

Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, September 25, 2019

Host: Tara Borland, Alaska Sea Grant

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

Note to Attendees: These calls will be moving to a new format starting with the next call in November. We will be using Zoom instead of the conference line that today's call is on. Details will be posted on [this](#) website and included with the reminder email.

Alaska Congressional Delegation Update

Eric Elam, Sen. Sullivan's office

- The Senator recently hired a new staffer to take on fisheries and ocean issues, Corinna Nichols. Corinna is a fisherperson with lots of experience in fishery issues and will attend these calls regularly and give the updates from the Senator's office.
- The Commerce Committee met and discussed the fishery disaster process and streamlining it for future issues. The Governor's office just declared two fishery disasters, 2018 Pacific Cod in Gulf of Alaska and 2018 Sockeye in the Chignik area.
- The Save Our Seas II bill, co-sponsored by Senator Sullivan, is more comprehensive than the first act and contains three main points: cleanup of marine debris nationally, international marine debris sources, and domestic infrastructure for recycling and other solid waste management issues. This bill was referred to three subcommittees and has passed through the first two and is now in the commerce committee.
- The Senate should pass a continuing resolution next week to fund the government through November 21, 2019.

Alaska Marine Highway System Update

Senator Jesse Kiehl, Alaska State Legislature

- The Governor's first budget included a 75% cut to the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) originally and would have closed the ferry system for the winter starting October 1, 2019. The second iteration included a 47% reduction in funding which still would have left several small communities without ferry service for the winter. The legislature tried to restore some funding but the effort was unsuccessful.
- The AMHS has now taken some steps towards dynamic pricing and a consultant contract has been issued to study privatization of the system. Several of the existing vessels in the fleet are approaching their end of life.
- Service to Prince Rupert has been discontinued due to other non-funding issues.
- The annual budget is still a concern moving forward with preparations being made now to develop next year's budget.
- The AMHS is critical to many rural communities in Alaska.

Young Fisherman's Development Act

Linda Behnken, Alaska Longline Fisherman's Association (ALFA)

- The Young Fisherman's Development Act was created in response to the number of difficulties experienced by young people trying to enter the industry.
- Federal funding is available to assist young people entering many other industries like agriculture and mariculture but not for fishing.
- ALFA worked with Congressman Young and Senator Sullivan's offices to develop legislation that would launch a program to allocate resources to Alaska Sea Grant for a competitive grant process to fund training and education for young fisherman. The funding is to come from asset forfeiture funds collected from breaches of fisheries regulations. This represents an important closing of the loop that will help in funding the development of fisheries into the future.
- ALFA has operated workshop training and apprenticeship programs for the last four years currently funded by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation through two-year grants and this act would ensure continued funding for these important programs.
- The bill was introduced on February 14, 2019 in both the House (H.R. 1240) and Senate (S. 496) and has advanced further on the Senate side than the House side picking up some bipartisan support along the way.

Arctic Futures 2050 Conference

Betsy Baker and Danielle Dickson, North Pacific Research Board

- The conference was convened by the Study of Environmental Arctic Change (SEARCH) program whose focus is translating science for policy makers. This conference took more than a year to plan and included the participation of a number of Alaskans. The purpose of the conference was to understand what policy decisions need to be made now for a future Arctic.
- Unlike many science conferences, the format was created to include broad Alaska Native representation with the recognition that science has become more aware of the important role that Indigenous knowledge can play in addressing climate change. Additionally, each panel included an Indigenous knowledge holder, a policy maker, and a scientist.
- About 400 people attended including 250 scientists, 67 indigenous people, and 87 policymakers with some media and influencers there.
- Travel funding for many of the Indigenous participants and young scientists was provided by the Pew Charitable Trust, the National Science Foundation, and others.
- The value of the conference came in the closing sessions where a range of participants agreed on the need for continued discussions and if a similar conference happens in the future it should be organized by Indigenous leaders and held in Alaska. Funding for travel in the future would be much appreciated.
- There are a few ways to follow-up on this conference; the [agenda](#) is available for review along with several published YouTube videos:
 - [Arctic Futures 2050: Day 1](#)
 - [Arctic Futures 2050: Day 2](#)
 - [Arctic Futures 2050: Day 3](#)
 - [Arctic Futures 2050: Conference Report Out and Discussion](#)
 - [Nansen Legacy and Arctic Futures 2050 Updates](#)
 - [AF 2050: Interview with Gail Schubert](#)
- Thanks to Senators Sullivan and Murkowski for their staff's participation in this conference.

Ocean Obs'19

Molly McCammon, Alaska Ocean Observing System

- This global conference is held every 10 years focusing on global oceans. The first comprehensive global ocean observing system started in response to this conference in 1999 with the Argo Floats program which now includes over 4,000 monitoring floats around the globe with the exception of the Arctic. There were about 300 people in attendance at that first meeting.
- The 2009 conference was held in Venice where the group discussed adding biological parameters to the monitoring program and started the first global ocean acidification network, identifying variables to be measured.
- This year's conference emphasis was on using ocean observations to meet stakeholder needs and to identify the remaining large gaps in ocean monitoring. The Arctic, Indian Ocean, and deep ocean represent the largest geographic gaps.
- Attendees were mostly scientists who recognized the overwhelming gaps of information on the Arctic and the increasingly important role that Indigenous knowledge plays in understanding changes in this area.
- Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) have received a lot of attention recently with bloom events happening around the globe. There is great need for a global network on HABs to be driven regionally.
- Marine plastics, and especially micro-plastics, were a big topic of discussion globally.
- AOS is meeting with people from the Marine Debris program at NOAA to organize a town hall style meeting in conjunction with the Alaska Marine Science Symposium to discuss the status of research & monitoring on marine debris, especially microplastics, in Alaska. This would be followed by a one-day session at the Alaska Forum on the Environment discussing the research & monitoring needs for microplastics to include perspectives from scientists, communities, tribes, and public health officials.
- The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP) is holding a workshop in November in Finland on monitoring plastics.
- Iceland, current chair of the Arctic Council, is holding a session in April 2020 in Reykjavík on marine debris and plastics.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just released a Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate which is getting a lot of attention in the media. The report's authors included several Alaskans, and included impacts on Alaska's sea ice, glaciers, and permafrost.

Announcements

- Betsy Baker: The Alaska Marine Science Symposium (AMSS) is happening the last week in January, abstract submissions close next week. A great opinion piece titled [Where the Sea Ice Recedes, So Does an Alaskan Way of Life](#), by Alaska Sea Grant's Gay Sheffield and others, was recently published in the New York Times
- Amy Holman from NOAA says that they had a good experience working with the Department of Defense (DOD) and the US Navy on their Arctic Expeditionary Capabilities exercises in Adak. Highlights include: permitting for this work with the National Marine Fisheries Service, collecting seabed information for nautical charts, and understanding the DOD's weather forecasting needs.
- Justin Sternberg from the Alaska Ocean Cluster announced an open position for the Blue Pipeline Manager in Seward with more details available on their [website](#).

Next Alaska Marine Policy Forum call: November 20, 2019, 1 pm Alaska time.