



Alaska Fishing Industry Relief Mission Inc.

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Alaska Fishing Industry Sends Help to Japan Fishing Fleets

Group funds six more projects to help fleets return to fishing after 2011 Tsunami

The Alaska Fishing Industry Relief Mission (AFIRM) is delivering aid to help fishing fleets of Northern Japan affected by last year's tsunamis. The Alaska seafood industry, led by major contributors UniSea and American Seafoods initiated the relief fund shortly after the March 2011 tsunami devastated the fishing communities of Northern Japan. Seattle-based Unisea, American Seafoods, and Glacier Fish Company inspired donations from their vessel, plant and office employees and then matched them, effectively doubling the industry's grassroots fundraising efforts. All in all, over 180 fishing and processing industry participants donated over \$375,000 with the purpose of helping the affected fishing industry of northeastern Japan rebuild their fishing and processing infrastructure.

"American Seafoods is pleased to participate in this extremely important and worthwhile effort to provide much-needed equipment to those who continue to recover from the effects of the devastating tsunami," said American Seafoods Company President Inge Andreassen.

The group has identified six more projects this month and will be sending over \$190,000 to six local fishing organizations across the region. The projects were identified by Vancouver-based filmmaker Linda Ohama who has been visiting the region and meeting with local fisheries cooperatives this summer. The current projects include:

- \$9,000 to Naburi Chiku to purchase lifejackets and equipment for 30 fishing families;
- \$38,000 to Mori Ju Gyogyo Corp for a fixed net and supplies for 10 families;
- \$46,000 to Onagawa Uoichiba Co. for 60 storage tanks for up to 800 fishermen;
- \$5,700 to Miyagi Fishermen's Association for two small fishing boats for 23 families;
- \$64,000 to Haragama Kisen for required safety equipment such as lifejackets, ropes, helmets, and pumps, for 250 fishermen;
- \$28,000 to Taro-cho Fishermen's Organization for air conditioners for a seaweed sorting plant for 50 fishermen.

The group is also considering applying remaining available funds to reconstruct a fish market in the community of Iwagi, pending identification of the other funding needed for the project that would benefit up to 900.

“We were told from the outset that there would be at least a year before affected communities could respond to the basics of life and complete planning to be ready to identify meaningful projects,” said AFIRM Chairman Larry Cotter. “Now over a year later, it has been a challenge to overcome communications obstacles to identify projects to directly help them return to fishing. We are extremely grateful for the help from Linda Ohama who traveled to the affected region and kept in close touch with AFIRM to identify opportunities to help, and translate their requests, on a purely volunteer basis from her sincere desire to help,” said Cotter.

AFIRM announced earlier this summer that they had funded an urgent request from a small boat fleet near Sendai that was ready to get back fishing, but only lacked lifejackets. AFIRM sent the group \$5,500 to get them back on the water.



Sendai fishermen with lifejackets from AFIRM Courtesy of Linda Ohama

The group also delivered \$136,500 to purchase a three ton capacity forklift and mid-size truck for use in the Ishinomaki regional fish market, and a fish processing training simulator use for the Miyagi fishery high school to help provide the workforce to support deliveries by fleets in the tsunami affected region.

AFIRM, a 501(c) (3) non-profit charity, was first formed to assist the Gulf fishing communities following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and was re-activated for the tsunami relief effort. AFIRM has zero overhead given its all volunteer board and staff, so 100% of all contributions are used directly for assistance. The group is not actively fundraising at this time, and will retain its board and structure for future efforts where the fishing industry needs help after major natural disasters.

More information is available at AFIRM’s website at www.akjapanhelp.org.

More information is available about Linda Ohama at <http://www.whitepinepictures.com/seeds/i/8/biography.html> .