

# Alaska Marine Policy Forum Summary

## Wednesday, August 16, 2023

Host: Ginny Eckert, Alaska Sea Grant  
Notes by Darcy Dugan, Alaska Ocean Observing System

*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, agendas for upcoming forums, and summary notes following each forum.*

### Alaska Congressional Delegation

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

- Senator Sullivan's office has been busy recently with travel and VIPs. Senator Sullivan was in Kotzebue and is now in rural communities in the northwest Arctic region. On June 22, he'll visit Kodiak with Senator Boozman and Senator Murkowski to talk about seafood and rural development.
- This year is a Farm Bill year. The Farm Bill is a once-every-5 year piece of legislation for the USDA that is broad and extends beyond farming to include food commodities, forestry, rural water and sewer, etc. Senator Sullivan's office is excited to have Senator Boozman in the state this week to talk about it.
- Senator Sullivan is working on the National Seafood Supply Act. Their office has been communicating about priorities with the committee as the USDA doesn't have an in-depth knowledge of seafood and oceans. Senator Sullivan has identified a need to establish an office for seafood that has experts to track issues on trade, commodity support, nutrition, etc.
- Senator Sullivan's office is also getting bills together to introduce this fall.
- They anticipate a challenging situation with seafood and pricing and global supply.

#### Harmful Algal Bloom Update from staffer Shannon Burns:

- The office is working on HABHRCA reauthorization through 2028 (more on [HABHRCA](#)).
- Work is underway to get a companion bill introduced on the House side.
- HABHRCA is generally a clean reauthorization. This authorization includes:
  - Giving different authorities to EPA, USACE and NOAA
  - Including sargassum in the definition of HABS
  - Codifying the HABS observing network
  - Reducing the number of reports required by NOAA by consolidating regional reports into one report.

*Q for Carina:* What can we expect from the appropriations process this year?

*Carina:* Not sure. She hopes for forward momentum but expects a challenging fall.

*Q for Carina:* What's the latest on the Coast Guard bill?

*Carina:* Senator Sullivan's coast guard fellow, Jason Joll, is the lead. Right now they are implementing what was passed in the last Coast Guard bill which was in December, and are actively working on legislation for the next one. Carina can connect Jason with anyone looking for more details.

**Updates from Senator Murkowski's office:** all staff was actively traveling

### **State legislative offices**

Dawson Verley, staff to Rep. Himschoot, was online to listen

Angela Stephi and Julie Morris, staff to Rep. McCain, were online to listen

*Invited Speaker:*

**Tammy Davis, Alaska Dept of Fish & Game Invasive Species Program Coordinator**

**Contact:** [tammy.davis@alaska.gov](mailto:tammy.davis@alaska.gov)

### Background

- European green crab threaten Alaska coastal ecosystems.
- For decades European green crab were just a threat but in 2022 they were found by the Metlakatla Indian Community on Annette Island.
- The crab have negative ecological and economic impacts when they establish.
- ADFG has a goal to raise awareness of green crab. They are working hard to increase the monitoring network and foster relationships .

### How do you identify a European green crab?

- 4 inches wide; 5 spines on either side of the eyes and three rostral bumps between the eyes. Coloration is variable (dark or bright green to yellowish brown, green and yellow to orange and red, etc.) More details in the powerpoint.
- Some of the native crabs you might find in the same habitat include hairy helmet, graceful rock, purple shore or hairy shore crab. Sometimes these get reported instead.

### Why are European green crab a problem?

- Voracious predators, consuming up to 22 clams per day
- Compete with native crabs for food and space
- Destructive to eelgrass beds
- Negative impact on subsistence, personal use and commercial harvest of native species
- Anticipated economic hit \$840,000 per year if they spread in Alaska

### Habitat

- European green crab are successful generalists and can tolerate a wide range of temps, salinity, and depths.
- After their initial arrival, the main mode of spread is currents.
- Warming climate means northward expansion is viable.

- A habitat suitability model was developed in the early 2000's but we have learned that green crab can also turn up where we wouldn't expect.

Prime habitat features

- Sandy, muddy or pebbled seabed
- Presence of eelgrass or salt marsh vegetation
- Some protection from wave exposure
- Freshwater input is well tolerated
- This means protected estuaries, salt marshes and mudflats are all suitable habitats.
- ADFG has used the ShoreZone platform to identify where to set traps.

Trapping European green crab

- ADFG provides the equipment needed to start trapping. A permit is required.
- Contact AK Dept of Fish and Game if these crab are observed in your survey area
- Take photos and collect a specimen of the crab and submit them to ADFG or call the invasive species hotline at 1-877-INVASIVE
- New monitors are welcome and needed!

