



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, March 23, 2016

Host: Paula Cullenberg, Alaska Sea Grant

Notes by Carol Janzen, AOOS

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 for the next call and summary notes. Links to the notes can be found on the Alaska Sea Grant and AOOS websites.

Ephraim Froehlich, Office of Senator Lisa Murkowski

Congress is in recess. Sen. Murkowski is in Alaska. She will be at ComFish Alaska in Kodiak late next week.

Legislative agenda: We hope to see the Energy Bill over the finish line after filling in holes, and hope to get it done by the first week of next session. The Senate Ocean Caucus has grown significantly and now has 30 members. It is exciting but slower because it is so big. We are planning a meeting on marine invasive species in the next few months. Please contact me or Amy McElroy in the Senator's office if you have resources on that topic.

We are active in the fight against genetically engineered/genetically modified salmon. All letter requests are in to Senate Appropriations. The Commerce, Justice, and Science Subcommittee is concentrating on mapping and charting as a priority.

Erik Elam, Office of Senator Dan Sullivan

All appropriations requests were in last Friday. Congress did a 2 year budget last year, so we don't need to do that this year. Sen. Murkowski is on the Appropriations Committee and our office supports her as needed.

Sen. Sullivan is currently acting as chair to the Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard that is reviewing the Magnuson Stevens Act. This is the 40th anniversary of the original act. The subcommittee did a status review of law, history, and successes. NMFS was a witness there for it. There is interest in reauthorizing the bill if there is a way to do it in a nonpartisan way.

Sen. Sullivan will speak at ComFish Alaska in Kodiak at 2 pm Friday, April 1. On April 20, a subcommittee hearing on marine debris and impacts on wildlife will be heard. We are examining the issue with biologists from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Question: Will there be a budget this fall? Answer: No prediction on appropriations process. We are not optimistic. There is a lot going on—Supreme Court issues, election, and reauthorization. These could be complicating issues.

Barbara Blake, Office of Lt. Governor Byron Mallott

Mariculture Task Force: The governor just signed off on an administrative order creating this, to provide recommendations to develop a sustainable plan for fish and shellfish mariculture in Alaska. History: The Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation requested the governor's office to establish the task force. Members are from state agencies, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Sea Grant, others. The governor is reaching out to a broad group in the state to be involved with the Mariculture Task Force. He plans to name individuals next week.

Mining in transboundary waters: There are several mining proposals in the headwaters of Alaska rivers but these mines are in Canada. The mines can impact waterways in Alaska. Alaska incurs the risks but does not get rewards of such activities. We have initiated transboundary mining conversations to make a resolution with Canada to protect these waterways. Some initiatives are under way: A statewide meeting, and a delegation from British Columbia came to visit in Southeast Alaska, including Minister of Mines Bill Bennett from Canada and others. The task force is working on initiating a baseline data collection. State of Alaska agencies and tribes are working on getting baseline data in these rivers. The task force is working on getting more public involvement in the environmental assessment process for permitting. We've had good success at bringing the transboundary issues to the fore. The Governor has signed a memorandum of understanding with Canada. We will continue to work with BC on issues that have ties with Alaska and Canada, including transboundary mining. A statement of cooperation is still under review in Canada. This had input from local citizens and tribes. Canada has reached out to its First Nations in Canada. They are not rushing it, as they want this process to be successful and participatory. Next steps: Yukon Territory in Canada is proposing two mines on the river. We are going to try to focus some attention on Yukon River issues next.

Final update on commercial fisheries: The Governor signed Administrative Order 279 which transferred some assets and responsibilities of the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission to ADFG to improve efficiencies. CFEC will continue but some services will be transferred over, including accounting, IT, budget, payroll, and a few others.

Question: Will the Lt. Governor consider a similar memorandum of understanding with the Yukon government? Answer: In initial conversations it is similar to BC but different.

Alaska Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

Draft legislation, HB 366, has been introduced by Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins to increase opportunity for Alaskans to access permits for limited entry fisheries. It would establish regional community permit banks. The bill is online for review, http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?bill=HB%20366. The first hearing in the House Fisheries Committee was last week. We want to get a public version out for feedback. We hope to grow a coalition through 2016, and then we will take it to the next step in the next session.

Heather McCarty, Co-Chair of Alaska King Crab Research, Rehabilitation, and Biology Program

Heather co-chairs AKCRRAB with Ginny Eckert, UAF fisheries professor. AKCRRAB has been working for nearly 10 years, toward successfully culturing native red and blue king crab to enhance the fishery. A few years ago AKCRRAB asked the State to come forward with legislation to enable hatchery rehabilitation of shellfisheries in Alaska, similar to what is on the books for salmon hatcheries.

