



**Alaska Marine Policy Forum**

Summary of Wednesday, Sept 18, 2013

Host: Ellen Tyler, tyler@aoos.org

Notes by Darcy Dugan

***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.***

**Bob King – Office of Senator Begich**

Bob was in Alaska for most of August and is now back in DC, but will return to Alaska in early October. He mentioned that Molly McCammon of AOOS had visited the Senator’s office that morning to talk about funding for the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), which Senator Begich supports. The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission had come by also, and Senator Begich’s office was glad to have them in town.

Although Senator Begich has been busy working with his colleagues to negotiate a Continuing Resolution to keep the Federal Government funded beyond October, he has taken time to meet with the administration to advance his Arctic science bill, which would help to increase and advance Arctic research. Bills dealing with pirate fishing, the NOAA CORPS, and algal blooms are all awaiting votes on the senate floor, and the Senator is hoping to see several of these “hotlined”– passed through the Senate with unanimous consent.

The immigration bill that includes removing the J1 Program, affecting fishing industry workers from outside the U.S., is still stuck in the House.

Today there was an announcement that $9.7 million was going to the North Pacific Research Board starting Oct 1st, and $1.6 million to the Alaska SeaLife Center for marine mammal studies.

On Sept 19th there will be a confirmation hearing for Kathleen Sullivan, the new NOAA Administrator. Senator Begich is supportive of Dr. Sullivan but will ask some difficult questions, including about funding. He expects that we will see a confirmation vote in the Senate over the next few weeks. The Office of Science and Technology Policy will also be appointing new members.

Senator Begich will chair the Oceans Subcommittee next week in a hearing on seafood sustainability certification. Groups such as Walmart, the National Park Service, and others are adopting Marine Stewardship Council standards. Alaska has opted to withdraw from the standards due to questionable practices and cost. Senator Begich wants to highlight national standards under the Magnuson Stevens Act and is hoping that the hearing will highlight Alaska’s good story and point a way forward. Testimony at the hearing will be provided by the National Marine Fishery Service, Stefanie Moreland with the State of Alaska, ADFG management, the National Fisheries Institute, Walmart, and a food service company called Sodexo. Bob was discouraged by a recent WWF Canada and MSC video titled “We don’t farm like this” that was released on YouTube. It struck him as shocking misrepresentation of fishing industry and was disingenuous about gear types.

Senator Begich will also continue hearings on the authorization of the Magnuson Stevens Act on Oct 22nd. He also plans to hold a hearing to follow up on vessel construction issues, highlighting the need for more U.S. ice breakers, NOAA monitoring vessels, US Coast Guard vessels, and an increase in the funding available for fishery finance programs.

**Nikoosh Carlo – Alaska Arctic Policy Commission (AAPC)**

Nikoosh is the new Executive Director of the AAPC, which is made up of [26 Commissioners](http://www.akarctic.com/?page_id=44), including 10 Legislators and 16 experts from throughout the state. The Commission has been tasked with delivering a preliminary report on Arctic Policy to the State Legislature in 2014 and final in January 2015. The AAPC has met three times in March, June and August in Juneau, Barrow, and Unalaska. The Unalaska meeting had a special focus on the US Coast Guard and fisheries concerns. Commissioners heard public testimony and spent time reviewing background documents being written by each of the 6 AAPC policy teams. Overall it was a productive meeting. The next meeting will be Oct 22-23 in Fairbanks. More info on upcoming meetings can be found at <http://www.akarctic.com/>

**Florence Fetterer– NOAA liaison to the National Snow & Ice Data Center**

Florence provided an update on the annual sea ice minimum, and summarized the ‘Sea Ice News and Analysis’ blog post. September is the end of melt season and official “minimum extent” will be this week. However, if you look at plots of daily sea ice extent, it continues to oscillate due to currents. Therefore, it is more accurate to look at a running 5-day average. Arctic wide, the extent is just over 5 million sq km, which is more than last year at this time but less than the long term average.

Last year was the lowest sea ice extent on record, dropping below 4 million sq km. This year’s loss started to slow down around the beginning of August due to cooler air temperatures over much of the Arctic Ocean – particularly on the western side. It was about 2 degrees cooler than 2012 in the Beaufort and Canadian archipelago. The Beaufort Sea has had more ice this year in September than at this time in the last 4 years, however the Greenland Sea has had less ice compared to previous years. Florence noted that there is a lot of year-to-year variability based on cooler air temperatures, and also that this analysis focused on extent and not volume which is hard to measure.

With respect to navigation, the Canadian Ice Center produced an analysis on the Northwest Passage, showing the northern part has not been navigable at all, and the southern part is navigable but difficult. This is similar to last year where the northern part was navigable for 4 weeks and the southern part was navigable for 6-7 weeks.

Florence also highlighted a data product called “[MASIE](http://nsidc.org/data/masie/)” – multi sensor analyzed sea ice extent, which is based on data from the National Ice Center. It is higher resolution and more accurate than passive microwave products, and shows where the ice is day to day. This product is also available on the AOOS data portal through the AOOS Arctic Portal and can be viewed [here](http://data.aoos.org/maps/modular-oikos/?portal_id=3#y=p&l=ba74f14c-ea25-11e0-986a-0019b9dae22b&z=68.8439588872142,-164.82035207952205,4).

**Paul Gill – US Coast Guard**

Paul shared with the group that the [Alaska Forum for the Environment](http://akforum.com/) (AFE) webpage is now up and current and encouraged listeners to check it out.

**Peter Murphy – NOAA Marine Debris Program**

Marine debris clean-up teams in the Gulf of Alaska, Kodiak, and Southeast this summer have seen significant debris. Densities are lower than last field season but higher than average. They are waiting for data from these teams. There will be a marine debris session at the Alaska Forum for the Environment, followed by an exhibit at the Anchorage Museum called The Gyre.

**The next Marine Policy Forum call will be at 1:00 PM on November 13th.** As always, be in touch with Molly McCammon (mccammon@aoos.org) or Paula Cullenberg (paula.cullenberg@alaska.edu) with any questions, comments or suggestions for speakers or topics.