There was a European green crab Training in April in Ketchikan and Metlakatla that brought together 24 folks to learn about green crab, raise awareness, and do a hands-on training for monitoring. Three new monitoring sites emerged after the workshop. Another workshop is planned for northern southeast.

Early detection monitoring is taking place in 20 locations in Alaska!

Reporting is easy. There is a portal on their [website](#).

## REPORTING

### European green crab and other suspect aquatic species

#### Where to report?

- ADF&G Invasive Species Reporter:
  - <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=invasivespeciesreporter.main>
- ADF&G Invasive Species Hotline 1-877-INVASIV (1-877-468-2748)

#### Information to collect

- Note the location by GPS coordinates or landmarks
- Take pictures of the individual in the habitat it was found. Take photos of the population of the organism to aid in identification.
- Scan the area for more of the organism or any noticeable changes (fragments of the organism you found, other species in the same area, habitat, etc.)
- EGC are banned invasive species and may not be collected without a permit (5 AAC 41.075)

The screenshot shows the 'Invasive Species Reporter' online reporting form. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Overview, Methods of Introduction, Prevention, Legal Requirements, and Report an Invasive Species. The 'Report an Invasive Species' tab is selected. Below the tabs, the title 'Invasive Species Reporter' is followed by a welcome message: 'Welcome to the State of Alaska invasive species reporter. If you are interested in reporting what you believe to be an invasive plant or animal, click on one of the buttons below to begin the online report. Your reports are important to us! Please include as much complete and detailed information as you're able. Upload digital photos, if you have them. Pictures really help us identify what you saw. A close up photograph of the individual and a photo of the organism in the setting in which you saw it can potentially help us identify the organism you're reporting. All reports go to ADF&G and ADNR invasive species coordinators.' Below this is a section titled 'What type of species are you reporting?' with the instruction: 'Select one of the species categories below to submit a report. If you are not sure which category to select, you may choose "Other"'. There are nine buttons with icons and labels: Amphibians (green frog), Birds (red bird), Fish (blue fish), Insects (purple insect), Invertebrates (blue worm), Mammals (brown mouse), Plants - Aquatic (blue plant), Plants - Terrestrial (purple plant), and Reptiles (green turtle). A final button with a question mark is labeled 'Other'.

**Note:** Free “Report Invasive European green crab” stickers are available at the Alaska Sea Grant Bookstore: <https://seagrant.uaf.edu/bookstore/pubs/M-241.html>

Tammy also has posters that can be posted in your offices and/or communities.

#### Metlakatla Indian Community Presentation on Green Crab (presented by Ginny Eckert)

- European green crabs were first detected in the Metlakatla area last July. This started a huge removal effort and they have removed over 1,650 crab.
- Washington experts said they were 3-4 years old so there is a high chance they are in other places too.
- Commonly with invasives, first you detect, then don't see very many, then see more. Pulses will continue to increase.
- Metlakatla Indian Community manages their own waters and have managed aggressively.
- Source populations show they've come from British Columbia and Haida Gwaii. Many other parts of Southeast Alaska are also vulnerable and it is essential to ramp up response.

*Audience question:* If they're concentrated in a particular area of Southeast and a likely vector for big geographic jumps is ballast water, what kind of vessels in that region use ballast water and has ADFG talked to them?

*Tammy:* European green crab in Alaska most likely came as larvae in local currents instead of ballast water. But ramping up outreach to those vessels with ballast water and discharge should still be done. There are regulatory complications with ballast water discharge that we won't get into today.

*Ginny:* Researchers believe northward movement has been synched with warm water events happening recently. This will be an increasing threat as we see warm water more often. States have seen large explosions following El Nino events.

**Announcements:**

- Lynn Palenski, North Pacific Research Board
  - The Alaska Marine Science Symposium scheduled for January 29–Feb 2, 2024, is open for abstract submission. Note this conference has shifted one week later and is back at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage.  
<https://www.alaskamarinescience.org/> #amss2024
  
- Sheyna Wisdom, Alaska Ocean Observing System
  - Through the Backyard Buoy program, the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission deployed thirteen small spotter wave buoys and will deploy three more. The data can be accessed on a prototype app  
<http://software.apl.uw.edu/proto/BackyardBuoys/app.php>
  
- Ginny Eckert, Alaska Sea Grant
  - There are a lot of funding opportunities out right now on coastal resilience through NOAA Climate Program Office and through other parts of NOAA. Many of the proposals are looking for grassroots efforts.  
<https://cpo.noaa.gov/Funding-Opportunities>

The next Alaska Marine Policy Forum call will be **October 18, 2023 at 1 pm Alaska time**. To register visit: <https://alaskaseagrant.org/event/alaska-marine-policy-forum-october-2023/>