



Working Waterfronts Framework

A Plan to Grow and Support Alaska's Coastal and River Communities

U.S. Senator Murkowski and her team have traveled across the state to learn about the successes and forward-looking needs of Alaskans. Amid the issues we have heard about, opportunities to enhance our coastal and river communities call out for greater consideration and emphasis. These communities face common challenges with regard to access, infrastructure, workforce, renewable energy, and growing the blue economy—but new federal policy and avenues of support can help Alaskans pursue projects that enable them to grow and thrive.

According to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 83 percent of Alaskans live in coastal areas. Working waterfronts are the beating heart of those areas, providing access to nourishing marine resources for commercial, recreational, and subsistence users. They can also be the most vulnerable to nature's power, as we saw recently during powerful storms in Western Alaska.

With the release of this document, Senator Murkowski is announcing her draft Working Waterfronts Framework to solicit feedback and ideas from Alaskans. She and her team are focused on the policy topics discussed below and will incorporate the feedback received to develop Working Waterfront-themed legislation to be introduced next Congress. Please share your responses to the following questions at Working_Waterfronts@Murkowski.Senate.Gov by December 2, 2022. [Note: See framework components on pages 2-4]

- *Are there ideas in the Framework that you particularly like and have suggestions to improve?*
- *Are there ideas in the Framework that you disagree with?*
- *Do you have other ideas that the Senator should add to her Framework?*

Framework Components

Young Fishermen – Alaska’s young fishermen contend with barriers to entry that previous generations did not face. The costs of gear, access, and fishing platforms continue to increase while climate change, pollution, and geopolitical disagreements inject further uncertainty into their chosen livelihood. The ‘graying of the fleet’ is a challenge to the industry, but also an opportunity for mentorship and workforce development. Senator Murkowski cosponsored the Young Fishermen’s Development Act (YFDA), which established the first-ever federal workforce development program for young fishermen and authorized \$2 million per year for the education and training of young and rising fishermen. She has also appropriated funds to stand up the YFDA in FY22 and FY23. The Senator proposes renewing the YFDA beyond 2026, increasing its authorization level to \$20 million, and including young mariculturists to promote diverse opportunities in our working waterfronts.

Domestic Seafood Marketing and Promotion – The majority of seafood *caught* in the U.S. is exported, while the majority of seafood *consumed* in the U.S. is imported from other countries. One avenue to correct this is to bolster marketing and promotion efforts for U.S. seafood. The Saltonstall-Kennedy (S.K.) Promotion and Development account was created for this purpose. However, only a small percentage of S.K. account funds support marketing and promotion of U.S. seafood, while the lion’s share support science and research at NOAA. The Senator proposes to increase the percentage of funds that are used for marketing of domestic seafood by amending the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act of 1954.

Small-Scale Community Processing – The Senator proposes to increase support for community infrastructure such as cold storage, cooperative processing facilities, and mariculture/seaweed processing facilities and equipment. She would do this through competitive grants and cooperative agreements for pilot projects for new seafood and mariculture processing infrastructure that would be offered the Department of Commerce and the Department of Agriculture.

Crop-Insurance for Fisheries – The fisheries disaster process is not working for anyone. Commercial, recreational, and subsistence users are not able to access relief funding for years after disaster strikes. The multi-year process is nearly useless for fishermen and communities experiencing a stock collapse as federal relief comes too little, too late to save vulnerable fishing operations. The Senator proposes to look at the federal crop insurance process used by the agricultural sector as a model to develop a new approach to fisheries disaster relief.

Accounting for Subsistence Users in the Fisheries Disaster Process: Existing fisheries disaster recovery programs do not adequately address the impacts on families that rely on subsistence fishing for food security, and those programs also fail to account for impacts on traditional practices and culture. The current fisheries disaster process ties relief to economic losses in the commercial fishery and does not attend to the unique needs of subsistence users. Many impacted communities are paying more for food than ever before and are unable to operate the subsistence economies on which their communities and culture depend. Subsistence users may be eligible to receive assistance, if Congress appropriates funds, under Section 312 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) if they are part of the affected fishing community or under MSA

Section 315, which explicitly allows for other parts of the fishing community beyond commercial fisheries to receive assistance if a catastrophic regional fishery disaster is determined by the Secretary. It is time that subsistence users be qualified for fisheries disaster assistance in their own right. The Senator proposes language to create a statutory change to ensure relief for subsistence users.

