



## **Alaska Marine Policy Forum**

Summary from Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Hosts: Sheyna Wisdom, Alaska Ocean Observing System

Notes by Molly Cain, Alaska Sea Grant

*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***

- The Federal government is currently operating under a continuing resolution (CR) that expires Nov. 17.
- Knauss fellow Shannon Burns is working on a Harmful Algal Bloom (HABs) reauthorization bill. We hope to introduce that before Thanksgiving.
- We will introduce a bill next week to reauthorize NOAA's Marine Debris Program. The previous one expired at the end of the fiscal year. This doesn't provide funding but reauthorizes it for an additional 5 years.
- Sen. Sullivan is part of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. They will meet next week and will talk about Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.
  - [Hearing information](#)
- Carina Nichols is working on a Russia Seafood Bill, as well as the Seafood office we're hoping will be established at the Department of Agriculture.

#### ***Senator Murkowski's Office***

*none present*

#### ***Representative Peltola's Office***

*none present*

### ***Alaska Legislative Updates***

*none present*

## *Invited Speakers*

### ***Davin Holen, coastal community resilience specialist, Alaska Sea Grant***

#### **'People on the Move in a Changing Climate' Overview**

- PEMOCC is a Sea Grant-led Research Coordination Network that fosters collaboration among diverse experts and stakeholders to address research needs related to climate-induced human mobility, its socioeconomic consequences, and its role in building resilience and adaptation to the impacts of climate change in US coastal and Great Lakes regions.
- The project spans many Sea Grant programs.
- The team held a series of 5 regional workshops across the U.S.
  - The final workshop was held in Anchorage and focused on Alaska, the Northwest, and Pacific Islands.
    - Some participants included members of tribal councils in Alaska, as well as attendees from Hawaii and Saipan.
    - The workshop looked at migration in general and what we can learn from migration underway.
  - An outcome of the workshops will be a series of articles published in the National Sea Grant log journal which synthesize findings and identifies next steps.
- Migration in Alaska
  - Largest growth in Mat-Su and Kenai Peninsula Boroughs, and mostly out-migration from other areas
  - Most in-state movement involves Anchorage, and there is considerable migration in and out of regional hubs (e.g., Juneau, Bethel, Fairbanks)
  - Key questions
    - Why do people stay in rural Alaska and why do they leave?
      - Home, family, subsistence lifestyles, sense of freedom
    - Why do people move?
      - Economic opportunities, education for children, to be near family in urban centers as they get older
      - Climate factors can also influence the decision to move.
        - e.g., Typhoon Merbok Impacts - scattered fishing boats
          - Some community members left after this Typhoon. Might not have been the only factor, but contributed to the decision.
  - The Mat-Su Borough grew from 20,000 to 110,000 in 30 years.

### ***Kelsey Anderson, senior planner, Matanuska-Susitna Borough***

#### **Growing Pains: reacting to, planning for, growth in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough**

- Kelsey participated in the PEMOCC workshop
- The Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) is growing and has reached a turning point in terms of the need for land use regulations
- Why is everyone coming to the MSB?
  - Residents appreciate the privacy, space and small-town atmosphere, and opportunities for outdoor recreation.

- MSB doesn't have the economic opportunities Anchorage has. There is still a lot of commuting to Anchorage.
- There has been unprecedented growth– the MSB has gained 40,000 and is expected to gain another 40,000. This growth is becoming a challenge
  - Little has been done in terms of land use regulations to guide growth.
    - MSB made a mistake by not identifying and purchasing key right of ways and trail connections as it grew
    - They are now trying to figure out how to hold developers responsible for increased traffic and maintaining connectivity for safe neighborhoods and routes to schools
  - Residents are concerned about environmental effects as well as what it means to protect a quality of life they have come to expect in the MSB
  - Because of the growth, the MSB has been designated an urbanized area by the federal government. This means they have to start planning in a different, more meaningful way.
    - They need to create a Metropolitan Planning Organization which makes sure all local governments have representation at a planning table where they decide how to spend federal dollars
    - They need to start planning to manage transportation and stormwater differently because there is so much development. They are working with DEC and EPA to make sure that the increased human footprint is not further impairing water bodies.
    - Planning staff is spending hours with communities, trying to facilitate conversations about the opportunities and trade-offs of growth.
    - It is an exciting time to be in the MSB and planning. They are learning the public is experiencing growing pains and are looking to the local government for solutions.
  - Kelsey's email: [Kelsey.anderson@matsugov.us](mailto:Kelsey.anderson@matsugov.us)

### **Attendee Q&A**

- What are the plans for the Mat-Su residents who commute to work in ANC or travel to catch domestic and international flights to utilize a rapid (moose- and bear-friendly) rail transit system and take advantage of the underutilized rail terminus at the ANC Intl. Airport?
  - Kelsey: Neither municipality is spending money to make that happen. A lot of residents in MSB rely on Valley Transit, the only transit operator that makes trips from MSB to Anchorage. They have a few scheduled daily routes. Transit in MSB is an anomaly for a local government in that we don't play a role in it. The transit is done through non-profits and public health providers.
- Are there any good analogs/lessons from other Gateway (to Wilderness) communities? For example, one issue is often rapid increases in the cost of housing since people are moving to the MSB from Anchorage for more affordable housing.
  - Kelsey: Thinking through affordable housing is a big factor in the comprehensive plan. In the MSB, a lot comes down to public water and public sewer. Only the cities of Wasilla and Palmer are operators of public utilities. The middle section

of the core area essentially has to develop on 1 acre lots because of septic and water requirements. One thing the cities are looking at is connecting the water and sewer lines from Palmer and Wasilla to the core areas so we can see development in those areas. Right now, we are being forced to grow at a rate of 1 acre per household, which is unsustainable.

