



## Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, February 3, 2016

Host: Molly McCammon

Notes by Holly Kent

*The Alaska Marine Policy Forum is a bimonthly teleconference for Alaskans to network and share information about marine policy, budgets, and legislation at state, national, and international levels, sponsored by Alaska Sea Grant and the Alaska Ocean Observing System. Contact [Sue.Keller@alaska.edu](mailto:Sue.Keller@alaska.edu) to be added to the list serve to receive a reminder and agenda for the next call, and summary notes following each call.*

**Amy McElroy, Office of Senator Murkowski** – They are busy with the national Energy Bill. There have been at least 200 amendments filed and they are working through those. There is no deadline for amendments.

**Ephraim Froehlich, Office of Senator Murkowski** – They are also kicking off this year's Oceans Caucus work plan with a series of events with marine debris at the top of the list, as well as enforcement actions on the high seas. Anyone willing to provide input into the caucus work plan and briefings is encouraged to contact Ephraim. Last year's plan for the Caucus was to get IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing legislation completed, and they have mostly finished that. Another priority has been reauthorization of the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observing System Act (ICOOS). That bill has moved through the Commerce Committee with the goal of getting it passed by the Senate this spring. The Oceans Caucus and the Arctic Caucus are both chaired by Senator Murkowski; there is quite a bit of overlap in their work plans and they work together on a lot of issues. The Arctic Caucus is doing a lot of Arctic-focused briefings for Congress and outside Congress. They are discussing the challenges of doing research in the Arctic, icebreakers and traditional knowledge. The Coastal Caucus is not chaired by the Senator, and Ephraim will find out more about their priorities. Alaskans seeking funding in the FY18 appropriations bills should submit their requests online to the Senator's office by February 29.

**Representative Louise Stutes, Legislative Update** – The state budget is the big issue in Juneau. The state is discussing a commercial fisheries tax increase of one percent. A second hearing is scheduled for next week. There may be more legislation introduced this year or next to address equitably sharing taxation among fishery user groups. Paula Cullenberg, Alaska Sea Grant, noted that there will be a meeting of the Bush Caucus on February 19 at 3:30 PM to discuss potential impacts to rural

communities from loss of fishing access including loss of permits and quotas. The Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) bill is moving forward. There have been some changes in adjudication, permit fees and permit transfers. One proposed change is to move licensing to local Alaska Department of Fish & Game offices to allow fishermen to get their limited entry permits locally. Representative Stutes reported that the State has submitted a rationalization plan for the Gulf of Alaska. She has not seen the legislation yet but understands that the plan submitted is based on the size of each boat's hold instead of historical catch.

**Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins** – The legislation for access to fisheries is a collaborative effort between the fishing industry and the legislature. The idea is to create a stepping-stone for young fishermen to get into the fishing industry. The legislation would create regional permitting banks. There have been many conversations regarding the legal and constitutional aspects of this legislation. Contact Representative Kreiss-Tomkins: [rep.jonathan.kreiss-tomkins@akleg.gov](mailto:rep.jonathan.kreiss-tomkins@akleg.gov)

**Brad Moran, new UAF Dean of the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences** – He just moved from Rhode Island and is in his fourth week of the position. He is proposing lots of changes to the school, especially in light of substantial reductions in state funding. He is now circulating a vision and strategy document for the school that includes a new emphasis on arctic science. Contact Dr. Moran at [sbmoran@alaska.edu](mailto:sbmoran@alaska.edu) if you'd like to get a copy.

**Carol Janzen, AOOS** – The second Pacific Anomalies Workshop was held January 20-21 in Seattle, WA. Overviews were given of what has happened since the first workshop in May 2015, with a lot of discussion on the linkages between the “Blob” and the current El Niño event with respect to their impacts on ecosystem response. Russ Hopcroft gave the Alaska overview. A guided discussion was held during the afternoon of the first day noting some sobering ecosystem responses like the shifting of food sources within the lower trophic levels in response to a 2 to 3 degree Centigrade increase in water temperatures. The shifting of these food sources may be responsible for seabird die-offs and unusual whale mortalities. There has been an increase in harmful algal blooms in California linked to the temperature anomalies. The second day featured breakouts by research discipline where data gaps were identified. A report is being written now and AOOS will have a link to the report on the “Blob Tracker” blog.

