



## **Alaska Marine Policy Forum**

Summary of Wednesday, September 24, 2014 call  
Host: Paula Cullenberg, [paula.cullenberg@alaska.edu](mailto:paula.cullenberg@alaska.edu)

***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.***

### **Jay Sterne, Office of Senator Murkowski: Congressional Update**

[Jay\\_Sterne@murkowski.senate.gov](mailto:Jay_Sterne@murkowski.senate.gov)

On Friday September 19 the President signed a Continuing Resolution (CR) authorizing funding for the US federal government at current levels through December 11, 2014. After election day (November 11), Congress will resume work during the “lame duck” session, when the Senate priority will be to pass some package of appropriation bills or a longer CR.

The Alaska and Washington congressional delegations have been working together to submit a request to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to update the acceptable market name of “Alaska pollock” to simply “pollock,” on grounds that use of the name “Alaska pollock” on fish from Russia causes consumer confusion. The impetus for changing the name now stems from a recent Russian trade ban on imports of pollock from the US. This ban is negatively impacting US pollock fisheries sales.

Senator Begich’s [Vessel Incidental Discharge Act](#), implementing uniform standards and best management practices for discharges other than ballast water and exemptions for small boats including commercial fishing vessels, remains stalled (unable to come to the floor for a vote) in the Senate due to other Senators’ concerns about ballast water and issues related to the spread of invasive species. The small boat exemption is supported more broadly. A similar vessel discharge rule cleared the House but staff in both chambers agreed that an extension of the moratorium on permit requests, or a permanent moratorium, is the most that can be expected in this session.

**Erik Elam, Office of Representative Don Young: Congressional Update**  
[erik.elam@mail.house.gov](mailto:erik.elam@mail.house.gov)

The [Coast Guard Authorization Act](#) passed the House in April and has been sent over to the Senate. Section 502 amends the current bill to make the incidental discharge exemptions permanent. As mentioned above, it is highly unlikely that this bill will receive mark-up in the Senate at this time and so a strategy to streamline this is needed. EPA is already issuing rulemaking to begin the permitting process.

The House passed the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) reauthorization legislation out of committee and while it is possible that the act could come to the floor of the House during the lame duck session, it will not make real progress until the next Congress.

The House also passed an Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing bill out of committee with a port states measure, but again additional movement is not expected.

H.R. 4732, Ocean Acidification Innovation Act of 2014, was introduced in late May and is now in committee.

Don Young and Rick Larson started a bipartisan Congressional Arctic Working Group and held their first event last week.

Erik will be in Alaska in October and encouraged constituents to be in touch with him directly at that time.

**Schawna Thoma, Office of Senator Mark Begich: Congressional Update**  
[Schawna\\_Thoma@begich.senate.gov](mailto:Schawna_Thoma@begich.senate.gov), [Bob\\_King@begich.senate.gov](mailto:Bob_King@begich.senate.gov)

Bob King was unable to join the call today, but Schawna Thoma gave an update and reported that the Senator enjoyed his recent meeting with NOAA's David Kennedy to discuss the NOAA Arctic Action Plan. Of interest to this group, the first installment of the Alaska fish disaster allocation, for the Yukon-Kuskokwim and Cook Inlet areas, should be going out to impacted commercial fishermen. Work continues on finalizing the remainder of the program but the Senator is working to resolve remaining issues very soon.

Mark Gleason of the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers thanked the delegation for their work on both the Port Seas Measure and the Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act.

The Coast Guard bill and the EPA small boat discharge waiver remain priorities for the Senator coming into the lame duck session. The waiver is part of the broader Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA), which sets national vessel discharge standards but concerns remain about other provisions dealing with ballast water

and invasive species. In October his office will work to try to address the concerns of various members from California, Washington and the Great Lakes.

Discussion continues on Magnuson Stevens reauthorization, although with limited time nothing is expected this Congress. This is not unusual; the last MSA reauthorization took 5 years to finish. And the clear message the Senator has heard from Alaskans—and the Pacific in general—was that MSA is working and major changes are not needed.

Senator Rubio recently introduced his Florida Fish Improvement Act, which tackles a variety of issues related to Florida's local red snapper fisheries but also impacts various aspects of Magnuson Stevens. Rubio introduced the bill to address his local issues and thinks MSA action is not moving quickly enough. Senator Begich believes MSA is generally working well. Please be in touch with Bob or Schawna with any comments or questions.

**Nikoosh Carlo, Alaska Arctic Policy Commission Executive Director**  
**Alaska Arctic Policy Commission Update**  
[nikoosh.carlo@gmail.com](mailto:nikoosh.carlo@gmail.com)

The Commission met in Nome and Kotzebue in August. Please see <http://www.akarctic.com/nome-kotzebue-meetings-aug-26-27/> for archives.

The Commission has been focusing on (1) the Alaska Arctic Policy Bill and (2) the Implementation Plan, and is seeking feedback on whether the Commission is meeting the state's needs.

(1) The Alaska Arctic Policy Bill consists mostly of the commission's vision and policy. The bill will require legislation. (2) The draft Implementation Plan is available at [www.akarctic.com](http://www.akarctic.com) for download, submission of written comments, and an up-to-date schedule for listening sessions being convened across the state. The overall plan will not require legislation, but rather will require action by the Alaska governor and administration agencies, and possibly individual components with legislation.

The Implementation Plan contains 23 recommendations that fall into four strategic lines of effort: (1) addressing the response infrastructure gap in Alaska's Arctic; (2) strengthening an Alaska Arctic science and research agenda; (3) supporting healthy communities; and (4) promoting economic development of Alaska's Arctic resources.

