10,000 secondary jobs. Statewide fishing provides \$5 billion in economic activity (2017-2018 average). Alaska’s fisheries represent about 60% of US production, and these fisheries are widely regarded as among the best managed in the world.

Included in both the proposed capital and operating budgets is \$26 million in funding for a variety of fisheries, wildlife, and resource projects. AML supports this funding as it benefits the state’s economy and residents. Otherwise, the proposed Department of Fish and Game budget is largely flat-funded. However, there is a proposal to combine all regional and statewide fisheries management allocations into a new commercial fisheries allocation. This change may impact the ability to track funding changes in regional fisheries and may impact a community’s ability to advocate for funding. This change appears to reduce transparency in funding. There is also a \$500,000.00 reduction in the sports fisheries division that will impact the hatcheries in Juneau (\$300,000.00) and Petersburg (\$200,000.00). This is a significant reduction to absorb in one year. The hatcheries play a significant role in their respective fishing communities and are an economic driver for their communities and the state.

The impacts of the proposed reductions should be carefully examined. Thank you for your attention to these requests, and consideration of the needs of Alaska’s local governments.

Respectfully,

Nils Andreassen
Executive Director