



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, March 22, 2017

Host: Paula Cullenberg

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 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.

Ephraim Froehlich, Sen. Lisa Murkowski's office

- The senator's office has a new team member, Charlotte Regula-Whitefield. She is a Sea Grant Knauss Marine Policy Fellow recently graduated from UAF and will be working closely with Ephraim and focusing on the Oceans Caucus, mariculture, and marine traffic issues.
- Senator Murkowski's office has been working on outreach and education to the new administration regarding the transboundary mining issue. The senator is preparing letters to the Departments of the Interior and State, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency on this issue.
- The Vessel Discharge Act just passed out of the commerce subcommittee and there are ongoing negotiations with its provisions, especially as they relate to commercial fishing vessels.
- The US Navy's operation, Northern Edge, planned for this May has some coastal communities in the Gulf of Alaska concerned and the senator's office is responding by encouraging the Navy to do their due diligence in communicating in person through community meetings in the affected areas to respond to citizen concerns. Molly McCammon, Alaska Ocean Observing System Director, and Paula Cullenberg, Alaska Sea Grant Director, offered to help the Navy to connect with these communities through teleconferences if needed but emphasized that there is no substitute for in-person meetings.
- The senator has voiced concerns regarding the newly released 2018 federal budget. She reiterates the fact that Congress will make the budget through a lengthy process. Her office is collecting lots of input on this issue and urges Alaskans to communicate with them regarding the value of these programs.
- There are still a lot of questions regarding the new administration requirement that 2 regulations be rescinded for every new regulation implemented and how it affects several fisheries. Crucial and time-sensitive regulations have been granted waivers for now but this will continue to be a problem so the senator is pressing the administration for a more streamlined process.
- In response to a question from Paula Cullenberg, Ephraim noted that the FY17 budget is currently being heard in the Appropriations subcommittee. The senator is hoping to get an omnibus bill passed, but if those negotiations break down there will likely be a continuing resolution passed for the remainder of FY 17. Regarding the FY18 budget, the process should be standard but the outlook is unclear now and Ephraim will update us as it proceeds.
- The senator's office will be reintroducing the bill regarding genetically engineered salmon the week of March 27-31.

Barbara Blake, Lt Governor Mallott's office

- The State is working with the Congressional delegation on the pink salmon disaster declaration. As of now, they estimate a total of \$67.1 million lost for commercial fishermen.
- The Lt. Governor is charged to finish work on the proposed Administrative Order regarding climate change. They are still collecting names for outreach and discussion. Their First Alaskans Fellow, Sig Topkok, is working on a climate change mapping project for the State of Alaska, describing who is doing what in Alaska on climate change. They are also in the process of hiring someone full-time in the Governor's office to focus on climate change.
- The Lt. Governor's office is coordinating with the Udall Foundation's U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution for the work that began under President Obama's National Ocean Policy. The institute is interested in possibly funding some work in Alaska relating to ocean planning.
- Albert Kookesh of our office has assumed all transboundary-related duties. Barbara will remain the back-up for this subject. Barbara's portfolio has changed and will now include Tribal Advising for the Governor. She will remain the lead staff for anything relating to marine resources, fish and game, and coastal community climate change adaptation.
- They continue to work with British Columbia and the concerns surrounding mines at the headwaters of Alaska rivers in Southeast. They have also begun the discussion on moving that conversation to the Yukon Territory.
- Barbara is working with Rebecca Braun, Policy Director, to coordinate a list of State of Alaska priorities relating to the federal budget. Please forward any items that might require State advocacy.
- The Lt. Governor is working with ADF&G on possible Title 16 fisheries habitat permitting reform.

Alex Schenk, Sen. Sullivan's office

- The senator has put together a marine debris bill with input from both industry and the conservation sector that will be introduced next week and will accomplish three things:
 - Provide funding for severe marine debris events
 - Reauthorize the NOAA Marine Debris Act
 - Encourage other countries to address waste disposal issues possibly through future trade negotiations
- Molly McCammon suggested that we have a discussion on micro plastics on a future call. Ephraim noted that the Oceans Caucus is taking on micro plastics and micro fibers and may be able to offer some information on this issue.