USDA Loan Guarantees for Fishing and Mariculture Businesses: Young fishermen and fledgling to mid-size processors face significant barriers to entry into fisheries and mariculture, in part because of a lack of infrastructure to support new businesses. USDA implements loan programs for meat and poultry producers and food supply chain infrastructure. Opening those programs to fishing and mariculture businesses would improve access to needed food security and economic opportunities for coastal residents and businesses.

Shellfish Mariculture: Alaskans have subsisted on shellfish for millennia but changing ocean conditions make hazards like paralytic shellfish poisoning more prevalent each year. The Senator proposes to increase shellfish testing capacity to support shellfish mariculture and expand access for subsistence and recreational harvesters. This would be accomplished through competitive grant funding for innovative methods that increase the efficiency and effectiveness of shellfish testing in rural and remote areas. She also proposes to provide grant opportunities for hatchery water treatment to remediate ocean and coastal acidification impacts on production, and for the development of local and climate-resilient broodstock.

Coastal Vegetation Inventory and Pilot Program: The Senator has heard from Alaskans that the last seaweed inventory in the state was done by rowboat in the early 1900s. It is time for an update. She proposes a nationwide inventory of coastal vegetation and a pilot program to investigate uses of coastal vegetation for erosion control and carbon sequestration.

Ocean and Coastal Acidification Research and Monitoring: As our oceans warm, acidification of our waters presents an additional challenge for marine life. The Senator proposes to provide research and monitoring funds for local, Tribal, and regional ocean and coastal acidification work, including low-cost observing tools for community science and mariculture operations.

Coastal Energy: Coastal renewable energy can be a catalyst for economic growth in rural and remote communities that currently depend on expensive diesel generation. More affordable energy can bring down costs and enable new businesses to operate and grow. The Senator proposes grant support for technologies like hydro, tidal, and transmission infrastructure.

Workforce Development for Maritime Trades: There is a nationwide workforce shortage and the impacts are strongly felt in coastal Alaska, where maritime businesses have shared that they need for reliable, skilled labor in the maritime trades sector. Federal support to train those who are interested in the maritime trades – including welders, fabricators, electricians and mechanics – is currently lacking outside of the traditional maritime academy pipeline. At present, there is not a coordinated federal/state approach to the maritime workforce pipeline and as a result, fewer training opportunities are available to people who want to enter these trades. The Senator proposes to modify the Maritime Administration’s Center of Excellence program designation for

Domestic Maritime Workforce Training and Education to include access to federal grant funding for maritime workforce development.

Fishing Vessel Electrification Pilot Program: Fishermen are increasingly focused on the future of vessel propulsion to reduce fuel bills and carbon footprints. Current research and development funding programs do not include fishing vessel electrification in their eligibility guidelines. The Senator proposes to expand the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program from the bipartisan infrastructure bill, and the activities undertaken within the Vehicle Technology Office at the Department of Energy, to include research and development funding for fishing vessel conversions.

Tourism: Many of Alaska's cruise destination ports do not have the electrical generation capacity to handle the vessels that visit them. In some cases, large cruise ships need to run their engines while in port to power their operations. The FY 2022 solicitation of the Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) allowed applicants to utilize funding for dock electrification projects, but this eligibility was only made available for FY 2022. The Senator proposes to modify the PIDP program for a period of 10 years to allow for shore-side electrification and associated intertie improvements. This modification would open up an avenue for Alaska communities to upgrade their shore-side infrastructure and reduce emissions. Additionally, the Senator plans to reintroduce her Cruising for Alaska's Workforce Act.

Small Boat Harbors/Boat Ramps: The Maritime Administration's mission and current suite of grant programs do not align well with the projects sought by smaller port and harbor communities that do not have robust cargo volumes. Coastal Alaska communities that are primarily oriented around recreational, sportfishing, or smaller-scale commercial operations have a difficult time accessing funding from existing programs for activities that are not under the umbrella of Army Corps responsibilities, which only include dredging and navigational improvements. The types of projects Alaska coastal communities are seeking funding for include boat haul-out ramps, docks, storage or warehouse facilities located in the port, powerhouses, cold storage or other uplands improvements. Federal programs like PIDP require applicants to have a draft of at least 20 feet to apply. To address this gap, Senator Murkowski secured an additional \$5 million in the Senate's draft FY 2023 appropriations bills for the Denali Commission to fund waterfront projects. The Senator plans to seek additional funds for the Denali Commission to fill this gap in working waterfronts support for Alaska.