Senate Bill 172 on mariculture was introduced this session. It was modified by Senate Resources after the first hearing; a number of things were substituted. Then it passed into the Senate Finance Committee. For HB 300, the House version, a hearing is tomorrow at 10 am in the Special Committee on Fisheries. We're not sure if they are going to adopt a similar bill, which is quite different from the original version. We don't know if it will happen this session. If not, it will next session.

Question: What will the timeline be for implementing something like this in our state? Answer: (background) Legislation would support the AKCRRAB goals for crab rehabilitation. King crab stocks have declined and there are no active fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska. The Kodiak fishery has been closed for two decades and has not rebounded despite lack of fishing pressure. Getting traction on this project is still a long way out. We have a 3-phase project going. We are now near the end of the second phase, which is the development of hatchery technology to raise king crab to a certain size, research into predator-prey relationships, and environment effects on released larvae.

Research on red king crab is further along than blue king crab. Now they want to make these technologies and knowledge operational. Industry has committed support for the rehabilitation aspect. Timing is down the road, but we need to find partners and then establish hatcheries, and do the permitting, etc. It is a question of technology transfer and implementation.

Carol Janzen, AOOS

Ocean Acidification Network for Alaska: AOOS held a successful Ocean Acidification Workshop in January during the Alaska Marine Science Symposium. The workshop focused on the technical issues (methods, approach, standards, what works, what does not). It was not intended as an outreach workshop. However, it did bring together experts and non-experts working on water quality issues in the state, so was a great venue for information exchange and collaboration building.

A natural outcome of the OA workshop was the convening of the statewide partners in OA research and monitoring. AOOS is taking the lead to establish an Alaska OA Network following this meeting, and Darcy Dugan (program manager at AOOS) is the lead on this. An interim steering committee has been established and they are planning on having a State of the Science workshop in fall 2016. At this time, a formal steering committee will be elected. Stay tuned for updates on this initiative.

Updates from Spring IOOS Meeting: The 2-day IOOS meeting was held in Silver Spring, MD, at the NOAA IOOS office. We met the new assistant administrator for NOAA's National Ocean Service, Dr. Russell Callender. Then we were provided with NOAA NOS program updates. Discussions were held on how the Regional Associations and IOOS could contribute to these programs.

IOOS launched its Closing Gap Campaign: Requesting support to fill critical observing gaps around the country: IOOS and regions are working together on a filling high priority gaps initiative in coastal observing. In 2016, High Frequency Radar for surface current mapping gaps was the focus and critical gaps were identified in 3-4 regions throughout the US, including Alaska. There is also a lack of O&M support for existing aging HFR systems, which was also part of this request. The campaign is aimed at filling these gaps, keeping in mind that not every region will benefit with each initiative request. Instead of each region getting an equal cut, only 3-4 regions will get new assets or support from this, though all will benefit from the O&M support.

The good of the whole is the approach here, and this approach resonated well on Capitol Hill. Alaska is one of the regions that would receive additional HFR resources, for monitoring and safety along the Arctic Marine Highway in the Bering Strait region. (2 stations)

ICOOS Act Reauthorization activities: (ICOOS = Integrated Coastal Ocean Observation System) Molly McCammon and Carol Janzen made Capitol Hill visits to Rep. Don Young, and Senators Murkowski and Sullivan offices, and were joined by Jeremy Mathis, director for the NOAA Arctic Program. Congressman Young is the primary sponsor of House version, HR 2744. Senators Murkowski and Sullivan are co-sponsors of the Senate version of the Act, S 1886. It is marked up, and the hope is that it will get a unanimous vote. The Senate version is more flexible and can increase the ceiling dollar amount.

Larry Hinzman, UAF Vice Chancellor for Research

Larry gave a brief update on the Arctic Observing Summit, held in Fairbanks during Arctic Science Summit Week. There was a very international presence, including several ambassadors, high level people from all over the world. It was a very positive meeting, and a good opportunity to cross lines. Over 1,000 people attended during the week.

Torie O'Connell, Research Director, Sitka Sound Science Center

Lisa Busch was in DC for the National Association of Marine Laboratories meetings. We have been working for over a year to get an NSF initiative on ocean acidification under way.

Paula Cullenberg, Alaska Sea Grant Director

ComFish Alaska is an industry focused event, to be held March 31-April 2 in Kodiak. It is a trade show featuring public information, alternative safety compliance work with USCG, seafood processing competition, and fishing skills competition. It is a nice event and a nice way to network with people in Kodiak.

UAF graduate student Erin Shew is serving as a 2016 Knauss Marine Policy Fellow at the White House Council on Environmental Quality. She started February 1. Her area of expertise is Alaska coastal resilience. She is happy to talk with anybody interested in this issue. Erin.Shew@alaska.edu

Coming Events

ComFish Alaska: March 31-April 2, 2016, Kodiak

Aleutian Life Forum: August 16-20, Unalaska

Next Alaska Marine Policy Forum conference call: May 18, 2016.