



Alaska Fishing Industry Relief Mission Inc.

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Alaska Crab Fleet and Processors lead Tsunami Relief Effort

Fishing industry fund passes \$300K, overall contributions approach \$1M in first months of long term effort.

The Alaska Fishing Industry Relief Mission (AFIRM) has received over \$300,000 in donations from fishing vessel owners, seafood processing companies and their employees, and other businesses associated with the seafood industry. These funds are dedicated to providing assistance to those affected by the tragic earthquake and tsunami in Japan. AFIRM will continue raising funds and hold fundraising events in fishing communities in the coming months.

“The initial response has been very generous, and we are just getting underway in what will be a long term effort continuing through the year,” AFIRM Chairman Larry Cotter said. “Our contacts in Japan say it will be months or a year before the scope of the damage and specific needs for restoration of fishing fleets and processing facilities will be known. For the foreseeable future we will focus on fundraising, and we are off to a very good start.”

The producers of the Discovery Channel’s “After the Catch” are planning a fundraising event in Hawaii featuring Deadliest Catch captains & crews, scheduled for June 5. AFIRM plans to hold fundraising events in Seattle and Alaska fishing communities in the early fall, when many fishermen return from summer fisheries.

“In a reflection of the popularity of the Deadliest Catch show, the crab fleet has been especially responsive with their generosity. The Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers Association has collected over \$70,000 in individual donations from its vessel owners. Seafood processor Unisea has matched \$79,000 in donations from its crab and pollock vessels, thereby doubling the contributions. Fishing vessels from Kodiak have donated \$13,000 so far, with efforts still underway. Glacier Fish Company matched its employees’ donations to raise an additional \$26,000. Clipper Seafoods is leading an ongoing employee and longline catcher-processor fleet fund drive. Aleutian Spray Fisheries has contributed \$20,000 on behalf of its fleet. The support of the entire industry is really amazing,” said AFIRM Treasurer Mark Vinsel.

“Other noteworthy donations include \$20,000 from APICDA, \$5,000 from Tatoosh Seafoods, \$5,000 from Northwest Farm Service Creditors and over 100 individual vessels or skippers with donations from \$500 to \$10,000 each,” said Vinsel.

Apart from donations to AFIRM directly, the seafood industry has also responded to the general relief effort. Trident Seafoods has raised and donated over \$250,000 as well as donated several containers of food. Silver Bay Seafoods donated \$150,000 to a seafood industry fund organized by the Japan seafood industry publication Minato Shimbun. American Seafoods forwarded \$26,000 to the Red Cross from its employees and will be donating \$26,000 as well to AFIRM.

“Altogether the industry is approaching a million dollars in total contributions. These contributions to the overall relief effort are complimentary and compatible with AFIRM’s effort to focus on the seafood industry.” said Cotter. “We applaud everyone in the industry for their efforts.”

Many people are interested in how AFIRM plans to use the funds it raises. AFIRM board members and advisors are in contact with the Japanese Embassy in Washington, DC, the Japanese Fisheries Association, the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, Maruha Nichiro, Nissui, and other Japanese companies to seek their input on the most effective way to directly assist people and communities in need.

AFIRM will collaborate with the Japanese fishing and processing industries and governmental leaders to best leverage our contributions with other available industry assets to help fishing communities in Japan to get back to harvesting and processing, once their needs can be established.

AFIRM, a 501(c) (3) non-profit charity, was first formed to assist the Gulf fishing communities following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. A downloadable brochure, list of current donors, and donations by credit card are available at AFIRM’s website at www.akjapanhelp.org.

AFIRM has zero overhead given its volunteer board and staff, so 100% of all contributions will go directly for assistance. All donations to AFIRM are 100% tax deductible.

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