- As a resident of the Kenai Peninsula Borough, I'm wondering how Mat-Su growing pains reflect what is occurring on the Kenai Peninsula. Homer is about to embark on updating our Comprehensive Plan, and we would love to learn from your experiences.
  - Kelsey: my email is [Kelsey.anderson@matsugov.us](mailto:Kelsey.anderson@matsugov.us). Happy to join you on the comp plan adventure
  - Davin: Ryan Foster from the City of Homer also participated in this workshop. He talked about their comprehensive plan. You can connect with him at [rfoster@ci.homer.ak.us](mailto:rfoster@ci.homer.ak.us).
- Any concerns for the rapidly disappearing fertile farmlands (due to new housing developments) and loss of lower-cost local farm product availability?
  - Kelsey: That is a huge concern. We have an intern whose focus is bringing food security into our comprehensive plan. We're lucky to be one of the agricultural parts of Alaska. But because we are developing so quickly, we are losing farmland to development. A member of the Alaska Farmland Trust is on our steering committee to help bring that perspective. A lot comes down to people's right to subdivide their property or not, since you can make more money subdividing. Unless we figure out a way to incentivize, we are seeing the future of farming in Alaska as a lot of smaller farms. A lot of hobby farms start up here, but the MSB isn't doing much to incentivize farming and protect farmlands. It is something we are thinking through in this planning process, and goes along with protecting the character of the Matsu. We've done interviews for the comp plan. Farmers stated food storage as the biggest challenge. They can grow and harvest, but not store with what they have.
  - Davin: Most farms in Alaska are making less than \$10,000/yr. So they are small-scale farms.

### *Announcements*

- Sheyna Wisdom, AOOS
  - AOOS Request for Coastal Resilience Project Ideas: <https://aoss.org/request-for-coastal-resilience-project-ideas/>
    - AOOS will be receiving funding under the Inflation Reduction Act for the period of Aug 1, 2024–July 31, 2028 totaling \$5M, and is accepting project proposal ideas.
    - Reach out to AOOS if you have questions.
    - Sheyna's email: [wisdom@aoss.org](mailto:wisdom@aoss.org)
- Ginny Eckert, Alaska Sea Grant
  - Two Alaska Sea Grant-nominated students were selected for the Knauss Fellowship, and will be heading to DC in February 2024.

- Blog story: <https://alaskaseagrant.org/2023/10/alaska-students-selected-for-knauss-fellowship/>
  - Upcoming Funding Opportunities
    - NOAA Marine Debris Program opportunities: <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/resources/funding-opportunities>
      - Marine Debris Removal funding opportunity - Letter of intent due Oct. 27, 2023
      - Marine Debris Interception Technologies funding opportunity - Letter of intent due November 15, 2023
      - Contact Peter Murphy with questions: [Peter.Murphy@noaa.gov](mailto:Peter.Murphy@noaa.gov)
    - National Sea Grant opportunities: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/inside-sea-grant/funding-opportunities/>
      - Climate Ready Workforce Program - Letter of intent due November 30, 2023
      - Marine Debris Challenge Competition - Letter of intent due January 31, 2023
      - Contact Ginny with questions: [ginny.eckert@alaska.edu](mailto:ginny.eckert@alaska.edu)
- Darcy Dugan, AOOS
  - The Tipping Points project is in the process of concluding. The project looks at what we know about salmon response to ocean acidification and how management decisions can affect harvest value.
    - Project website: <https://aoan.aos.org/salmon-tipping-points/>
    - Tipping Points Brochure: <https://aoan.aos.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Tipping-Points-Takehomes-FINAL.pdf>
  - Alaska Ocean Acidification Network has been partnering on a series of carbon dioxide removal (CDR).
    - The next session in the series is Friday October 20, and focuses on alkalinity enhancement.
    - Past webinar recordings can be found here: <https://aoan.aos.org/2023-mcdr-webinar-series/>.
- Sheyna Wisdom
  - Alaska Marine Science Symposium. Abstract deadline was October 6, but there will soon be openings on the website for workshops: <https://www.alaskamarinescience.org/>
  - 2024 AMPF dates have been set. You can register and add all the dates to your calendar at <https://alaskaseagrant.org/events/alaska-marine-policy-forum/>

Please reach out to [Ginny Eckert](mailto:ginny.eckert@alaska.edu) or [Sheyna Wisdom](mailto:shey.wisdom@alaska.edu) if you would like to hear about a particular topic during future forums.

**The next Alaska Marine Policy Forum call will be December 6, 2023 at 1 pm Alaska time.**  
To register visit: <https://alaskaseagrant.org/event/alaska-marine-policy-forum-december-2023/>