



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary of Wednesday, July 17, 2013 call

Hosts: Molly McCammon, mccammon@aoos.org

Paula Cullenberg, paula.cullenberg@alaska.edu

Summary notes by Ellen Tyler

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 for meeting reminders and summary notes following each call.

Glenn Gray, Glenn Gray & Associates: Coastal Erosion in Shaktoolik glenn@glenngray.net

Glenn Gray provided a brief summary of a project in Shaktoolik with Terry Johnson and Paula Cullenberg at Alaska Sea Grant to help the community decide how to adapt to increasing shoreline erosion, fall flooding and storm surges. Shaktoolik has established a planning committee to coordinate three partner agencies: the city government, Native Village of Shaktoolik and Shaktoolik Native Corporation. The community has prioritized the need for a sheltered location to ride out fall storms, and interim measures to protect residents during weather events. Next steps through September include soliciting input, identifying funding, and sharing expert opinions. In September, the community will make a decision regarding what action to take, share progress with neighboring villages, and develop a step-by-step action plan. A final report will document tradeoffs and lessons learned and will be available to other communities.

Chris Oliver, North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC): Updates chris.oliver@noaa.gov

Chris gave an overview of the recent proposed commercial and charter halibut catch share management plan published last month in the [Federal Register](#). The Council has been operating under a catch share plan for the past few years, and the major difference in management under the new rule is a difference in the initial halibut allocations upon which the Council will then develop and recommend annual allocation strategies. In other news, Chris also noted that elements of the Groundfish Observer Program continue to be discussed, including a pilot study to use electronic monitoring devices in lieu of physical observers on-board, particularly for smaller vessels. The new rule is open for public

comment until the August 12th and comments may be submitted to the Assistant Regional Administrator Glenn Merrill in the Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS, Attn: Ellen Sebastian, and identified by the Docket Number NOAA-NMFS-2011-0180.

In early June, the NPFMC took final action to limit GOA chinook salmon bycatch in non-pollock trawl fisheries. With this action, all trawl fisheries in the BS/AI and GOA will have hard chinook bycatch caps. The next Council meeting will be October 2nd in Anchorage.

The Board of Fish this fall will be considering several state water groundfish proposals, which could expand or create new State water fisheries. The Council and Board will need to coordinate closely as these measures could affect Federal management actions related to Steller Sea Lion protection measures being considered by the Council this fall.

Bob King, Office of U.S. Senator Begich: Congressional Update

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The Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) is up for reauthorization this year and a good overview of issues was presented at the “[Managing Our Fisheries](#)” conference in DC earlier this spring. MSA fisheries subcommittee hearings are getting underway. July 23rd will be the first of a series of hearings, with the focus on Northeast and Mid-Atlantic fisheries. A September hearing is expected on the South Atlantic and Gulf fisheries; and an October hearing will focus on the Pacific and Alaska fisheries. In preparation for these hearings, Senator Begich hosts listening sessions to get feedback from Alaskans. Two sessions have already been held - one in Kodiak during the Crabfest and most recently in Fairbanks. An additional listening sessions will be held in Kenai in August.

On July 24, the full Commerce Committee will be holding a [hearing on cruise ship safety issues](#), responding to recent safety incidences. On July 30, a mark-up is expected on the following bills:

[S. 272](#) Arctic Research, Monitoring, and Observing Act (sponsored by Senator Begich)

[S.839](#), Coral Reef Conservation Amendments Act

[S.1254](#), Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act

[S.269](#): International Fisheries Stewardship and Enforcement Act

[H.R.69](#), Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act

Senator Begich spoke on July 17 to the US Arctic Research Commission at the 5th Symposium on the *Impacts of an Ice-Diminishing Arctic on Naval and Maritime Operations*, calling on the White House to redouble efforts, and invest more heavily in Arctic science and infrastructure. Read more [here](#).

U.S. Senator Mark Begich

Senator Begich thanked Bob for his summary and offered callers an opportunity to ask him any questions. He remarked that his subcommittees- particularly Appropriations and Homeland Security- have been very active. The Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations Bill passed out of the House on July 9 and Senate Subcommittee mark-ups

for both CJS and Homeland Security were July 16th. Senator Begich has been promoting his top priorities within CJS, in particular:

- \$150 million to be included for fisheries disasters nationwide
- Increases for NOAA's Marine Debris and Ocean Acidification programs
- Reinstatement of the Prescott Grant program
- An increase in the Fishery Finance program

A summary was released on July 18th and is available [here](#).

Within the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, Senator Begich pushed for a bigger focus on the Arctic, and called attention to resource needs. That summary is available [here](#).

Question: What has the Senate Appropriations reaction been to the President's approach towards STEM education in his budget? [The President's Budget, released in April, proposed consolidating NOAA education programs into broader STEM and Department of Education programs.]

