



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, September 27, 2017

Host: Darcy Dugan

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 Sue.Keller@alaska.edu to be added to the list to receive a reminder and agenda for the next call, and summary notes following each call.

Alex Schenck, Sen. Dan Sullivan's office

The Senator thanks the State of Alaska for providing the numbers quantifying the pink salmon fishery disaster of 2016 needed to request federal relief funds.

The Save our Seas bill (marine debris) passed the Senate and is now in the House Natural Resources Committee.

The senator met with Rear Admiral (Ret.) Timothy Gallaudet after his confirmation hearing for NOAA deputy administrator to discuss priorities. The senator's office is putting together a list highlighting state priorities for NOAA to include the need for more electronic weather and ocean data, like those provided by AOOS, and more hydrographic surveys. The senator is looking for more input on these priorities from the public to make sure that they have covered all bases.

You can contact Alex at alex_schenck@sullivan.senate.gov

Tom Mansour, US Coast Guard Fellow, Sen. Sullivan's office

Senator Sullivan's office held a hearing on September 12 on the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and heard from commercial, recreational, and charter fishermen. The next hearing will focus on fisheries science and emerging technologies.

Ephraim Froehlich, Sen. Lisa Murkowski's office

Senator Murkowski officially designated September as Wild Alaskan Salmon Month. Senator Murkowski's office is now working on moving the US Coast Guard Authorization bill forward.

Transboundary fisheries is a big topic in Washington DC, and the Senator is looking for ways to engage federal agencies on this issue. The Senator is working on long term legislative priorities, beginning with Arctic policy legislation that hasn't been updated since 1984. Ephraim will be in Anchorage for the annual Alaska Federation of Natives conference October 19-21 and is available for meetings. You can contact him at ephraim_froehlich@murkowski.senate.gov.

Barbara Blake, Lt Governor Byron Mallott's office

The Lt. Governor recently returned from a trip to Washington DC to engage with the new federal leadership and met with the Environmental Protection Agency, State Department, Canadian Embassy, and Alaska's Congressional Delegation. In each of his meetings he urged specific actions on the part of Canada and our federal government, specifically that: acid mine drainage be stopped once and for all; federal resources be made available to maintain a robust system of baseline and continuing water quality measurements in all Transboundary river systems; and catastrophic liability response must be addressed since this is a serious issue with the State of Alaska and stakeholders.

The Lt. Governor will return to British Columbia in November to reach out to key officials of the new government, including the Ministers of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources; Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation; and Environment and Climate Change Strategy. He is also planning a trip to Ottawa with Alaska's congressional delegation to press Alaska's priorities with Canada's federal officials. Top among these priorities is the continued protection of Alaska's rivers. He will also discuss fisheries, marine policy, and climate change.

Internal discussions continue surrounding the State of Alaska's position and advocacy surrounding the MSA Reauthorization and Salmon Fisheries Management Plan within the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

The Lt. Governor has requested continued coordination for a second fishery visioning meeting to discuss where the State would like to see fisheries in the future.

The Lt. Governor has given a directive to begin formation of an internal fisheries working group to include the heads of 6 departments. Discussions will include fisheries/marine resource sustainability. They are pursuing follow-up from their middle Yukon River visit. The State is engaged in research and analysis of Board of Fish decisions and identifying potential solutions to improve the availability of resources to those living on the Yukon.

The Lt. Governor's office continues its efforts toward inclusion of local and Alaska Native voices in the important decisions made by the State.

The Lt. Governor continues to build relationships and listen to concerns from those most affected by the Pacific Salmon Treaty negotiations.

Barbara introduced Nikoosh Carlo as the administration's new Senior Advisor for Climate Change Policy.

Walt Meier from National Snow and Ice Data Center

As of this month, the extent of open water from Nome, Alaska, to the sea ice edge in the Arctic is as much as 800 miles—marking an extreme event.

Not only do the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas have a lot of open water now, but the ice directly to the north continues to melt even though we've passed the overall minimum. It's still going down, probably because of warm ocean water, as well as wind helping it.

There is going to be a lot of open water well into October, and maybe November off the north coast of Alaska.

"This is of great interest in northwestern Alaska near Nome," said Gay Sheffield, Alaska Sea Grant's Marine Advisory agent there. "The return of the ice did not occur at St. Lawrence Island last year until mid-January." There were strong weather events, including a category 2 hurricane during the last week of December, Sheffield said.

Meier guessed the ice will be quite late in returning again this year, but NSIDC does not forecast freeze-up dates. NOAA and the US Navy, as well as Alaska communities, have a lot of interest in predicting freeze-up. There is a push to predict what's beyond September but we are not there yet.

Overall, the trend toward less Arctic sea ice continues. The amount of multiyear (thicker) ice is much lower than decades ago, and the new ice that forms each year is quite thin.

NSIDC monitors sea ice using passive microwave sensors on a satellite, and has records that go back to 1979. Sea ice reached its minimum on September 13 this year. The overall ice extent for the Arctic is now 1.79 million square miles, making it the eighth lowest record.

In March 2017, the melt season started with the smallest amount of sea ice ever seen in the satellite record, and progressed through May when melting slowed down. The reason it slowed was a persistent low pressure system over most of the Arctic Ocean through the summer. Cloudy skies kept solar energy from coming in and melting the ice.

Despite the slowed melting overall, in the Alaska region in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, "we really saw it melt back quite far north, as folks may be aware. The ice edge got to almost 80 degrees north." Walt cannot confirm this, but it looks like in some areas that's as far north as they've ever seen it.

Phil Mundy, NOAA Auke Bay Laboratory

Phil gave a presentation on the Chinook salmon run timing forecast for the Yukon River delta. This project was started as a demonstration for scientists to show how much value the data provided on the AOS website can add to their work. This work is being done by NOAA over concerns about the large Chinook bycatch associated with the pollock fishery in the Bering Sea. Over the years since this project was initiated the forecasts have become increasingly more accurate, with the 2017 forecast being the most accurate so far.

Roundtable

Cheryl Rosa reminded folks that the US Arctic Research Commission will be having its commission meeting on October 10, 2017 at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage and the agenda is available at arctic.gov.

Darcy Dugan:

- Reminded folks that abstract submission for the Alaska Marine Science Symposium 2018 closes on October 6, 2017 and that folks can request workshop space online on the AMSS [website](#);
- Mentioned that the state ferry M/V Columbia will start collecting ocean acidification data on October 3, 2017;
- Invited folks to a book signing at the UAA Bookstore on October 4, 2017 by Alaska writer Nancy Lord who recently published a novel, *pH: A Novel* and included a presentation by Darcy on the science behind OA; and
- Noted that the Alaska Dispatch has laid off their only science writer, so scientists will need to be better at engaging with the media and public in Alaska to share science with the public.

Ben Brown with Barbara Blake's office reminded folks about the [2017 Alaska Young Fishermen's summit](#) in Anchorage on December 6-8, 2017 at the Dena'ina Center.

Ernie Weiss reminded folks about the [North Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings](#) in Anchorage at the Hilton from October 2-10.

Next Alaska Marine Policy call: November 15, 2017, 1 pm Alaska time

Upcoming Events

November 16 - 18: Pacific Marine Expo (a.k.a. Fish Expo), Seattle

December 5 - 6: Animal Telemetry Network Workshop, Anchorage

December 6 - 8: Alaska Young Fishermen's Summit, Anchorage, Dena'ina Center

December 4 - 12: North Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting, Anchorage

December 11 - 15: AGU Fall Meeting, New Orleans, LA

January 22-26, 2018: Alaska Marine Science Symposium, Anchorage