

Alaska State Legislature

Official Business



State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska
99801-1182

May 9, 2012

The Honorable Dr. Jane Lubchenco
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Under Secretary Lubchenco:

A tremendous amount of debris swept into the sea by the tsunami in Japan last year is washing up on Alaska's shores, threatening our coastal resources and the communities and economies that depend on them. We need your help.

We do not know how much tsunami-generated debris is on its way toward the coastlines of Alaska and other Pacific states, but the first waves of it are already here. Observers have documented unprecedented amounts of debris on Montague Island and other islands in the Gulf of Alaska including hazardous materials and containers of fuel and other toxins.

Alaska's unique, wild and prolific coastal regions are national and global treasures, but to Alaskans they are much more. Healthy coastlines are the social, cultural and economic foundations of our coastal communities. Allowing potentially dangerous tsunami debris to overwhelm Alaska's coastal resources would have negative ripple effects throughout Alaska's communities and economy.

We request that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration make the necessary resources available to assess the potential magnitude of what could be a prolonged torrent of debris littering Alaska's coastline. We also request the agency to set in place an aggressive plan to minimize and mitigate the damage to Alaska's coastal resources.

We know the debris is coming, and our chances for minimizing its impact are far better if we know what we are dealing with and are prepared to address it.

Thank you for your attention to this imminent challenge facing Alaska and the other Pacific states. We look forward to working with your administration and state and local agencies to address this brewing threat before the damage is done.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Beth Kerttula in black ink.

House Democratic Leader Beth Kerttula

Handwritten signature of Berta Gardner in black ink.

House Democratic Whip Berta Gardner



Representative Les Gara



Representative Max Gruenberg



Representative Scott Kawasaki



Representative Bob Miller



Representative Pete Petersen



Representative Chris Tuck