



### **Alaska Marine Policy Forum**

Summary from Wednesday, February 15, 2023

Host: Sheyna Wisdom, Alaska Ocean Observing System

Notes by Molly Cain and Sheyna Wisdom

*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***

##### ***Carina Nichols, Senator Sullivan's Office***

- Working on the Farm Bill and seafood priorities. Concerned about Conservancy lawsuit and precedence that might set for Alaska being on the hook for Orcas hundreds of miles away. Working on commerce committee fisheries and oceans priorities. Enjoyed meeting with the Marine Debris Foundation Board last week.
- Last Congress funded the government; passed Alaska Salmon Task Force Act
- New Knauss Fellow in Senator's Office: Shannon Burns
- **Participant Question:** Sullivan is sponsoring an amendment to the Save Our Seas 2.0. What is different about this version compared to the previous one?
  - **Eileen Manning (Sen. Sullivan's Office):** Save Our Seas passed in 2020. This bill is a small update to that. Provides some technical corrections and increases the flexibility of funding for NOAA Marine Debris program and the congressionally chartered Marine Debris Foundation. The office is in discussions about Marine Debris 3.0 Bill, which they hope to introduce this summer.

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

- Matt is the new legislative assistant for fisheries and oceans
- Farm Bill is a priority. Thinking about how to incorporate seafood and fisheries into the farm bill.
- [Appropriations Portal](#) is open on Sen. Murkowski's website. March 10 is the deadline for earmark requests.
- New Knauss fellow in Senator's Office: Bella Smith.

## *Alaska Legislative Updates*

### **Senator Kaufman, Chair of Senate Transportation Committee**

- Previous legislation created the [Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board \(AMHOB\)](#)—to be a competent board with technical competences to help steer the marine highway system to better operations. With IIJA funding coming in from Congressional delegation, we have a board with a year to form and work with DOT. Looking at making sure the funding is used to create a functioning marine highway system.

## *Invited Speakers*

### **Sarah Rheinsmith, North Pacific Fishery Management Council**

#### **Topic: Snow crab rebuilding plan—final update**

- Agenda for February council meeting where you can find final analysis document on snow crab rebuilding plan: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2975>
- As a recap, the Bering Sea snow crab stock was declared overfished in 2021. It remained overfished in 2022. We think this was due to ecosystem conditions in the 2019 and 2020 seasons that resulted in a mass mortality event. First time in history the fishery remained closed.
- Following the declaration, per Magnuson-Stevens Act guidelines, required to put together a rebuilding plan within 2 years.
- Proposed alternatives for analysis and establishment of parameters.
  - Alternative 1: no action (does not comply with MSA guidelines)
  - Alternative 2: establish a rebuilding plan and set the target rebuilding time to the number of years necessary to rebuild the stock to MSY at probability > 50%. Two options: 1) no directed fishery but allowing bycatch, 2) allowing directed fishery with limits and allowing bycatch. Stock will be considered rebuilt when reaches BMSY
- The council selected Alternative 2, Option 2 with the modification of setting the target rebuilding time to 6 years.
  - Must implement by October 2023
  - Reviewed every 2 years to ensure adequate progress is being made.

### **Peter Murphy, Alaska Coordinator for the NOAA Marine Debris Program**

### **Harmony Wayner, Alaska Sea Grant State Fellow with NOAA Marine Debris Program**

#### **Topic: NOAA Marine Debris Program: Alaska Marine Debris Action Plan –status, update, next steps**

- Marine debris action plans exist for many states or regions across the country. Common goal is to capture a collaborative picture within that region with status, actions, gaps, needs, and future actions. Organized by action and by debris type. They talk about what is happening and what are the priority actions.
- The Alaska Action Plan will be organized by Actions, Needs, Priorities, and Context. Trying to capture a collaborative and holistic picture of Alaska marine debris issues, needs, and efforts.
- A steering committee for the action plan formed from all sectors - has been meeting since October 2022.
- Trying to make sure to provide multiple pathways so there are no barriers to

engagement.

