



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Host: Sheyna Wisdom

Notes by Brooke Carney, 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 to receive email reminders and agendas for upcoming calls, and summary notes following each call.

Sheyna Wisdom, AOOS hosting today's call

Alaska Congressional Delegation Updates

Matt Robinson and Kit Cunningham for Senator Murkowski's office

- Sea Grant Knauss Fellow Kit Cunningham is working on a bill that Senator Murkowski's office is co-leading focused on atmospheric river data gathering and expanding data gathering efforts within Alaska;
- She is also in the information gathering stage for legislation on seaweed and kelp mariculture research
- Q and A Discussion:
 - Q on atmospheric rivers: seeking more information, offer to connect Kit with researchers
 - A: working on expanding more baseline weather observations in Alaska as well
 - Comment: Alaska Climate Adaptation Science Center (CASC) info could be helpful, Alison Bidlack is good contact in Juneau; happy to hear about work on improved NWS forecast products; Alaska lacks basic infrastructure that NWS provides for lower 48; systems that perform well in lower 48 don't necessarily work in Alaska; recent example quality of forecast of recent Juneau outburst flood; noted potential connections between atmospheric rivers and possible landslide activities
 - Comment: lots of discussion and interest about weather forecasting and projects; sat workshop last week, wanting to work on cross-agency coordination; hoping a new FAA report will help elevate shared priorities around weather forecasting
 - Q: AK Mariculture Alliance; asking about kelp legislation details
 - A: new legislation being created with another office, not coming up with new grant program but trying to amend existing grant programs, currently

in information gathering stage; wanting to bolster mariculture industry where that is wanting and also supporting seafood industry in other ways

Carina Nichols for Senator Sullivan's office

- Engaged in lots of follow up communications after traveling around Alaska during recess
- Hosted Bristol Bay Salmon Week last week in DC
- Flurry of activity end of year legislation, follow up on bills
- Jul 31: Commerce had markup, Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act markup in committee; The Marine Debris Act reauthorization/amendments marked up, NPRB language marked up; still TBD if any will get passed but they moved forward

Jillian Everly for Representative Peltola's office

- Fisheries Improvement and Seafood Health (FISH) Act coming up and expected to pass; establish timeline for Office of Management and Budget to review fisheries disaster funds
- Working on legislation - domestic seafood production act; working on co-sponsors and doing outreach; dispelling myths about aquaculture vs mariculture
 - Impact study on all things related to aquaculture; want to consider requirements for environmental compliance related to offshore finish aquaculture (but not mariculture)

Alaska Legislative Updates

No updates to share

Invited Speakers

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)—Alaska activities update

Joel Immaraj, Regional supervisor Leasing and Plans, Alaska Region

- Joel provided [slides \(link to presentation\)](#) that highlighted an overview of the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM), its mission, and details about the Alaska Regional Office of BOEM
- There are three program offices in Alaska: Resource Evaluation Office, Leasing and Plans, Office of Environment
 - Resource evaluation: resource analysis and economic analysis
 - Leasing and plans: anyone wanting to obtain rights to explore and develop specific offshore areas; after lease secured a plan must be submitted
 - Office of environment: provide decision makers with science to ensure offshore resource development is done safely and responsibly
- Fall: annual feedback survey issued
- BOEM experts use best available science and indigenous knowledge to analyze potential impacts to multiple marine resource areas (typically 20-30 studies going on at any given time)

- Conventional energy leases
 - Cook Inlet has no active leases
 - Beaufort Sea has 6 leases, active production Hilcorp Northstar, Hilcorp Liberty (no production there)
- Renewable energy
 - Recent report of feasibility study for renewable energy in Alaska offshore wind, wave, tidal
 - 3800 gigawatts, most from wind
 - No current leases,
 - Cook Inlet workgroup started Dec 2023 to collaborate among federal and state agencies, outreach with tribes, communities, NGOs; information gathering in Cook Inlet OCS; gauging interest in renewables in Cook Inlet
- Other BOEM priorities: marine minerals (no current interest, but studies and understanding ongoing); carbon sequestration (Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation authorizes granting of leases, rulemaking currently in process; understanding carbon storage potential in AK offshore waters; BOEM Arctic and Alaska strategy (security, climate change and environmental protection sustainable economic development, international cooperation and governance)
- All BOEM work is collaborative across federal and state agencies, universities, and NGOs: Outreach at conferences etc; Commitment to building relationships
- International activities: The Arctic Council; two working groups