Paula Cullenberg, Alaska Sea Grant

- Paula noted that she was in DC with the other directors from the Sea Grant program when the Administration's FY 18 "skinny" budget was released and they learned about the proposed elimination of the Sea Grant program. This provided them an opportunity to immediately address this issue on the hill. The Alaska delegation expressed strong support for Sea Grant and encouraged input from Alaskans regarding how they have worked with Sea Grant and their view of the budget proposal.
- Ephraim reported that Senator Murkowski's office would appreciate hearing from people about Sea Grant and other budget issues. He also noted that the senator has joined other coastal senators from Maine and Hawaii in writing to OMB and signed on to a resolution of support for Sea Grant.
- Alex said that Senator Sullivan's committee has sponsored the Sea Grant reauthorization bill and sent out a "Dear Colleague" letter regarding budget issues.

Discussion on Community Centered Regional Science Conferences

- Paula introduced the discussion saying that regional science conferences have been a great thing for Alaskans who find it difficult to network with colleagues because of the large travel distances between communities in Alaska.

Melissa Good, Marine Advisory Agent for the Aleutian Islands/Pribilof Area

- Melissa talked about the Aleutian Life Forum (ALF) which was held last fall in Unalaska. This conference was sponsored by Alaska Sea Grant, AOOS, the Aleutian Bering Sea LCC, and the Aleutian Pribilof Island Association and others, and drew industry stakeholders, research scientists, local leaders, and local residents. There were 40 presentations with 100 people registered for the conference. At the end of the conference the steering committee planned a synthesis session with open discussion on the conference in general which was a new idea and worked quite well. There was a coastal resiliency workshop that was attached to the end of the conference which also went well.
- Melissa also talked about the Western Alaska Interdisciplinary Science Conference scheduled for next month. This conference will focus on regional research needs and community concerns. Developing an Aleutian Islands Waterway Safety Council will be added as an addendum to the conference.
- These two regional conferences have been essential in bridging the gap between traditional ecological knowledge, local fishermen and western science practitioners. They also serve to give voice to the local residents and provide an opportunity to not only learn what science is being done in their area but also to voice their concerns about resource changes and trends. There is a great need to strengthen the communication between resource managers and communities with these conferences providing an opportunity for in-person conversations which are invaluable.

Julie Matweyou, Marine Advisory Agent for the Kodiak Archipelago

- Julie introduced the Kodiak Area Marine Science Symposium (KAMSS) coming up in mid-April. This conference was initiated in 2011 by Alaska Sea Grant. It was the first time that scientists came to Kodiak Island and it is held every three years. KAMSS is usually a 2-3 day event with keynotes, social events and workshops. This year Julia Parrish, who organized the COASST program, will be speaking. 26-30 oral abstracts have been submitted and lots of posters.
- This conference is very exciting for the community and has been surrounded by other community gatherings due to the strong steering committee support. Many fishermen are expected to attend the event.
- This year will focus on capturing thoughts from residents with facilitated discussions following each of the thematically arranged plenaries. The pace of this conference, which specifically suits the local residents, is a bit slower than that set at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium.
- There will be some facilitated discussions about coastal resiliency as requested by the community.
- Kodiak is a very busy place with many things happening and lots of different organizations being active. This conference helps the community to tie together all of these efforts.
- Julie says that the local residents are really interested in what scientists are doing in this area and greatly appreciate the time and effort that is made by the scientists to come to the island and communicate with them. Conferences like these really help the community based monitoring efforts in the state.
- Paula said that conferences like these have really firmed-up her belief in the value of local knowledge and how beneficial it is to gaining a perspective and doing effective science. Scientists have made some great strides due to this information.

- Melissa says that in Unalaska there are not a lot of agency people or scientists stationed there and so the local residents have taken it upon themselves to gather data regarding the extreme changes that they are seeing in their environment and these conferences provide a platform for them to talk about these changes.
- Julie mentioned that ComFish also comes to Kodiak every spring and provides a venue for a real mix of interests from industry to politics.

Next Alaska Marine Policy call: May 24, 2017, 1 pm Alaska time

Upcoming Events

April 3-11 [North Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting, Anchorage](#)

April 18-21 [Kodiak Area Marine Science Symposium, Kodiak](#)

April 26-29 [Western Alaska Interdisciplinary Science Conference, Unalaska](#)