



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, September 16, 2020

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

Carina Nichols, Senator Sullivan's Office

- Several bills passed through the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation committee on September 16, 2020.
 - [S.804 Empowering Rural Economies Through Alaska Native Sustainable Arts and Handicrafts Act](#)
 - [S.3831 Visit America Act](#)
 - [S.4286 Research Investment to Spark the Economy Act or the RISE Act](#)
 - [S.4462 Flood Level Observation, Operations, and Decision Support Act or the FLOODS Act](#)
- The US Department of Agriculture announced a [Tariff Relief Program for the Seafood Industry](#) and the Senator's office is working on clarifying the details. There is a rumor that this COVID relief package will be awarded on a first-come-first-serve basis and that is FALSE.
- They are looking forward to the [2020 Comfish Alaska](#) conference September 17-18 in Kodiak.
- They have been closely following the Senator's Save Our Seas 2.0 marine debris bill which is in the house Transportation and Infrastructure committee and are hoping to get it passed before the end of the year.

Kayla Rillo, Congressman Young's Office

- They are working hard to get the Save Our Seas 2.0 bill passed before the end of the year.
- The Congressman is pushing to get [S.1425](#) the ICOOS reauthorization bill signed into law by the end of the year.

Ann Robertson, Senator Murkowski's Office

- The Senator is working to advance [The Blue Globe Act](#), introduced by Senators Murkowski and Whitehouse.
- Senator Murkowski continues working on [The Blue Carbon for Our Planet Act](#) which touches on mariculture efforts in Alaska with regard to kelp production and ocean acidification. Their office is very interested in any feedback from Alaska stakeholders. Ann can be contacted at Ann_Robertson@murkowski.senate.gov.
- They are expecting passage of a continuing resolution through the regular appropriations process this month to keep the government open beyond the end of the month.
- The Senator has been working on several initiatives through the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee including funding for NOAA, seed grant support to bring the

R/V Fairweather back to Ketchikan, the Pacific Salmon Treaty, NOAA fishery surveys, marine debris, and the Tsunami Warning Center.

- Along with the other members of the Alaska Congressional Delegation, they will be participating in Comfish Alaska in Kodiak.

Mariculture in Alaska

Heather McCarty, Alaska Mariculture Task Force

- Heather is the acting chair of the task force in the temporary absence of chair Julie Decker.
- The task force was created in response to stakeholder concerns regarding mariculture in Alaska with a goal of advancing, developing, and supporting the industry.
- They have been supported by the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation and external grants.
- The task force has recently been focused on outlining the structure of a successor group after the task force sunsets next year, tentatively called the Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA).
- The AMA would exist as a 501c3 organization with membership open to stakeholders in the mariculture industry in Alaska.
- The task force has also created the Mariculture Research and Training Center to be housed within Alaska Sea Grant and coordinate and identify necessary research as indicated by stakeholders.
- The task force has developed a [five year plan](#).
- Heather McCarty shared that the Alaska Mariculture Task Force will be discussing the topic of Aquaculture Opportunity Areas at their next meeting on September 23 from 12-3PM AK time. Contact [Heather](#) for more information.

Alicia Bishop, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA)

- Alicia is the Alaska Regional Aquaculture Coordinator.
- [Executive Order 13921](#), "Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth" was signed May 7, 2020 and in Section 7 directed NOAA to identify 10 regions as Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) by 2025.
- The first two regions designated were Southern California and the Gulf of Mexico.
- Alaska industry stakeholders can submit comments requesting that Alaska be considered for a future AOA.
- AOAs can be considered within state waters, Economic Exclusion Zones, or any combination of the two.
- AOAs should be large enough to accommodate 3-5 commercial aquaculture operations.

Announcements

- Gay Sheffield of Alaska Sea Grant shared that there were Russian military exercises in the Bering Strait region recently and Ann Robertson at Senator Murkowski's office responded that they are working with the Pentagon and the US Coast Guard to identify what notifications can be given to local communities in the future.
- Amy Lovecraft mentioned that the [Wilson Center interviewed both Senators Murkowski and Sullivan](#) and the live exercises in the Bering Strait Region were discussed.
- James Lima of BOEM announced the Call for Information and Nominations and Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS for [Cook Inlet Sale 258](#) scheduled for 2021. Comment period closes on October 13.
- Sue Goodglick of Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) says that the department has been looking for funding to research potential impacts to marine mammal resources from aquaculture.

- Gay Sheffield announced that the Bering Strait Region is experiencing a marine debris event since August potentially indicating vessel sinking in the region.
- Hannah Wilson, Sea Grant Mariculture Policy Fellow, says that Sea Grant is working on an updated mariculture website and working with agencies to create a portal to consolidate application information for new mariculture farms.
- [Dan Lesh](#), McDowell Group, announced that the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation recently received a grant to work on seaweed marketing strategies and he welcomes any information regarding this topic for their work with AFDF.
- Bob Foy, NOAA's Alaska Fisheries Science Center, reported that the research vessel Oscar Dyson has been collecting data and retrieving moorings. Generally, sea surface temperatures in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas have been cooler than normal but warmer in the Eastern Bering Sea and substantially warmer in the Gulf of Alaska than average. They are working with the North Slope borough on a Bowhead whale survey and finishing up a sail drone survey in the Bering Sea.
- Darcy Dugan of the Alaska Harmful Algal Bloom Network announced that AOOS received funding for and have just hired a full-time network coordinator. Also, harmful algal blooms will be included in the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council's ecosystem status report for the first time this year. The next monthly conference call for the AHAB network will be on October 8. If you would like to be added to the email list, contact [Darcy](#).

Next Alaska Marine Policy Forum call: November 18, 2020, 1 pm Alaska time.