**Dr. Kathy Kuletz, USFWS** – The USFWS started seeing signs of seabird die-offs in August 2014 with an estimated 37,000 dead individuals found in offshore waters. A small-scale die-off started in March 2015 and continued through the summer with many birds not breeding at all. The die-offs were expected to spike in the fall, and they did. Late December saw thousands of birds washing up on shore following storms. The USFWS is continuing to monitor the situation in Alaska working with and receiving help from USGS and the Prince William Sound Science Center. As many as 110 carcasses have been sent to the lab for necropsy exams with most showing severe signs of starvation and only a few containing high levels of domoic

acid. The USFWS is working with a University of Washington citizen science group called COASST, to monitor the event in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. 25,000 individual dead murrelets were counted in Prince William Sound with an estimated total die-off of 60,000-100,000 occurring since March. This is an unprecedented event, with mostly murrelets, but other species involved also. About 75% of the dead birds appear to be females. The lack of funding is a struggle, while the only thing to do right now is monitoring. Past bird die-offs have been connected to warm water events like El Niño. In the case of marine mammals like whales, some funding can be freed up for monitoring and response through the establishment of an Unusual Mortality Event, but no such mechanism exists for seabirds. The USFWS is working with other agencies to discuss how to be more proactive with this issue. Shipping and testing of samples is expensive. These birds are also used for subsistence so Alaska coastal communities are concerned.

**Molly McCammon, AOOS** – AOOS held an Ocean Acidification Technical Workshop last week in Anchorage. Scientists from the Ocean Acidification Research Center at UAF, NOAA's national Ocean Acidification Program, and other regional research entities attended and worked to develop consensus on how we should be monitoring here in Alaska. A workshop report will be written and provided on the AOOS website. The biggest issue seems to be a desire and need to show how ocean acidification manifests itself and affects the fish and resources that local coastal communities depend on. The group supported forming a statewide network to connect stakeholders, scientists and managers. AOOS is taking the first step to coordinate a preliminary group that will include stakeholders with an interest in ocean acidification. Stay tuned for more info.

The Alaska Marine Science Symposium was held last week with 850 people attending, similar to last year. Due to a travel ban state agency participation was less than expected. Great presentations were made on the Gulf of Alaska, and Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. Dr. George Divoky spoke on his forty-year research program on black guillemots. Ambassador Mark Brzezinski, executive director of the US Arctic Executive Steering Committee, talked about the goals of his committee. There were lots of students participating in the symposium and the following awards were presented:

Best Student Oral Presentations (Alaska Sea Grant)

PhD – Jordan Beamer

Master's – Jane Sullivan

Special recognition to Srishti Dasarathy as the only undergraduate presenter.

Best Student Poster Presentation (NPRB)

PhD – Veronica Padula tied with Sarah Traiger

Master's First Place – Jane Dolliver

Master's Second Place – Alexis Walker

Special recognition by the Northwest Aquatic Marine Educators (NAME) to the three undergraduate and one high school presentation.

We were all very impressed by these students giving such polished and professional presentations to a very large group.

**Paula Cullenberg, Alaska Sea Grant**

New Sea Grant Knauss Marine Policy Fellow Erin Shew will be hosted by the White House Council on Environmental Quality: Two state fellows are currently working in Alaska: Matt Robinson is hosted at the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and Marysia Szymkowiak is being hosted by the National Marine Fisheries Service. Fellowship application is open now for next year's Knauss and State Sea Grant Fellows and will remain open until February 12, 2016 with great hosts available.

Davin Holen was recently hired as the new coastal community resilience specialist in the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program funded by Alaska Sea Grant, NOAA, ACCAP, and AOOS.

The 2016 Alaska Young Fisherman's Summit was held January 27-29 in Juneau. The summit was attended by 70 young professional fishermen from 30 communities across the state. The fishermen spent three days together meeting on professional development with a chance to testify at the House Fisheries Committee and hear from Governor Walker. Representative Kreiss-Tomkins says that it was an amazing delegation, the best he has seen yet. Representative Stutes says that it was an honor to have them there in Juneau, very touching and emotional. Representative Ortiz concurs.

**Hajo Eicken, UAF** – Arctic Science Summit Week is coming up March 12-18. Hajo mentioned some of the highlights for the week. More information can be found at [assw2016.org](http://assw2016.org).

**Tara Riemer, Alaska SeaLife Center** – Some of their staff attended a Sea Star Wasting Summit in January and anyone wanting more information on this can contact her. The Marine Gala is coming up Feb. 13 with tickets for sale on the Alaska SeaLife Center's website.

The next Alaska Marine Policy Forum is scheduled for March 23 at 1pm.