

jdecker@afdf.org

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**From:** Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference <smarquardt@swamc.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 21, 2020 8:30 AM  
**To:** jdecker@afdf.org  
**Subject:** Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference - May 2020 Newsletter

SWAMC Newsletter

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May 2020



## Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

## Executive Director's Corner –

Here we are in the middle of May and Alaska is starting to reopen. Multiple plans designed to safeguard communities that depend on the arrival of out of state processors, fishermen, and fisheries managers are in place, and an uneasy sense of cautious optimism seems to be growing in some of our fisheries dependent communities. A successful salmon season is not just about jobs and tax revenue; it is about protecting our most vulnerable and ensuring our health care providers are ready and able to test quickly and effectively throughout the season and beyond.

Regular air transportation in parts of our region has resumed on a much lower level of service than we enjoyed in the past, and the Tustumena is scheduled back into service in early June with her first trip down the Chain leaving Kodiak June 3<sup>rd</sup> and returning to Kodiak in the wee hours of the 9<sup>th</sup>. If you need to get a vehicle, HHG, construction, or materials from Central Alaska to your community you *must* reserve your space as soon as possible out of Homer or she will be full into Kodiak, but not full down the Chain. A good option is to book out of Kodiak and do your purchasing there instead of Homer or Anchorage. The July sailing leaves Kodiak the 15<sup>th</sup> and you should book your space there as soon as possible as well. Contact Reservations at 800-642-0066.

The LB&A (Legislative Budget & Audit committee) met on May 11 to make decisions on the federal CARES funding provided to the State and it was accepted fairly quickly by the joint committee. It provides funding for homeless assistance, airports, the measurement standards and commercial vehicle compliance program, Whittier tunnel operations and maintenance, and the

Visit  
SWAMC's [COVID-19 resources](#) page for  
links to economic  
assistance resources  
for municipalities,  
tribes, and  
individuals.



Aleutians West



Bristol Bay



Kodiak Island



northern region highway and aviation, focused on unanticipated personnel costs due to the travel restrictions in place.

The second set of RPL's before the committee were also approved after lengthy discussion on May 15. These were the four additional expenditures of CARES Act funding submitted by Governor Dunleavy that direct money to Small Business Relief, the Community Assistance Program, Community Direct Costs, and a Stimulus for Alaskan Fisheries. In the end, the majority's position was that this is such a unique and unpredictable situation which allows leeway for the LB&A committee to make funding decisions that would usually be predicated on the involvement of the full Legislature for discussion and final approval. The committee in the end voted almost unanimously to approve the funding levels and participants in the Governor's version. Now it gets interesting.

A lawsuit was filed against the State of Alaska claiming that the State had acted illegally by appropriating these funds through the Revised Program Legislative (RPL) process. In order to avoid a lengthy hold on emergency funds being distributed throughout the state, the House and Senate were called back to Juneau to address the situation and act quickly. They did so Tuesday and Wednesday and both bodies voted to uphold the Governor's RPL's and the work of the LB&A committee. They then adjourned the Legislature's last regular session for 2020, and the Governor should sign the bill by the end of the week.

There are significant federal dollars going to communities based on the formula that the state uses through the Community Assistance Program. The money comes with significant COVID-19 strings and

## Aleutians East



Lake & Pen  
Borough



Pribilof Islands

reporting requirements, but will be extremely helpful to those financially harmed by the restrictions and shutdowns since March 17. There are three different payments that will go out: ASAP (likely early June), July 1, and October 1. Municipalities will receive the second and third payment *only* if they have expended 80% of the prior funding. Muni's are able and encouraged to craft their own plan to spend the funds and can directly grant dollars to businesses, non-profits, senior citizen centers, health care providers, and individuals who need them to stay in business. It's a broad swath of who can receive funds, and it will be up to local governments to design the criteria for applications, and the amount of funding each applicant will receive. More information can be found on the [Treasury Guidance FAQ page](#) and the [RPL pages detailing CAP amounts to be distributed to each community.](#)

SWAMC is waiting for direction from DCCED to see what the rules, reporting, and responsibilities are for the \$50K to \$75K (carved out of the \$290 million dollars in the Small Business Relief Fund) being provided to ARDORs to provide technical support to their regions to help business owners access the Relief money. This money is being managed by AIDEA and Credit Union 1 for grants to small businesses in the amount of \$5K to \$100K per grant. Visit DCCED's [AK CARES Grant page](#) for detailed eligibility information. As soon as we have direction, we will be contacting our communities to share information and provide application assistance to small businesses. We are eager to provide support and get funding out the door to our region.

