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### **Linda Behnken honored by Alaska State Legislature ; ALFA celebrates 40 years of fishery conservation leadership**

Linda Behnken, Executive Director of the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA) and a Sitka-based commercial fisherman, was recently granted an honorarium by the Thirtieth Alaska Legislature for her work protecting our local, regional, and national small-boat fisheries and coastal communities.

Behnken was awarded the honorarium during a "Gearing up to 40 years" reception in Sitka last week, attended by ALFA's supporters, funders, and local fishermen and featuring seafood prepared by award-winning Juneau chef, Lionel Uddipa. The award comes on the heels of Behnken's national recognition last year as a "Champion of Change for Sustainable Seafood" by the White House.

"Linda is a down-to-earth, hard-working Alaska mom and fisherman who cares about our oceans and sustainable rural economies and bring ferocious political efficacy to bear on her work," said Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, who represents Sitka and surrounding rural communities. "She's employed innovative strategies to advance marine conservation and strengthen small-boat, community-based fisheries. She has a history of collaborating with diverse stakeholders and bringing fishermen to work together with scientists to solve conservation and management challenges."

In addition to honoring Behnken, the reception was hosted to celebrate forty years of ALFA's leadership in fishery conservation locally and nationally. Founded in 1978, the organization spearheaded efforts to eliminate foreign fishing on sablefish and rockfish stocks in the 70s, supported an aggressive rebuilding schedule for depleted sablefish stocks in the 80s, and lead the battle to eliminate trawling from Southeast Alaska waters in the 90s. Linda has acted as Executive Director since 1991.

Under her leadership, ALFA has received recognition nationally for its role as a leader in fishermen-led advocacy in support of coastal fisheries and communities.

"Linda has taught me that while the fish in the Gulf of Alaska may be different from the fish in the Gulf of Mexico, our battles are the same." says Eric Brazer, Deputy Director at the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance. Brazer works with ALFA as part of the Fishing Communities Coalition, a national coalition of small boat fishing organizations. "Through her leadership at the Fishing Communities Coalition, we can chart a better course for tomorrow's commercial fishermen."

To celebrate forty years of advocacy, forty donors contributed to support ALFA's Fishery Conservation Network, a program started by Behnken that engages fishermen and scientists in a range of conservation projects. The reception wrapped up the Sitka Fishermen's Expo, a weeklong event hosted by ALFA and the Sitka Seafood Festival, which provided workshops, educational events, and networking opportunities for commercial fishermen and the public.

When asked about the award, Behnken said, “I am humbled, amazed, and more than a little overwhelmed. Really the accolades belong to the entire ALFA Team--staff, board and members--and to the incredible community that supports us. My inspiration comes from all of you.”

*The Alaska Longline Fishermen’s Association is an alliance of small boat, commercial fishermen committed to sustainable fisheries and thriving coastal communities. Our members support science-based fisheries management through collaborative research, advocacy and innovation. We work to safeguard ocean health and improve the economic viability of small boat fishing. For our members, commercial fishing is more than a livelihood; it's a way of life.*

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