



September 5, 2023

Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
 US Department of Transportation
 1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
 Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing to express our strong support for the Native Village of Chenega's application to the US DOT's Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program. Ours is a harsh maritime environment that is also affected by more frequent freeze/thaw cycles. Safe and well-draining roads are critical infrastructure for ensuring access to our remote communities, roads that are used to keep our Native village and corporation operations functioning.

Our 2021-2025 Prince William Sound Community Economic Development Strategy's (CEDS) first goal is to "Enhance infrastructure to build resilience to climate change, increase economic development opportunities, and enrich the way of life in Prince William Sound."

Chenega's road improvements design and permitting project aligns directly with that goal. Road infrastructure design now includes considerations for minimizing dust that can cause respiratory health problems, and facilitating drainage that extends the lifespan of such critical investments as well as adapts to increased precipitation as rain. This investment will benefit Chenega residents' health, improve working conditions in the Village, and help the Village adapt to changing climate conditions.

We believe that the proposed project is a necessary step toward community resilience and increased economic development. From our experience in working with the Native Village of Chenega, we know the Village to be an experienced, capable organization. We urge your strong support for Chenega's RCN application for road re-surfacing.

Sincerely,

Kristin Carpenter
 Executive Director

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September 18, 2023

Tom Vilsack, Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

On behalf of the Prince William Sound Economic Development District, I am writing to urge your support for an important mariculture innovation project submitted by Wild Blue Solutions. Stakeholders across the state have been working to expand Alaska's kelp farming capacity and bring the benefits of this sector to our small and regional businesses. Only two of our five Prince William Sound communities have road access, and in these remote villages the support to add a handful of jobs makes a very big difference.

Building on and sustaining Prince William Sound's blue economy is the primary focus of our region's 2021 – 2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and this proposal to develop an alginate extraction method aligns directly with that vision. We're facilitating a network of over 40 stakeholders working to develop a mariculture sector in Prince William Sound, including kelp and shellfish farmers, kelp seed hatcheries, research centers, seafood processors working to develop seaweed processing capacity (drying, blanching, freezing, packaging), and tribal entities who are considering investments in mariculture in our region.

This proposal would support the research needed to develop a product that could replace the horticulture industry's millions of plastic pots thrown away annually by home and commercial gardeners, and would also supply valuable nutrients for growing plants, reducing the need for added fertilizers. As the federally-recognized economic development district for the PWS region, we stand ready to support Wild Blue Solutions with small business start-up guidance and resources, as needed.

Speaking from the vantage point of supporting aquaculture in Prince William Sound, we see kelp and shellfish farming here as a good fit because:

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- Commercial fishing is a long-established industry in the region, with a fleet of 541 permitted drift gillnet fishermen and several hundred permitted purse seine vessels; these operations are run by fishermen with extensive knowledge of local waters and vessels that have capacity during the winter months.
- Prince William Sound has 29% of recent kelp farm applications submitted for permits statewide, reflecting the strong interest in this region in investing in kelp farming. We started learning of the great interest in kelp farming in PWS when the Alaska Mariculture Task Force offered a kelp farming training program in 2020 and received 150 applicants for the 30 participant spots available.

This regional interest in kelp farming is influenced by U.S. market demand for kelp, which is currently met by importing more than 98% of the domestic edible seaweed supply. Since the first kelp farm established in the U.S. in 2012, “domestic edible seaweed aquaculture production has increased significantly . . . with Maine and Alaska accounting for the. Majority of growth and overall market share” (Edible Seaweed Market Analysis, The Island Institute, 2020).

You already know that Alaska is renowned for its cold, clean, nutrient-rich waters, providing ideal growing conditions for cultivating food products. We see this project as having great benefit for supporting the growth of mariculture in our remote coastal communities where fishermen are working to diversify their income sources.

Thank you for your consideration,



Kristin Carpenter
Executive Director





October 11, 2023

Darryl LaCounte, Director
Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. LaCounte,

I am writing to express our strong support for the Native Village of Chenega's application for the BIA's Tribal Climate Resilience grant to support the planning, engineering design and permitting phase to develop a wave attenuator breakwater. Chenega is accessible ONLY by water and by air, so protecting its harbor from the harsh maritime environment, the region's frequent freeze/thaw cycles, and potential climate change effects from sea level rise is critical. Prince William Sound (PWS) experiences tide changes of 8 – 12' two times/day, a lot of moving water, and a breakwater is critical for ensuring safe access to this remote village.

