



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, June 16, 2021

Host: Sheyna Wisdom, Alaska Ocean Observing System

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 (AOOS). 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

Maya Becker, Senator Murkowski's Office

- Maya Becker is the Sea Grant Fellow for Senator Murkowski's office working until the end of January 2022.
- The Senate continues working on President Biden's nominations and FY2022 appropriations.
- The Senate passed the Innovation and Competition Act (S1260), formerly known as the Endless Frontier Act, which will add a technology directorate to the National Science Foundation expanding American research and development efforts, investing in national labs, and contains several Arctic provisions championed by Senator Murkowski.
- Senator Murkowski is working to advance the Blue Globe Act (S140) introduced by the Senator and Senator Whitehouse. This legislation would invest in data collection within and monitoring of our nation's bodies of water in support of the Blue Economy.
- Last month, Senator Murkowski and colleagues introduced a resolution calling for the Senate to give advice and consent to the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- The Senator continued working towards accurate labeling of GMO salmon.
- The Senator also reintroduced her blue carbon for our Planet Act which would enhance federal research on coastal ecosystems that store carbon dioxide and methane to combat climate change and ocean acidification.
- The Senator is also working to secure COVID 19 relief funds for the seafood industry, ensuring that China honors its commitments to import US seafood.
- In April, NOAA awarded close to \$19M to AHTNA Infrastructure and Technologies to rebuild its port in Ketchikan home to its hydrographic survey vessels and the R/V *Fairweather*.

Carina Nichols, Senator Sullivan's Office

- Their office is spending a lot of time and energy on appropriations right now.
- NOAA is standing up the Marine Debris Foundation as part of the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act and they are looking for board members now, please contact Carina at the Senator's office with questions, Carina_Nichols@sullivan.senate.gov.

NOAA's FY 2022 Budget

Amy Holman, NOAA Alaska Regional Coordinator

- NOAA's budget request for this year was \$7B, a \$1.5B increase from last year representing increases in 7 areas;
 - Research - \$149M
 - Observations & Forecasting - \$368M
 - Restoration & Resilience - \$260M
 - Offshore Wind - \$20M
 - Equity - \$58M
 - Fleet - \$101M
 - Satellites - \$468M
- Bob Foy provided some highlights for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS):
 - A substantial amount of funds in the budget are dedicated to the Climate Fisheries Initiative, a cross line office effort with NMFS, Oceanic & Atmospheric Research (OAR), Ocean Service (OS), and others to develop climate models to inform management.
 - Some funding for increasing survey capacity (important for Alaska)
 - Identification of climate vulnerable species under the Endangered Species and Marine Mammal Protection Acts
 - A substantial request for large scale Habitat Restoration under climate resilience
- The increases dedicated to offshore wind will help with species reviews, science and technical reviews, survey mitigation, fisheries management, and environmental reviews etc.
- The increase in budget for Equity includes a piece on addressing critical gaps in territorial science and management, outreach & education, community social vulnerability indicators, and workforce training to support the seafood industry.
- The National Weather Service (NWS) saw increases in improving communication tools, delivering products to underserved communities, and space weather.
- NWS saw a big increase of \$65M related to climate observations and forecasting including bringing in local observations to the system.
- NWS is working on a flood inundation mapping tool which will come online for Alaska as soon as we connect more of our topography to our symmetry, fire weather, and seasonal forecasts on a national scale.
- NOAA's OS received a \$240M increase which included some National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) programs that were slated for cuts in the previous administration but have now been restored.
- A joint proposal with NCOS, the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), and the National Marine Sanctuary's programs was funded as part of the Climate Fisheries Initiative.
- The OS research portfolio was increased by \$20M to support community adaptation to coastal inundation within Alaska and the Arctic. Additionally grant proposals have gone out for Harmful Algal Bloom research.
- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation also received increases and will be making grants.
- Observations and Forecasting: there has been an increase of almost \$20M for navigation observations and positioning, \$10M for modernizing spatial reference systems and water level observations.
- A \$5M increase for building climate outlook capabilities and a dashboard for coastal inundation with \$5M going to national coastal modeling coverage.
- There was a \$29M increase for IOOS regional observations going out to the 11 regional associations including AOOS.
- The increase for Restoration and Resilience includes funds for place-based conservation efforts like the President's 30 By 30 initiative to protect 30% of the nation's land and water by 2030.