- Conducting listening sessions
- Host webinars
- Input form
- Direct communications
- Will draft a plan and then share back
- Action planning is an on-going process. Includes drafting, updating, incorporating feedback. There will be opportunities moving forward to provide feedback. Plan to finalize by October/November 2023.
- Currently hosting listening sessions and online webinars
  - Listening sessions at AMSS January, AFE February, ComFish March, ATCEM March
  - Webinars in March and April
- Input methods
  - Include a map with the action plan - thinking about distances between locations to help with thinking about methods.
  - Also looking to include organizational contacts, disposal information, others as identified by communities. People in Alaska prefer to be action-based rather than sitting in a workshop.
- Feel free to reach out with feedback or questions:
  - Peter Murphy
    - [peter.murphy@noaa.gov](mailto:peter.murphy@noaa.gov)
    - [marinedebris.noaa.gov](http://marinedebris.noaa.gov)
  - Harmony Wayner
    - [harmony.wayner@noaa.gov](mailto:harmony.wayner@noaa.gov)
    - [marinedebris.noaa.gov](http://marinedebris.noaa.gov)

### ***Ginny Eckert, Marine Debris Foundation Board: update***

#### **Topic: Marine Debris Foundation Board Update**

- Marine debris: any solid material that is disposed of (intentionally or not) in the marine environment
- Many effects globally: e.g., marine transportation, human health, wildlife health, economic impacts. Big problem in Alaska.
- Marine Debris Foundation is a new nonprofit organization created by Save Our Seas 2.0. Authorized by Congress. Goal to assess, prevent, reduce, remove marine debris.
- The Foundation has a volunteer Board that includes two Alaska representatives: Julianne Curry and Ginny Eckert. Ginny serves as the Chair.
- The Board had their first in person meeting in October 2022.
- Activities of the foundation:
  - Fundraising. Foundation will match federal funding with private funding. Board will be working on private fundraising.
  - Working with NOAA, as well as with states, local, and tribal governments, foreign governments, entities, and individuals.
  - Administer grants, including the Genius Prize for Save Our Seas
- Mission: The Marine Debris Foundation leads efforts to eliminate marine debris and

plastic pollution through innovative grantmaking, effective advocacy, and strategic partnerships.

- Vision: The Marine Debris Foundation envisions a planet free from marine debris and plastic pollution.
- Website: <https://marinedebrisfoundation.org/>

#### Q&A

- Can you explain where the money is coming from? You said the organization will be dispersing money but congress didn't appropriate any
  - Ginny: We will be advocating for funding. We have an operational grant right now that is helping to support support staff. The act authorizes up to \$10M. We will put in requests for funding in this upcoming legislative season. We have two committees: a fundraising committee and a granting committee.
- How can people apply? I'm thinking about Tribes trying to apply for grants and get funds for local cleanup of marine debris.
  - Ginny: We've met with the NOAA Marine Debris program because we want our efforts to be complimentary. They provide grants for cleanup. NOAA mentioned some of the areas they have trouble serving relate to small requests and providing funding directly to communities. There is marine debris infrastructure funding with past and future funding opportunities. That may be able to help some of those cleanup efforts in Alaska as well. The Genius prize is something we will be putting out there.
- How much is the foundation's work domestic-focused vs. international-focused?
  - Ginny: There is a significant amount of debris in Alaska coming from non-U.S. sources. The foundation is grappling with that issue now. The Foundation envisions having a role in the international policy arena and in encouraging the U.S. to step up internationally in addressing marine debris. Policy is an area we will engage with. We acknowledge that the issue occurs on both fronts.
  - Mary-Eileen (Sen. Sullivan's Office): On the international marine debris efforts - in addition to NOAA, which is mainly domestically-focused, we have USAID which has a program called Save Our Seas. It is under their Clean Cities Blue Ocean program. So there are a number of agencies tackling the problem internationally.
  - Peter Murphy: An element that has grown is awareness in popular press. That is true international as well. A question is how much marine debris is international vs. domestic. We don't have good numbers on this.

#### *Announcements*

*Please reach out to Ginny or Sheyna if you would like to hear about a particular topic during future forums.*

**The next Alaska Marine Policy Forum call will be April 19, 2023 at 1 pm Alaska time. To register visit: <https://alaskaseagrant.org/event/alaska-marine-policy-forum-april-2023/>**