



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Host: Ginny Eckert, Alaska Sea Grant

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 dawn.montano@alaska.edu to receive email reminders and agendas for upcoming calls, and summary notes following each call. Visit the AOOS website to listen to an audio recording of this call.

Alaska Congressional Delegation Update

Jamie O'Connor, Senator Murkowski's Office

- Jamie has taken over for Ann Robertson as the Fisheries & Ocean staffer for Senator Murkowski.
- Maya Becker is the Sea Grant Fellow for Senator Murkowski's office working until the end of January 2022.

Digital Coastal Act

Miki Schmidt, NOAA Office of Coastal Management

- The NOAA Office of Coastal Management manages and leads four national programs; Coastal Zone Management, National Estuarian Research and Reserve, Coral Reef Conservation, and Digital Coast.
- The Digital Coast program was envisioned 15 years ago to fill gaps in products and services identified by the coastal resource management community so that coastal professionals could find relevant data.
- The program has now evolved as an enabling platform that meets the needs of the customer resource management community.
- Digital Coast focuses on data and integration of data into decision support tools, visualization tools, and training for coastal professionals to apply these tools.
- [The Digital Coast Act](#) was introduced in 2010 and signed into law in 2020.
- Representative Young was an initial cosponsor of the bill with Maryland's Representative Ruppberger. Senator's Murkowski and Sullivan were co-sponsors of the bill on the Senate side.
- Digital Coast is an authorization act with several requirements including to fill data gaps in coastal elevation, land use, land cover, critical infrastructure, socioeconomic, human use, habitat, living resource, and aerial imagery. Those data are required to be publicly accessible.
- The act additionally requires that the program coordinate with other similar authorities like the IOOS Act, Integration of Coastal Mapping Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, and Hydrographic Services Act.
- A provision in the act says that they will provide a greater focus on underserved areas including the Arctic.

- The Digital Coast program has been working in partnership with the USGS Alaska Mapping Executive Committee and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources to develop and invest in some data products.
- The program will now focus on the service delivery component of the act and work towards identifying the need for integrated tools and approaches to pilot.

The Alaska Harmful Algal Bloom Network

Thomas Farrugia, AOOS

- Thomas was hired six months ago as the first full-time AHAB Network coordinator and is an employee of the Alaska Ocean Observing System.
- The network was formed in 2017 and built upon decades of HAB work that has been done in Alaska to provide a statewide view and framework to promote awareness, research, monitoring, and response to HABs in Alaska.
- The network is actively growing and has begun developing a strategic action plan.
- There are about 130 individuals representing over 30 organizations both in and out of Alaska who meet monthly by phone for updates and to share related activities happening around the state. The next call will be on May 13.
- Goals for the network include establishing statewide programs and protocols for sampling and testing, developing and hosting a data portal for HAB bio-toxin data, securing long-term funding for baseline sampling, and developing outreach and training workshops and materials.
- The network hosts a [website](#) with access to materials developed and data collected by the AHAB community.
- The network is expecting to provide increasing value to the community as changing ocean conditions are likely to make HABs more prevalent in Alaska with blooms in areas not seen in the past and affecting both human health and wildlife populations.
- Currently, the network is working on increasing more long-term funding from both the state and the federal government.
- Please contact [Thomas](#) for more information.

Announcements

- *Tammy Davis, ADF&G* – The Alaska House Resources Committee recently held a hearing on House Bill 54 which established an Invasive Species Council with 27 seats. The hearing was to require the council to develop a strategic plan, regularly update the plan, and report to the legislature.
- *Jill Prewitt, AOOS* – A new [Bering Science Winter 2020/2021 report](#) has been released if there are any questions please contact [Jill](#).
- *Kris Holdereid, Kasitsna Bay Lab* – NOAA’s National Center for Coastal Ocean Studies has funded a project in Alaska to develop risk assessment products for HABs. Additionally, there is an effort out to produce a pilot publication on the State of Kachemak Bay modeled on other ecosystem-wide reports. Contact [Kris](#) for more information.
- *Ginny Eckert, Alaska Sea Grant* – ASG has a state fellowship program that will be placing a record number of fellows with different organizations around the state. The Kodiak Area Marine Sciences Symposium was held April 19-23 and the [Western Alaska Interdisciplinary Science Conference and Forum](#) will be held online May 13-14.

Next Alaska Marine Policy Forum call: June 16, 2021, 1 pm Alaska time.