



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, May 20, 2019

Host: Heather Brandon, 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 be added to the list serve to receive a reminder and agenda for the next call, and summary notes following each call.

Amy Kirkham, Sen. Murkowski's office

- Amy is the Sea Grant Fellow working with Ann Robertson, the legislative assistant covering fisheries, oceans, and other environmental issues.
- Senator Murkowski has been working on appropriations and her priorities including continued funding for: NMFS, the Pacific Salmon Treaty, the Sea Grant program, IOOS, ocean acidification, the National Estuarine Research Reserves, transboundary water quality monitoring, Prescott grants for marine mammal rescue and stranding activities and the aquatic invasive program.
- Senators Murkowski and Whitehouse co-sponsored the BLUE GLOBE Act (Bolstering Long-Term Understanding and Exploration of the Great Lakes, Oceans, Bays, and Estuaries). The Ocean Digital Coast Act was co-sponsored with Senator Baldwin in April and Senator Murkowski recently introduced the SEAL Act (Shipping and Environmental Arctic Leadership) and the Arctic Policy Act.
- Pink Salmon Disaster funds have not yet been approved for disbursement. The Senator is hoping that this will happen soon.
- Senators Murkowski and Sullivan with Congressmen Young sent a letter to the US trade representatives asking for an exemption to the seafood tariffs for Alaska seafood.
- The FDA lifted the ban on GMO salmon and the delegation is working on getting the FDA to take another look at this.

Erik Elam, Sen. Sullivan's office

- Working with Murkowski's office on appropriations.
- Senator is traveling the state with US Attorney Bill Barr last week and this week.
- Looking forward to Oceans Week on Capitol Hill next week.
- Their office is working on an updated version of the Coast Guard bill for committee consideration in July and will also introduce the Save Our Seas Act 2.0.
- Senator Sullivan's office will be sponsoring a roundtable event on June 10 discussing ivory and handicrafts and the need to pass legislation sponsored by Senators Sullivan and Murkowski to pre-empt bans from other states on ivory products that unintentionally include walrus ivory with elephant ivory.
- The Commerce committee passed reauthorization of the Sea Grant and IOOS programs.
- The American Fisheries Advisory Committee Act also passed which will affect the Saltonstall-Kennedy grant program by putting industry in the driver's seat for administration of the program rather than NMFS.

Greg Smith, Rep. Andi Story's office

- HB 116 was sponsored by Representative Story's office to simplify the DNR lease renewal process for aquatic farms and is moving through committees.

Liz Harpold, Rep. Dan Ortiz's office

- HB 41 on Shellfish Enhancement projects passed out of Fisheries Committee and is now in Senate Finance .

Senator Jesse Kiehl

- Wants to note that the Senate will not be able to pass an operating budget in time to prevent many State of Alaska departments' layoff notices to go out.

Doug Vincent-Lang and Rachel Baker, Alaska Department of Fish & Game

- The department is working to add federal funds to the Pacific Alaska Salmon Treaty to assist the department in implementing treaty items.
- The department plans to work with NPRB on Chinook salmon issues.
- Through their seat on the NPFMC, the department is putting together a list of issues to tackle over the next four years.
- The Marine Mammal Protection Act is problematic across Alaska as it says that marine mammal populations are to be managed for their optimal sustained population, putting a marine mammal at a higher priority than any other marine animal or as a part of a functional marine ecosystem. Will work with the Alaska delegation to change that.
- Rachel adds that the NPFMC is having a meeting in Sitka next week and of special interest to the department are the reports that will be presented on the Observer Program performance for 2018 and several reports on salmon bycatch management programs.

Glenn Haight, Board of Fisheries

- Glenn described the Board of Fish process. Proposals for policy changes are received by the board in April and then a review is published in August with the first board meeting happening in October. The board considers different areas and issues on a rotating basis so this year they are focusing on Lower Cook Inlet, Kodiak, Upper Cook Inlet and statewide king and tanner crab.

Heather McCarty, Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association, Co-Chair of the Mariculture Task Force

- The goal of the task force is to restore Blue King Crab in the Pribilof region and Red King Crab in the Gulf of Alaska.
- Legislation is needed to establish a regulatory framework for ADF&G to manage shellfish hatcheries to facilitate restoration.
- Senate Bill 22 & House Bill 41 are companion bills first proposed four years ago by the administration to address shellfish hatcheries and did not get passed.
- The bills were proposed again in 2017 and did not get passed.
- The bills are in the legislature now for the fifth year.
- SB22 is in senate finance with an amendment opposed by the United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) as they feel it sets a bad precedent. HB41 is also in senate finance in its original format.
- January will bring a new effort for both bills in the legislature.

- Work has been occurring now under special research permits which has allowed for development of culture techniques, but legislation is needed in order to elevate the production level needed for restoration.
- There has been a lot of support for these bills.

Julie Decker, Executive Director of the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Chair of the Mariculture Task Force

- HB76 passed last year allowing for the existing mariculture revolving loan fund to also be used by non-profit shellfish hatcheries and regulations, and processes are being developed now.
- Federal legislation was introduced last year on aquaculture in the U.S. exclusive economic zone and did not pass, but will be reintroduced in the near future.

Next Alaska Marine Policy Forum call: July 17 2019, 1 pm Alaska time.