Recommendations on economic development compose an area that needs further work and the Commission asks the interested public to submit suggestions for recommendations on this important topic. Commission discussion has generated several potential topics around which new recommendations could be formed:

small business development, access to capital, onshore and offshore development, and fostering entrepreneurship.

The Public Comment Period is open from September 15 to November 15, 2014. Please submit written comments to [aapcgovernance@gmail.com](mailto:aapcgovernance@gmail.com) with the email subject: AAPC Public Comments – [individual or organization name]. There will be a listening session on October 10 hosted by Stefanie Moreland, to coincide with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting.

The 2014 Week of the Arctic, sponsored by the Institute of the North and others, will be held October 6-11 in Nome, Kotzebue, and Barrow. It will be a platform for community leaders, experts, and stakeholders to learn about the Arctic and add to priorities and perspectives. More information can be found at: <http://www.institutenorth.org/programs/arctic-advocacy-infrastructure/woa/2014-week-of-the-arctic>

The future of the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission is still under discussion, although the enabling legislation calls for dissolution once the recommendations are delivered to the Alaska Legislature on Jan. 30.

**Chris Hess, Northwest Arctic Borough Science Program**

[Chess@nwabor.org](mailto:Chess@nwabor.org)

The Northwest Arctic Borough Science Program is a research program supported by a grant from Shell. The goal of the program is to find out more about the science of the borough, both terrestrial and marine. The program is guided by a 15-member advisory committee. A survey of the current state of the science and gaps is in progress, and work is being done to investigate what it would take to start a local marine laboratory. Seven small projects have been funded so far: purchasing acoustic recording instruments for baseline acoustics monitoring of beluga whales and other noise in Kotzebue Sound; deploying drifters to collect data about surface currents; beluga whale population study in Buckland including traditional knowledge; implementing a data portal in partnership with AOS; and reporting on the state of scientific and traditional knowledge led by Henry Huntington and Mike Macrander. The budget is about \$1.2 million a year. The research is being done locally, with jobs and training for local residents.

The borough is looking to hire a science director for the program:

<http://www.nwabor.org/jobDescriptions/ScienceDirector.pdf>

**Rick Thoman, National Weather Service Alaska Region**

**Alaska Climate Forecast for Upcoming Seasons**

Please see Rick's slides at <http://www.aos.org/climatebriefing/>

## Globally

- We are expecting extra tropical sea surface temperatures to be unusually warm.
- August and June-July-August were the warmest sea surface temperatures on record.

## Alaska

- Positive Pacific Decadal Oscillation.
- Record high temperatures at the Bering Sea climate stations.
- 2014 near-Alaska sea ice is slightly less than last year.

We are on an El Nino watch—there is a 65% chance that we will have an El Nino this winter. We will have above normal temperatures this winter. In midwinter, chances are there will be warmth farther south in Alaska.

How does the coming winter contrast to last winter? Last winter the warming did not extend into the Bering Sea and this year it is expected to. Also last winter we did not have an El Nino. The drivers are different this year.

## **Florence Fetterer, National Snow and Ice Data Center: Sea Ice Update** [fetterer@nsidc.org](mailto:fetterer@nsidc.org)

Visit the National Snow and Ice Data Center at <http://nsidc.org/>.

The arctic ice minimum was declared on September 17, 2014. It was the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest on record, since 1979. The ice declined in early September and then slowed. Last year there was less ice in the Laptev Sea, but more ice in other seas. This year the Northern Sea Route saw more than 500 sailings, while the Northwest Passage was not open to ships. A point of interest is that ice location forced Franklin vessel searchers farther south, where they found one of the sunken vessels from 1845.

## **Peter Murphy, NOAA** **Marine Debris Summer Update**

There was considerable marine debris activity this summer. Japan gave money to NOAA as a good will gesture; NOAA continued to fund regular programs; the State of Alaska offered dedicated cleanup funding; and projects were also funded by the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council. There was also increased interest from the Gyre exhibit at the Anchorage Museum that highlighted marine debris. That exhibit will be moving to the aquarium in Atlanta next. Results of the cleanup projects are not yet available.

In 2012 aerial surveys were made to look for and set a baseline for Japanese tsunami debris. This summer attempts were made to resurvey those areas; the Arctic and Gulf of Alaska were surveyed but not all areas could be monitored due to unfavorable weather. That aerial survey data is available on the website of NOAA's Environmental Response Management Application (ERMA)

<http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/maps-and-spatial-data/environmental-response-management-application-erma>

A NOAA grant program for community-based removal just opened last week for new proposals and will be open through November at [marinedebris.noaa.gov](http://marinedebris.noaa.gov).

**Upcoming events**

September 26, 2014 United Fishermen of Alaska 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event, Anchorage  
October 20-25, 2014 International Ice Charting Working Group meet, Punta Arenas  
Nov. 19, 2014 AOS 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, Anchorage Museum  
December 2, 2014 Ocean Acidification Workshop, Marriott Hotel, Anchorage  
Jan. 19-23, 2015 Alaska Marine Science Symposium 2015, Anchorage  
May 12-15, 2015 Data-Limited Fisheries, 30<sup>th</sup> Wakefield Symposium, Anchorage

**The next Marine Policy Forum call will be at 1:00 PM on November 12.** As always, be in touch with Molly McCammon ([McCammon@aos.org](mailto:McCammon@aos.org)) or Paula Cullenberg ([paula.cullenberg@alaska.edu](mailto:paula.cullenberg@alaska.edu)) with any questions, comments or suggestions for speakers or topics.