



## Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, May 20, 2020

Host: Molly McCammon, 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. Contact [dawn.montano@alaska.edu](mailto: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**

***Senator Jesse Kiehl***

- The legislature approved all CARES Act money from the federal government which includes \$50M in relief funds for commercial fisheries.

### **Impacts from the Pandemic**

***Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)***

- The North Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended [two actions](#) that affect the Halibut IFQ Program: 1) Allow temporary transfer of IFQs for all quota share holders for the remainder of the 2020 fishing season, and 2) Temporarily remove vessel use caps for IFQ halibut harvested in Areas 4B, 4C, and 4D for the remainder of the 2020 fishing season.
- ADF&G has all necessary infrastructure in place to manage fisheries for this year including measures protective of public, fishermen, agency staff and community health.

***Frances Leach, Executive Director, United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA)***

- Impacts from the pandemic began as early as January with markets crashing in China resulting in devastation to the related fisheries.
- In March the UFA began putting procedures in place that processors and harvesters would comply with to combat the spread of the virus and that would reassure communities.
- The Governor issued [Health Mandate 17](#) on Protective Measures for Independent Commercial Fishing Vessels, along with further guidance in Health Mandate 16.
- UFA has been involved in tracking funding opportunities available to commercial fishermen. UFA has published a [Covid 19 Resource Guide](#) on their website.
- Overall, the pandemic has highlighted the industry's recognition of the importance of harvesters, processors, and commercial fishing communities working together.

***Robert J. Foy, Science & Research Director, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NMFS-NOAA***

- The biggest impact to the center has been on their ability to monitor oceans and ecosystems, building on a 50-plus year time series. This information is crucial in managing our fisheries.
- The center manages the onboard observer program and immediately began adapting procedures for travel and data collection through working with the fishing industry.

- There have been numerous cancellations and postponements of research vessel trips, affecting their ability to conduct basic surveys.
- The center is working to prioritize research needs focusing on community and staff health.
- The center will provide more detail on changes to their stock assessment procedures at the June meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.
- The center funded a large sail drone project with three surface drones on their way to Alaska now to collect acoustic mid-water data for the Pollock fishery.
- There are a number of international research entities tentatively in Alaska waters this year and the center is working to identify core needs and work with them to collect as much data as possible.
- Through a collaborative effort between NOAA, AOS, and the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee, a [spreadsheet](#) has been developed with the status of research cruises and published on the AOS website and elsewhere.

***Josh Keaton, Resource Management Specialist, Sustainable Fisheries-NOAA***

- NOAA's Sustainable Fisheries program works on active day-to-day management of the Federal Groundfish fisheries and the Halibut IFQ program.
- The Pollock and Pacific Cod fisheries A seasons are either finished or nearly finished with most season allocations having been met.
- The B and C seasons have not yet started and are slated to last into November so impacts to these from the pandemic have yet to be seen.
- There are some indications that the Sable Fish and Halibut IFQ fisheries are at about 88% of their average harvest for Sable Fish and 50% for Halibut in the first 10 weeks of the fishery.
- There have been reports of lower value in fisheries resulting from a drop in demand for seafood products which may contribute to the lower catch rates.
- Observer coverage for fishing vessels is near full coverage with some partial coverage waivers.

**Announcements**

- Ginny Eckert, Alaska Sea Grant – They have been working to support the fishing industry by providing economic advice and how to access federal and state support. The information can be found on their [website](#).
- Molly McCammon, AOS – AOS is soliciting input to its next five years of priorities, projects, and activities. For more information please visit the [website](#).
- Jim Sartucci, KL Gates – There are many fishing trade associations getting better at coordinating with Congress to get additional funding for impacts to the pandemic and these efforts are making better progress than smaller regional efforts. He is happy to talk to anyone interested in this topic. Please contact him at [jim.sartucci@klgates.com](mailto:jim.sartucci@klgates.com) or (202) 778-9374.
- Timi Vann, NOAA Office for Coastal Management – Timi is the new sub-regional lead under Becky Smyth for the Pacific Northwest and Alaska and is looking forward to working in the region again. Timi's email is [timi.vann@noaa.gov](mailto:timi.vann@noaa.gov).

**Next Alaska Marine Policy Forum call: July 22, 2020, 1 pm Alaska time.**