Lastly, the Census count is ongoing in our region and it is critically important that you respond for the benefit of your community. State and Federal funding rely on Census information and they only count once every ten

years. Juneau is showing a 57% response rate, Kodiak is at 42%, but the Aleutians are below 5%. This is a dismal response rate, and it will do your community great harm to not be counted. Visit [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov) to respond electronically or to have a paper copy mailed to you. I filled it out online myself in just a few minutes. Check with your City Clerk for more information or assistance. It's that important.

Take care,  
Shirley Marquardt, Executive Director

## SWAMC Program Updates

### AK Can Do Program Offers Financial Relief

With support from the United Way of Anchorage, The Alaska Community Foundation, and the Rasmuson Foundation, SWAMC is distributing funds through the *AK Can Do* program to assist people in our region who have been impacted by layoffs, furloughs, and closures during the pandemic and are in need of financial assistance.

If you have lost your job since March 17<sup>th</sup> because of pandemic-caused statewide shelter-in-place, non-essential-business closures, or travel bans, and are unable to pay rent, mortgage payments, or utilities for the months of April or May, you are eligible to apply for financial assistance. If you are an essential worker who had to find emergency childcare because of school closures, you are also eligible to apply for assistance. Funds would be paid directly to your landlord, utility provider, and/or childcare provider. Complete applications will be reviewed and verified by SWAMC staff; financial assistance will be provided through May 31.

Click the links to review the [guidelines](#) and the [application form](#). If you have questions, please email [smarquardt@swamc.org](mailto:smarquardt@swamc.org) and we will get back to you as quickly as we can.



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Mariculture is a rapidly growing industry in Alaska, particularly in the southwest region. This sector involves the cultivation of aquatic organisms such as salmon, halibut, and scallops. The industry has faced significant challenges, including fluctuations in market prices and concerns about environmental impact. However, it also presents opportunities for economic development and job creation. The following sections will explore the current state of mariculture in Southwest Alaska, its challenges, and potential future directions.

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## Growing Mariculture Businesses in Southwest Alaska

Mariculture has recently been a bright spot of growth in Alaska's economy. New farms are producing seaweed and shellfish from Ketchikan to Kodiak, and now interest is growing in other parts of Southwest Alaska, with applications coming in from Sand Point and Adak. The Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF), Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (SWAMC), and the Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association (APICDA) have partnered to offer mariculture business development for interested communities and individuals in Southwest Alaska. Education, outreach, and technical assistance is being provided for free by mariculture specialist Tamsen Peeples.

A lifelong Alaskan, Tamsen has spent the past five years working with researchers, regulators, farmers, and processors to help produce the first commercial seaweed mariculture operations in the state, out of Kodiak. She is excited to lend her expertise and help develop mariculture in the SWAMC region. **Tamsen can help prospective farmers perform site analysis, develop a business plan, and navigate the State of Alaska permitting process. This free assistance is available through 2020 on a first-come, first-served basis, limited to 6 participants. Be sure to contact Tamsen prior to September 1<sup>st</sup> in order to secure this technical assistance!** Due to COVID-19, visits to communities have been cancelled and outreach is being conducted via phone, email, or Zoom. This project is funded by a USDA Rural Development Business Grant.

For more information, visit: [koruandkelp.squarespace.com](http://koruandkelp.squarespace.com)  
or contact Tamsen at [tamsen.peeples@gmail.com](mailto:tamsen.peeples@gmail.com)

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Laura Vaught - Economic Development Specialist  
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**Our mailing address is:**

3300 Arctic Blvd. #203  
Anchorage, AK 99503

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Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (SWAMC) · 3300 Arctic Blvd. · Suite 203 · Anchorage, AK 99503 · USA

