



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, July 15, 2015

Host: Molly McCammon

Notes by Sijo Smith

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 serve to receive a reminder and agenda for the next call, and summary notes following each call.

Erik Elam, Office of Senator Dan Sullivan

Their office just hired Alex Schenck to help with ocean/fisheries issues. Senator Sullivan is working on a Coast Guard authorization bill that includes a land exchange in support of developing a port outside of Nome at Port Clarence, and is hoping to get the bill to the Senate floor in September. He is also working with Representative Young on how best to move forward with reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Senator Rubio just pushed through a more localized bill similar to MSMFCA. Senator Sullivan is also working on an ICOOS Act reauthorization bill.

Erik will be in Alaska in mid-August. Contact him via email if you have issues to discuss.

Amy McElroy, Office of Senator Murkowski

Amy has been attending the Navy/USARC conference discussion the impacts of changing sea ice on marine transportation. An increase in marine transportation is expected, and more information is needed on how it will impact people and the environment. It's a hot topic right now, as the priority charting won't be finished for a couple of years but ships will continue to travel throughout the affected areas. There will be more discussion and activity around this in Anchorage at the end of August, with more information to follow.

Barbara Blake, Governor's Office

Barbara is Governor Walker's special assistant for fisheries, forestry, transboundary mines, and some Alaska Native issues. She reported that the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve is being transferred from ADFG to UAA. Governor Walker is asking to meet with people around the state, including the NPFMC and Board of Fisheries Chairs, to discuss strategies for Alaska's fish policy.

Representative Paul Seaton

Representative Seaton worked with harbor masters and industry representatives to pass a bill addressing derelict vessel removals, but the current budget doesn't include funding for it. If this is to move forward, the funding will need to come from some other source such as private industry or the federal government. The Invasive Species bill – HB38 - has moved out of the House Resources committee and is now in House Rules. Those interested in seeing it move forward should submit comments to the committee indicating their support. http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=29&bill=HB0038

Albert Csaszar, BOEM

Albert spoke on behalf of Dave Johnson and gave an update on the status of Shell activity in the Chukchi this summer. Shell plans to conduct exploratory drilling, but has not yet received all the necessary permits.

Julie Matweyou, Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program

The large harmful algal bloom (HAB) off the west coast is the most severe anyone has seen in over a decade. Fisheries and shellfish farms in California and Washington have been significantly impacted and closed. Responders aren't sure if the bloom is related to The Blob, but it is possible. Researchers in Kachemak Bay and SE Alaska are involved in monitoring programs and testing shellfish, and DEC ran 47 PSP samples to test for the presence of DA – domoic acid. So far all the toxin testing done in Alaska has been negative, but there has only been testing of shellfish from the Gulf of Alaska. Julie commented on the strength of the collaboration of the informal HAB response network that includes state health and environmental officials.

Kris Holderied, Kasitsna Bay Lab

The Kasitsna Bay Lab is doing an intensive phytoplankton monitoring project involving both amnesiac and paralytic shellfish poisoning. They've found that the *Pseudo-nitzschia* bloom in the bay has tapered off significantly, which is consistent with other's findings in SE Alaska and in BC, Canada. Beyond what the state DEC lab does, KBL works with NOAA to do toxicity tests on phytoplankton and are finding that levels are low and decreasing. She is very interested in working to put all of this summer's strange events together on one site, and agreed with Julie that a strong network across the state was developing.

Kate Wynne, Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program-

Kate has tracked dead marine mammals around Kodiak for the past 30 years. During the last couple of years whale deaths have been dominated by killer whale predation. This spring, in late May, there was an unusual event of dead fin whales. Up to eight dead fin whales have been seen in the Kodiak area - all the carcasses were freshly dead when first spotted but impossible to access. One landed about a week after it died and they were able to get a few samples. The vitreous fluid from the eyeball is being tested for neurotoxins. One test came back negative, but the sample was old and limited in quality. There are now around ten dead fin whales and eight dead humpback whales; not included in this total are several fairly certain orca kills. All the carcasses are old, so it still looks like one main event that occurred in late May. This suggests a biotoxin or similar impact, but there haven't been the dead birds or sea lions that would be expected in a food-related event. Kate is working

with others on an application to NOAA to declare this an Unusual Mortality Event so if more dead whales appear they can get funding to get to the carcasses sooner. They have sent off samples for radiation testing, but don't expect to find direct ties to radiation. They also don't believe this event was caused by the Navy's Northern Edge activities given the timing and that baleen whales aren't usually the first to be impacted by sonar.

Open Floor

Danielle Dickson from NPRB reported that NPRB is looking for ideas for their upcoming Request for Proposals. The NPRB website has a link to submit ideas.

Gale Vick from Tanana Chiefs Conference shared that the NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy will be available in August.

Upcoming Dates

- **July 25: Open house at Ted Stevens Marine Research Institute in Juneau**
- **July 15, 17, 18, 1-3pm: Public Discovery Labs (on ecosystem monitoring) in Homer at the Kachemak Bay NERR**
- **July 17: Killer whale talk (Craig Matkin) in Homer at noon**
- **July 15: Japanese tsunami debris cleanup kickoff - Kodiak**

Next Marine Policy Call: September 23, 2015