



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Wednesday, July 23, 2014—Summary

Host: Ellen Tyler, tyler@aoos.org

Notes by Sue Keller

Bob King, Office of Senator Mark Begich – Congressional Update

Bills that have made it out of committee include the [Sea Grant reauthorization](#) bill (Sen. Schatz), and the [Vessel Incidental Discharge Act](#) (Sen. Begich) implementing uniform standards and best management practices for discharges other than ballast water and exemptions for small boats including commercial fishing vessels. The latter has 31 cosponsors but faces opposition from Senators concerned about ballast water and issues related to the spread of invasive species. The small boat exemption is supported more broadly. The Cruise Passenger Protection Act (Sen. Rockefeller) had a hearing today and Senator Rockefeller is pushing hard to have the bill marked up before the [Coast Guard Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2015 and 2016](#) (Begich) markup in September. The Coast Guard Authorization could provide vehicles for the other bills, including Sea Grant reauthorization and VIDA.

A revised draft of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) reauthorization legislation is online for public comment. (Begich chairs the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard, responsible for managing this bill.) The revised draft incorporates many of the comments of Alaskans and others from around the nation who responded to the initial discussion draft in April. The [most recent draft](#) is available on the subcommittee's website.

The MSA is still in draft form pending a formal introduction of an amended bill. The public will still be able to comment as the bill is taken up by Senator Begich's subcommittee, and marked up by the full Commerce Committee before moving to the Senate floor for action. Any Senate version of MSA must then be reconciled with the House version in conference.

Bob King will be in Juneau in August 2014.

Jay Sterne, Office of Senator Murkowski – Congressional Update

Secretary of State John Kerry hosted a global conference in June on addressing major threats to the sea—overfishing, marine pollution and ocean acidification. Sen. Murkowski, co-chair of the Senate Oceans Caucus, said the caucus has discussed doing more on ocean acidification and illegal fishing.

In response to President Obama's proposal of expanding a Pacific Ocean marine sanctuary, Murkowski introduced Senate Bill 2608 to require congressional approval of Executive Orders establishing national monuments, including sanctuaries.

Murkowski offered an [amendment](#) to the FY 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill that would require labeling of genetically engineered salmon. Murkowski also supported language in the 2015 State and

Foreign Operations spending bill that would allow Alaska seafood processors to hire foreign students for temporary positions through a work travel program, “J-1 visa.”

Jerry Dzugan, Alaska Marine Safety Education Association – 2010 Coast Guard Authorization Act

As of July 1, 2013, all new fishing vessels over 50 feet need to be classed and vessels over 79 feet need to be load-lined. This change is estimated by the industry to increase cost of new vessels by 10-40%. Congress should be aware that these requirements incur higher cost, punish vessel operators who have already spent money to meet an earlier requirement, remove safety protection, and are confusing to vessel owners. Dzugan knows of one new vessel that has been built in Alaska to meet the requirements.

Dzugan noted there were commercial fishing safety training requirements in the 2010 Coast Guard Authorization Act, however there is no financial support coming out of Congress to support the training. Vessel owners/operators are required to take training on safety topics and drill conducting, the importance of wearing personal flotation devices, etc. Commercial fishing safety overall is much improved but man overboard deaths in particular are still a problem.

Cheryl Rosa, US Arctic Research Commission – new Arctic Appointments

Admiral Robert Papp, recently retired head of the U.S. Coast Guard, was appointed by Secretary of State John Kerry to serve as US Special Representative for the Arctic. He will oversee US policy in the Arctic. Fran Ulmer was appointed as Special Advisor to the State Department, on Arctic Science and Policy. Ulmer will also continue in her position as USARC chair.

The next chair of the Arctic Council will represent the United States. A draft program plan will be released in September 2014 and approved in March 2015. USARC will hold an Arctic research meeting in mid September 2014 in Anchorage, along with Science Day on September 15.

CDR Dennis Brown, US Coast Guard - Arctic Shield 2014

USCG is carrying out Arctic Shield 2014 in northern Alaska this summer. The objectives are:

1. Perform missions and activities in the Arctic.
2. Advance maritime awareness through operations, intelligence, and partnerships.
3. Improve preparedness and response capabilities.
4. Test capabilities and refine arctic resource requirements.

This summer the USCG has increased maritime activity around the Seward Peninsula, with 38 dockside boardings and 29 vessel safety inspections. They are boosting arctic search and rescue capabilities and coordinating research on the *Healy*.

They are monitoring ship traffic, increasing tribal and international engagement, and working with children in the “kids don’t float” program. USCG has educated 2,600 children during Arctic Shield 2014. The USCG has improved search and rescue capabilities in Barrow, and will host a Canada-US North Oil Spill exercise in Juneau. They also held mass rescue exercises in St. Paul and Barrow.

Amy Holman, NOAA – NOAA Habitat Blueprint Update

The NOAA Habitat “Blueprint” effort identifies coastal and marine habitats as places to focus NOAA expertise and resources, with the goal of protecting and conserving healthy marine habitats.

The Alaska Habitat Blueprint team has identified three candidate habitat focus areas: Southeast Alaska/Whiting Harbor, Kachemak Bay, and Chukchi Sea. The Alaska Habitat Blueprint [webpage](#) includes information on each area including maps, an outline of NOAA's objectives, and some of the threats and issues.

NOAA seeks feedback from stakeholders:

1. In which candidate habitat focus area do you think NOAA's proposed habitat conservation efforts can make the most significant difference and have the greatest positive impact in achieving NOAA's proposed habitat objective?
2. Are there any candidate habitat focus areas where there are issues or concerns that could negatively affect the likelihood of successfully achieving the proposed habitat conservation objective?
3. Of the proposed focus areas, are there any in which you would be particularly interested in partnering with NOAA to achieve the proposed habitat conservation objective?

Please send comments by August 29, 2014. Feedback will help determine which area will be included in the Habitat Blueprint. Comments can be sent to AKHabitatFocusArea@noaa.gov

Upcoming Dates:

- Aug 5-14 Kenai Watershed Forum's Wild & Scenic Film Festival
- Aug 12-19 Admiral Papp to tour Alaska
- Aug 26 ACCAP webinar "El Nino – past, present future" ([register](#))
- Aug 26-27 Alaska Arctic Policy Commission – Kotzebue/Nome
- Sept 9 ACCAP webinar: Climate Change Adaptation for Shaktoolik ([register](#))
- Sept 15: AOOS Ocean Film Contest deadline, <http://www.aos.org/film-contest/>
- Sept 15-16 102nd US Arctic Research Commission Meeting – Anchorage
- Sept 18 Climate Change in the Aleutians & Bering Sea – lecture and discussion in Unalaska
- Oct 6-11 Week of the Arctic hosted by Institute of the North (Nome, Kotzebue, Barrow)
- Oct 7-8 Sikuliaq Outreach & Education workshop - Fairbanks
- Nov 7-8 Shellfish Aquaculture Technology Conference – Anchorage
- Oct 7-10 Bering Sea Days in St. Paul
- Nov 19 AOOS 10th Anniversary Celebration – Anchorage Museum

Next Marine Policy Forum call: Sept 24th