[University of Alaska's Master of Marine Policy degree program update](#)

Keith Criddle, Ted Stevens distinguished professor of marine policy, UAF

Hannah Myers, assistant professor of marine policy, UAF

Hekia Bodwitch, assistant professor of marine policy, UAS

- Keith Criddle: UAF and UAS have a new joint program, master of marine policy
 - Provide exposure to students in policy space; pairs UAF and UAS strengths
 - Graduates: forecasting potential impacts of proposed policies; retrospective analysis of management measures that have been put in place
 - 30 unit, course only (non-thesis) program, foundations of marine policy and capstone project, internship
 - Breadth and depth in four areas
 - Currently have 18 students enrolled
 - First 3 students graduated in August 2024; 3 grad anticipated in 2025; 2 more admitted to start in 2025
 - Courses available in person and virtual
 - Current class has students from many areas of US: PA to FL and AK, all over; 7 students are ADFG employees, 4 officers from US Coast Guard, 2 of recent grads were US Coast Guard
- Hekia Myers
 - Heika has a background working with indigenous groups in New Zealand and Atlantic Canada on strategies to support indigenous fisheries governance
 - Teaching mariculture policy course in the spring

- Building relationship with Tribal partners in Southeast Alaska
- Hannah Bodwitch
 - PhD at UAF, postdoc at Oregon State University, excited to return
 - Expertise marine mammal fishing gear entanglement, quantitative approaches to marine mammal policy and management
- Q:- who are other faculty involved? Who is teaching econ?
 - Just three of us; drawing heavily on courses across two universities including Arctic studies program; Hannah located in Fairbanks; Heika and Keith in Juneau
 - Discussion on interests of various students, diverse across marine policy topics
- Q: how soon into the program can an internship be started?
 - Many students are employed full time; the program can place people with any a wide variety of hosts and help develop opportunities.
 - Want students to have some coursework completed before starting an internship, but no hard timeline or course requirement; 2 to 6 credit internship
 - Work with each student to craft individual program, including internship location and timing

Open floor

- Danielle Dickson with NPRB: The Alaska Marine Science Symposium is happening Jan 27–31, 2025 in Anchorage, abstract submission now open <http://alaskamarinescience.org> deadline Oct 14
- Darcy Dugan with AOOS: The Alaska Ocean Acidification Network is co-hosting a webinar series on marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR) and the next session is Monday Sept 23 on [ocean iron fertilization](#) Previous recordings can be accessed [here](#).
- Stephen White with the Marine Exchange of Alaska: There was a recent webinar on the [Arctic Watch program](#); see the Facebook page and website recording
 - They are considering hosting another one; seeking topic ideas
 - Congressional funding is supporting the Arctic Watch program thanks to Senator Murkowski's staff
- Ginny Eckert with Alaska Sea Grant: The National Academies Gulf Research Program is hosting a [workshop](#) in Anchorage October 8–9, 2024, at the Egan Center. This is the first in a series of workshops to bring together representatives from Alaska and the Gulf of Mexico region to share experiences, knowledge, strategies, and best practices to help prepare for and recover from potential future spills.

The next Alaska Marine Policy Forum is November 20 and registration is open

<https://alaskaseagrant.org/events/alaska-marine-policy-forum/>

Please share ideas for future topics and speakers with Sheyna Wisdom wisdom@aoos.org or Ginny Eckert gleckert@alaska.edu. Please email dawn.montano@alaska.edu to be added to the Alaska Marine Policy Forum announcement list.