

# United States Senate

July 10, 2019

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.  
Secretary  
Department of Commerce  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross,

I am writing to follow-up on our previous communications and conversation regarding the homeporting of the NOAA ship *Fairweather*. As you know, following the refurbishment of the *Fairweather*, the vessel was homeported in Ketchikan, Alaska. However, in recent years, the vessel has been homeported in name-only in Ketchikan due to a deteriorated dock facility.

Previously, you committed to directing "NOAA to explore a suite of options, including engaging the local community and interagency agreements, that could assist in the recapitalization of port facilities in Ketchikan and to provide a report on all the directed activities." To that end, I am writing to share with you recent developments in furtherance of rebuilding the necessary infrastructure to bring the *Fairweather* back to Ketchikan as required by statute.

First, enclosed is a letter from the Ketchikan Gateway Borough outlining various actions the community has undertaken, including securing an appropriation of \$7.5 million from the Alaska Legislature to support the renovation of the dock facility. Further, the Borough is also seeking additional grant funding through the Economic Development Administration. Second, to operationalize the State appropriation, I authored a provision in the Coast Guard Authorization Act, enacted in December 2018, to allow NOAA to accept non-federal funds for the design and construction of a new Ketchikan-based dock for the *Fairweather*.

Finally, the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), a public investment corporation of the State of Alaska, commissioned a cost and design study for the dock replacement, which was recently completed. This investment demonstrates their deep interest in being an active participant in this project. The study, which is enclosed, estimates that the cost of reconstructing the current NOAA dock facility is \$7.4 million, significantly lower than previous NOAA estimates. AIDEA stands ready to bring their significant expertise and resources to bear in support of this project, and I request that you to assign appropriate staff to begin the necessary discussion and planning.

With your renewed commitment to returning the *Fairweather* to Ketchikan, and working together with the community, the State of Alaska through AIDEA, and the Alaska congressional delegation, I know we can obtain the necessary resources to build the infrastructure necessary to return this vessel to its rightful homeport.

Sincerely,

  
Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator

Thanks again, Mr. Secretary, for your continued focus on this important issue - Dan