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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 13, 2006

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UFA Supports IRS Exxon Valdez Tax Relief Legislation S. 3422 and Thanks Senator Lisa Murkowski

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA), representing 32 Alaska fishing groups, supports Senate Bill 3422 introduced last week by Senator Lisa Murkowski for tax relief to help plaintiffs in the Exxon Valdez oil spill settlement. The legislation would give plaintiffs the ability to increase retirement contributions, and provide tax relief through income averaging.

Although the oil spill occurred seventeen years ago, approximately 28,000 fishermen plaintiffs still await the final decision on the appeal of punitive damages, most recently set at \$4.5 billion plus interest by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. A ruling on Exxon's appeal of the judgment is expected later this year. Without this legislation, fishermen plaintiffs will see the value of their patience and perseverance eroded by taxes.

"We survived a drastic downturn in salmon prices over the last ten years. Alaska wild salmon now are holding onto a hard fought market niche through the differentiation in the marketplace that both Senators Murkowski were able to get passed in the Country of Origin Labeling. We were just barely holding on for most of these years since the spill, but most of us who were fishing then that are still alive are having to catch up with retirement plans," said Mac Meiners, a lifelong fisherman who fished herring and salmon in Prince William Sound before the oil spill and now fishes for salmon in Southeast Alaska.

UFA proposed Exxon settlement tax relief of income averaging and one-time retirement contribution allowances as components in the UFA Marketing Plan in 2001. UFA estimated that as much as 60% of Exxon settlement would go to taxes but that with tax relief, but that the IRS would still collect over \$1 billion in taxes on the settlement. The plan also called for the use of Saltonstall-Kennedy funds from duties on seafood imports for marketing of Alaska seafood, which led to the creation of the Alaska Fisheries Marketing Board.

"We appreciate Senator Murkowski's response to our requests and support her efforts 100%. Senator Murkowski and Alaska's delegation has been extremely responsive to Alaska's fishermen. We now need Alaska's non resident fishermen that live in every other U.S. State to help weigh in with their delegations to see that this gets passed this session," said UFA President Bob Thorstenson Jr.

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