Answer: We made our position clear- STEM is a very important and woefully underfunded program across the board. Any proposed reorganization of STEM education programs needs to be carefully monitored to ensure that it does not diminish the marine and fishery science programs. We also oppose consolidating NOAA into the Department of the Interior. Programs like the Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship are critical in Alaska and we need to make sure these successful programs continue.

Question: Can you give us a sense of the momentum around a NOAA reorganization?

Answer: The Administration keeps talking about it, but the Homeland Security Committee and the Appropriations Subcommittee of Interior and Environment are not interested in it. I sit on both of these Committees and Subcommittee and I oppose it- so it's not on a worry list for me right now.

Question: Is there anything that we can do to help the bills slated for mark-up later this month through the process successfully?

Answer: The best thing to do is advocate for them within the Administration and make sure any controversy is relieved ahead of time. If mark-up goes well, each bill will be 'hotlined' and we'll know pretty quickly if there is any controversy with the bill. [To "hotline" a bill in the Senate is to put a bill, which has either passed out of the House or been successfully marked-up out of committee, to a vote of confidence so it comes to the floor under Unanimous Consent. For more, see "Non-Controversial Bills" beginning on page [252 of Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process](#)]

Question: Does Representative Bonamici's Marine Debris Emergency Act have a companion bill in the Senate?

Answer: Yes, the Senate companion bill is [S1162](#). Additionally, the NOAA Marine Debris Program was funded at \$6 million- nearly \$2 million above its previously funded amount, and language was included in the bill report to give preference for extreme events.

Question: Could you provide additional details about the HABs and corals bills slated for mark-up later this month?

Answer: Yes, see links above.

Sen. Begich will be hosting an online town hall on his Facebook page next week on Tuesday, July 23 at 1:30 pm AKST. Check his Facebook and Twitter pages for more information in the coming week.

Molly McCammon, Executive Director, Alaska Ocean Observing System: Wrap-up
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This year's (23rd Annual) Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PENWR) conference had for the first time a specific "ocean and coastal" track, which focused on shipping, ocean acidification, marine debris, invasive species, and tourism. She promised a report out on that conference on the next call.

As part of the settlement with BP following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the National Academy of Sciences received \$500 million to establish a 30-year research program on health, environmental protection and oil system safety for the Gulf, as well as the entire US outer continental shelf. Molly was appointed to a one-year term on the Advisory Group tasked with developing a strategic plan for the program. The first meeting is later this month. She will be reporting back in September and encouraged listeners to be in touch with her.

Darcy Dugan, Program Manager, Alaska Ocean Observing System: MPF Survey
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Darcy shared the results from a survey of Marine Policy Forum participants that AOOS conducted last month. The forum has been a regular teleconference for the past 3 years and the survey was sent to the whole e-mail list. 32 people took the survey and the feedback was very positive. 90% of respondents reported that the calls are either "fairly useful" or "extremely useful." 72% liked the forum just the way it is and 20% liked the idea of adding webinar capabilities. However with so many of the presenters participating remotely, enabling a desktop view may or may not aid the discussion. A whopping 97% of users access the notes after the call and some "Favorite parts" included:

- Broad scope of topics
- Hearing directly from Congressional and legislative staff
- Getting timely info, confirm/refuting what people hear in passing

The majority of participants had no suggestions. However there was a request to add a bi-monthly listing of upcoming relevant public comment opportunities, provide short follow-up briefings on meetings that already occurred and some requests to send the agenda out earlier. Since we often we get speakers confirming just at the last minute, an earlier agenda may not be accurate.

Darcy noted that the Alaska Women's Environmental Network does a weekly post of opportunities to comment on proposed actions, deadlines, and upcoming events. It is called “What’s Up” and people can join by emailing Peg Tileston at pegt@gci.net.

Peter Murphy, NOAA Marine Debris Program

Peter gave a brief update on NOAA marine debris program activities. It is the field season now, and his team is collecting data. There was a question about known sources for testing debris for radioactivity. Peter commented that no elevated levels of radiation have been detected in seafood and detectable levels are orders of magnitude below what would be injurious to humans. For additional questions on radioactivity and radiation testing, visit: www.epa.gov/japan2011 or contact Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) spokesperson Molly Hooven at 202-564-2313.

Gale Vick commented that as we begin thinking about the MSA reauthorization, and bycatch issues impacting our fisheries, maybe we should start considering river impacts (aside from bycatch) to enhance fisheries. It would be great to get a report out in September to hear about what happened this fishing season on the rivers.

Paula Cullenberg noted that Alaska Sea Grant’s [Alaska Young Fishermen’s Summit](#) will be December 10-12th in Anchorage and the Alaska Sea Grant Lowell Wakefield Symposium will be May 13–16 and will be focused on [Fisheries Bycatch: Global Issues and Creative Solutions](#).

The next Marine Policy Forum call will be at 1:00 PM on Wednesday, September 18th. As always, be in touch with Molly or Paula with any questions, comments or suggestions for speakers or topics.