



## **Alaska Marine Policy Forum**

Summary from Wednesday, April 19, 2023

Hosts: Ginny Eckert, Alaska Sea Grant & Sheyna Wisdom, Alaska Ocean Observing System

Notes by Molly Cain

*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](mailto:dawn.montano@alaska.edu) to receive email reminders and agendas for upcoming calls, and summary notes following each call.*

### ***Alaska Congressional Delegation Updates***

#### ***Mary-Eileen Manning, Senator Sullivan's Office***

- New Congress so there is currently a lot of organization happening
- Farm Bill Reauthorization is in progress. The Alaska delegation is working on an amendment to establish a seafood office at USDA.
- Sen. Sullivan is introducing an Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing bill tomorrow. Sen. Murkowski and others are co-sponsoring.
- Save Our Seas 3.0/Marine Debris Efforts
  - Sullivan's office is continuing consultations. Please [contact Sen. Sullivan's office](#) with any ideas related to marine debris.
- New Coast Guard Bill
  - Sullivan's office is putting together additions. Please contact Sen. Sullivan's office with any ideas related to this.

#### ***Matt Robinson, Senator Murkowski's Office***

- Appropriations
  - We are finalizing our submissions to the committee for Congressionally Directed Spending. Our scheduled date for requests to be published is tomorrow. Information should soon be available on Sen. Murkowski's website.
- Working Waterfronts
  - Restarting efforts. Meeting internally and will reach out to the rest of the Alaska Delegation. Knauss Fellow Bella Smith is reviewing feedback received to date on this.

#### ***Tyson Fick, Representative Peltola's Office***

- Have held several listening sessions (e.g., in Kenai, Anchorage). Have heard from folks with concerns going into the fishing season (e.g., set-net closure, King salmon closure, bycatch). They are currently synthesizing what they heard and continuing to have

conversations about what can be done legislatively.

- House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, Fisheries (WWF) met with NOAA representative
  - Asked for an update on the status of implementation guidelines for the [National Standard Guidelines for Fisheries](#). The administration wants to update the guidelines.
  - Asked for an update on the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit

## Questions

- Is there any indication of when NOAA will put out its notice of intent concerning the National Standard Guidelines?
  - No
- What is the timing of the Coast Guard Bill?
  - The last Coast Guard Bill got delayed. We would be happy to receive input on the next one over the next few months.

## *Alaska Legislative Updates*

*none provided*

## *Presentations by Invited Speakers*

### **2022 Bering Strait harmful algal bloom (HAB) event—A collaborative response**

#### **Bob Pickart, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution**

- First dedicated field program to study HABs (harmful algal blooms) in the Arctic
  - Interdisciplinary program involving many investigators
  - Lead PI on the research cruise was Don Anderson, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Bob Pickart was the Lead Scientist
- Research cruises occurred in 2022
  - Funded by NSF Polar Programs
  - Cruise 1 occurred in mid-July to mid-Aug 2022
  - Cruise 2 occurred in mid-Aug to early-Sept 2022
- Prior to the cruise, the team put together a communications plan that included daily updates to regional communities and weekly summaries to Alaska Harmful Algal Bloom network

#### **Evie Fachon, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution**

- Their research group studies *Alexandrium catenella*
  - Causes paralytic shellfish poisoning
  - Toxins passed through the food web
  - Blooms were observed in the Bering Strait and Chukchi Shelf regions in 2018/2019
- Observe HABs in the field in real-time
  - Use Imaging FlowCytobot (IFCB)
  - Concentrations >1000 cells/L are a dangerous concentration
- Developed risk advisories to pass on to community

- Bloom detected west of St. Lawrence Island on July 25
  - >20,000 cells/L
  - Communications activated
- Bloom progressed through the Bering Strait and intensified
  - Concentrations >150,000 cells/L = very dense!
  - Multiple rounds of advisories issued

### ***Gay Sheffield, Alaska Sea Grant***

- It was unique that there was a communication plan developed in conjunction with the research cruise
  - The people doing the research communicated directly with the regional hubs before, during, and after the cruise.
  - Directly integrating into the regional communication network was a great advantage. When the researchers noticed conditions were bad, they were able to get ahold of Norton Sound Health Corporation and Alaska Sea Grant.

### ***Emma Pate, Norton Sound Health Corporation***

- Norton Sound Health Corporation shared the advisories with medical staff who shared the advisories with clinics in communities near the Alexandrium bloom
- Alaska Sea Grant and Norton Sound Health Corp. communicated with Tribal organizations.
- Gay and Emma traveled to communities because there was so much concern due to the advisories.
- A local from St. Lawrence Island sent in a clam for sampling as a result of the advisories.
  - They normally would have eaten the clam, but based on information they received by word of mouth, they decided to send the clam in for testing.
  - The clam tested over 5x the food safety limit.
- Regional communications:
  - Radio
  - Newspaper – *Nome Nugget* had a front page article about the topic
  - Local seminars
  - Community meetings
  - Youth education: Outreach with high school biology classes interested in HABs in response to media coverage. Performed sampling in the field and microscopy with University of Alaska Fairbanks lab to identify phytoplankton in the water. Important to get information to younger people since the problem will continue into the future.
  - Regional/statewide meetings
- Started sampling phytoplankton weekly at Cape Nome last summer, as conditions permitted; some challenges due to wildfire smoke and Typhoon Merbok
- Norton Sound Health Corporation is working to establish a baseline for phytoplankton data in the region. They would like to have a toxin testing lab in the future.
- In the area there is comprehensive utilization of marine ecosystems, which are affected by HABs, for nutrition and culture.

### **Gay Sheffield**

- HABs are of immediate human and animal health concern.
- Coordination and teamwork was key.
- The bloom traveled across regional hub locations so it was important to have regional hubs brought on to address human health risks.
- There are a lot of research needs in terms of how HABs at different levels affect different organisms.

### **Thomas Farrugia, Alaska Ocean Observing System**

- Consistent expanding monitoring is needed.
  - We got lucky that there was a research project and crew in the area when the event happened last year. That will not always be the case.
  - Need funding for consistent monitoring across Alaska to provide immediate info about HABs and aggregate time series of HAB data for research
- Three approaches to HABs monitoring
  - Presence/quantity of harmful algal species
  - Toxin testing
  - Communication/outreach
- Different areas of Alaska have different needs/capacity to consider
- [Alaska Harmful Algal Bloom](#) (AHAB) Network
  - Formed in 2017
  - Strength of network comes from members who contribute to a shared goal, monitoring, etc.
  - Provides a space to talk and provide information about HABs
- AOOS has some current funding; gets some funds from the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) through the National HAB Observing Network (NHABON).
- Federal and state funding are needed to build additional capacity and to create a statewide monitoring program

### Q&A

- Can the IFCB be deployed to help monitor?
  - It could help. It is a very expensive instrument. To start, it is good to have the instrument attached to somewhere that is accessible for troubleshooting.
- What is the turnaround on the toxin testing sampling?
  - It will vary depending on the type of testing. For the clam testing, it did not take very long. It was an emergency response so it probably happened faster than usual. Under normal circumstances when it is for research purposes, it often sits in line for a while.
  - Much of the total turnaround time is due to shipping. At the Anchorage lab, once the sample gets to the lab, turnaround can be within a day.

*Announcements*

*Please reach out to [Ginny Eckert](#) or [Sheyna Wisdom](#) if you would like to hear about a particular topic during future forums.*

**The next Alaska Marine Policy Forum call will be June 21, 2023 at 1 pm Alaska time. To register visit: <https://alaskaseagrant.org/event/alaska-marine-policy-forum-june-2023/>**