Our 2021-2025 PWS Community Economic Development Strategy's (CEDS) first goal is to "Enhance infrastructure to build resilience to climate change, increase economic development opportunities, and enrich the way of life in Prince William Sound."

Chenega's wave attenuator project aligns directly with that goal. In Prince William Sound, impacts of climate change include coastal erosion, glacial melt, and ocean acidification. Coastal erosion affects the region's infrastructure, likely requiring mitigation strategies and investment, such as this project. While the precise relationship between warmer ocean temperatures and PWS fish stocks is unknown, increased water temperatures could change the distribution or abundance of fisheries and coastal habitats in and around Chenega.

We believe that the proposed project is a necessary step toward community resilience and increased economic development. From our experience working closely with the Native Village of Chenega, we know the Village to be an experienced and capable organization. We urge your strong support for Chenega's BIA Tribal Climate Resilience application for the design and engineering of a wave attenuator.

Sincerely,

Kristin Carpenter
Executive Director

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October 11, 2023

Paul Layer, V.P.
 UAA Office of Academics, Students, and Research
 Butrovich Building
 910 Yukon Drive
 Fairbanks, Alaska 99775

Dear Dr. Layer,

I am writing on behalf of the Prince William Sound Economic Development District (PWSEDD) to express our full support for Dr. Getu Hailu's proposal, 'Waste Heat Recovery for Kelp Processing'. This research project will help us explore an innovative solution to a pressing issue within Alaska's burgeoning mariculture industry.

PWSEDD is working with regional mariculture businesses and stakeholders to identify opportunities for mariculture business growth, connect kelp farmers with resources to start or expand their businesses, and leverage financial and equipment resources to expand seaweed processing capacity. Mariculture has the potential to mitigate some climate change effects, and to help diversify our region's commercial fishing economy.

The Waste Heat Recovery for Kelp Processing project, which will investigate the feasibility of using heat from incinerated cardboard to dry kelp, has significant potential to provide a solution that will strengthen Prince William Sound's (PWS) mariculture supply chain, which is currently experiencing a bottleneck in processing capacity. Kelp products harvested in PWS must be dried prior to sale due to the prohibitive cost of shipping a heavy, wet product from our remote location. There are currently no kelp drying facilities in PWS, inhibiting the development of our regional kelp businesses. The proposed research will assist PWSEDD in our efforts to explore potential solutions, and to help our region's mariculture industry become self-sufficient and economically resilient.

The strength of this proposal lies in both its innovative approach to solving a pressing problem and the broader impact it would have on the regional mariculture industry. It aligns with the Faculty Initiative Fund's goal of promoting collaborative research, community partnerships, and methods to reduce costs. The proposed heat recovery system would not only utilize waste cardboard, a cost-effective and environmentally friendly solution, but could also serve as a model for similar remote locations facing the same challenges.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of Dr. Hailu's proposal and believe that with your support, we can advance our shared goal of promoting sustainable economic development in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Kristin Carpenter
 Executive Director

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November 21, 2023

Jennifer Granholm, Secretary
US Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm,

On behalf of the Prince William Sound Economic Development District, I am writing to express our strong support for hosting an Arctic Energy Ambassador to serve our remote coastal communities. Our energy concerns range from the high cost of fuel and electricity in our small towns and villages to the need to make a transition to renewable energy sources as quickly as possible.

Alaska's Department of Labor and Workforce Development notes that "Energy is the most volatile part of the consumer price index" and one of our communities, the Native village of Chenega, ranks fifth highest among 100 surveyed Alaska communities for the price of home heating fuel (Alaska TRENDS, July 2021).

Our 2021-2025 Prince William Sound Community Economic Development Strategy's (CEDS) first goal is to "Enhance infrastructure to build resilience to climate change, increase economic development opportunities, and enrich the way of life in Prince William Sound." Identifying and implementing energy efficiency projects in our region will go a long way to lowering the barrier to economic development that is the high cost of energy here in Prince William Sound. Having a staff person in our region dedicated to coordinating energy projects, helping electric cooperative and Native village staff plan projects and identify funding sources will be an enormous asset for our region. Assistance from an energy ambassador will improve energy resiliency for our communities, and ultimately reduce energy costs in a generally low-income area.

We urge your strong support for the PWSEDD's application for Arctic Energy Ambassador support. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kristin Carpenter
Executive Director

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