

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 13, 2021

Mr. Michael Connor
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
Office of the Under Secretary of the Army
United States Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Assistant Secretary Connor:

We are writing to express our support for the City of Homer's request for \$1.5 million for a new start General Investigation (GI) study to analyze the expansion of Homer's existing port and harbor. The City of Homer has committed \$750,000 in local cost share and the City has requested \$750,000 from the State of Alaska to complete the \$3 million, three-year GI study. The recently enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provided supplemental appropriations to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and directed the Army Corps to develop a work plan for the use of the funds within 60 days of enactment. We view this as an opportunity to make you aware of the merits of this project.

The City of Homer and the USACE recently completed a six-month high-level Planning Assistance to States (PAS) study that examined the project's feasibility. The preliminary Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 0.9 to 1.0 confirmed that proceeding with a GI is warranted. The GI will complete all of the economic, environmental, geophysical, and engineering analysis necessary to develop a full BCR.

Centrally located in the Gulf of Alaska, Homer's multi-modal port is a marine industrial and transportation hub for Central and Western Alaska. Originally covering 16 acres when constructed in 1965, the city expanded the harbor to 50 acres in 1986 to meet commercial demand. Homer continues to see increasing demand for harbor use as the city has increasingly become a maritime commercial and transportation hub for the region. The GI is the first step toward constructing a purpose-built large vessel harbor.

Over the last 15 years, large vessel traffic in the harbor has grown 42 percent and the length of vessels requesting moorage has doubled. That growth trend appears to be continuing. The harbor hosts the second highest count of commercial fishing vessels in the state, over 50 maritime charter companies, and Alaska Marine Highway vessels. Currently, there is a 414-vessel waiting list and due to space constraints, large vessels are rafted two to three abreast in the harbor. The impacts of the vessel overcrowding include transit delays and increased maintenance and repair costs for the float systems. Additionally, vessel traffic lanes are congested, which presents navigational hazards, especially when small private boats are sharing travel lanes.

Due to lack of space, many large vessels must travel to the Lower 48 for the winter to complete maintenance, which is estimated to cost the region an estimated \$3.5 million in economic opportunity losses to the fleet annually and \$2.75 million annually in local job opportunity losses. The large vessel harbor expansion project would alleviate the space constraints the harbor currently experiences posing mutually beneficial solutions for the large and small vessel fleets.

The project will be designed to support multi-modal cargo operation allowing it to serve as a backup port in the event of a major disaster at the Port of Alaska. As the region's only ice-free gateway to Cook Inlet, the harbor also serves as a port of refuge for large vessels transiting the Gulf of Alaska, Cook Inlet, and Kennedy Entrance.

Additionally, the Homer harbor has the potential to accommodate layover, repair, and provisioning needs of U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) ships deployed under the Arctic Security mission and a level 3 Ports, Waterways, and

Coastal Security station. This station has been proposed by USCG District 17 staff to safeguard critical facilities including the Tesoro Refinery, Cook Inlet Natural Gas Storage Facility, Nikiski Industrial Complex, and the entrance to Port of Alaska, Alaska's only DOD designated strategic seaport.

The PAS estimated that over a 50-year period the cost of doing nothing carries a present-day value of \$93 million. Homer's port expansion would meet the growing market demands of the marine industry, address navigational hazards, and capture new economic opportunities. The project will positively impact the lives and livelihoods of thousands of Alaskans through job creation, economic development, and strengthened national security well into the future.

Consistent with all applicable law, policy, and guidance, we respectfully request that you give due consideration to the City of Homer's request and all Alaskan funding requests. We also ask that you keep our offices apprised on the outcome.

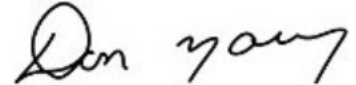
Sincerely,



LISA MURKOWSKI
United States Senator



DAN SULLIVAN
United States Senator



DON YOUNG
Congressman for All Alaska