- NOAA's marine debris removal effort has received an increase of 60%.
- The Equity area of the budget includes tools to help underserved communities.
- The Research area increase includes restoration of funding to the Sea Grant program with an additional \$5M equity initiative.
- Sea Grant funding for aquaculture is level, an increase of \$35M for a resilience initiative with equity themes, and \$5M for a new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiative.
- There are a number of increases in the NOAA budget for climate studies and climate modeling including a joint effort with the Department of Energy on advanced research projects.
- There is a \$10M increase for enhancing regional and community resilience through scaling up regional integrated science assessments like the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy.
- A \$20M increase in research will fund sustained atmospheric observations and to support pieces of the Paris Agreement.
- The increase in NOAA's satellite service will fund a number of satellite launches in the next 16 months including an Argos satellite and some polar orbiting satellites that will greatly help in Alaska.
- The National Center for Environmental Information (NCEI) will be receiving \$88.1M which includes additional resources to support specific Climate activities to improve partnerships at regional levels.
- More information can be found in [NOAA's FY22 Blue Book](#), and [NOAA's FY22 Budget](#) press release.

North Pacific Fisheries Management Council Meeting Update

Kenny Down, NPFMC

- The Council had just finished three weeks of meetings at the time of this forum call.
- The Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) process is occurring with the Scientific and Statistical Committee and the EFH model descriptions will be presented by the SSC at the next meeting in October.
- The Council is bound to review the EFH Model every five years and one of the potential outcomes could be to revise the Fishery Management Plans.
- Likely to come out of the EFH review is the Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) process may follow or be tied into it. The Council has received some requests to open up the nomination process so that groups can nominate HAPC's which are required to be within the EFH model.
- The Council received an Ecosystem Committee report and agreed to have the Council staff do some updating on the Eastern Pacific stock of Northern Fur Seal.
- The Council asked staff to reach out to other organizations regarding marine debris for any information that may be useful to the Council.
- The Council is doing a lot of tracking on important ecological areas that are identified by tribes and NGOs and they will continue this effort.
- The Board asked the Council to bring back a paper on research initiatives taking place in the Gulf of Alaska and some forage fish ecology information to feed to the Ecosystem Committee.
- The Council is doing a lot of work on climate resilience and getting reports from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center.

Announcements

- *Amy Holman, NOAA* – Dr. Rick Spinrad has been named as the new NOAA Administrator and Janet Coit as the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries and Acting Deputy NOAA Administrator. Details are available in the NOAA [press release](#).

- *Bob Foy, AFSC* – The AFSC fieldwork operations are ongoing, wrapping up acoustic surveys and a large whale monitoring survey in the Gulf of Alaska. Surveys are going on in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska for bottom species, and a joint Polar Bear and Seal survey with the USFWS.
- *Kris Holdereid, Kasitsna Bay Lab* –The lab is catching up on lab analysis work for Harmful Algal Blooms. There was just a big red water bloom in Kachemak Bay and thanks to efforts by the State of Alaska colleagues and others the bloom was quickly identified as being produced by a non-toxic algae. There has also been an uptick in paralytic shellfish poisoning events around the state so keep an eye on that.
- *Betsy Baker* – The Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement has finally been ratified by China and will be entering into force in the month of June. The agreement includes a requirement that indigenous and local knowledge be considered in decisions of the five Arctic Ocean Coastal parties. Background information on the agreement can be found in an [article by a Chinese colleague](#) of Betsy's.
- *Lynn Palensky, NPRB* – There are two [open seats on the NPRB Advisory Panel](#) and they are looking for representatives, one from the Bering and Aleutian areas and a second from the Arctic area. NPRB is also anticipating a commitment of \$1.4 M for synthesis and assessment for the Arctic Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (AIERP). NPRB is releasing early information on their shorter RFP timeframe which will come out after their board meeting in October.

Next Alaska Marine Policy Forum call: August 18, 2021, 1 pm Alaska time.