



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, November 16, 2016

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

- Congress is focused now on the federal budget and whether there will be a continuing resolution for the next three months or an omnibus bill.
- The administration transition is very uncertain now but should be clearer as time goes on.
- The [Digital Coast Act](#) has been hotlined. This act would require NOAA to establish a constituent-driven program to provide a digital platform for coastal data.
- The Senator is still working hard on the transboundary mining issue and was in Ottawa this week meeting with Canadian officials.
- There has not been enough information yet to make a prediction on how the new administration will deal with marine policy issues.

Rep. Don Young's office

No update

Governor Walker's office

No update

Pete Jones, NMFS

- NOAA has been focused on the budget and developing contingency plans if there is a continuing resolution through March. NMFS is the only NOAA line office with political appointee in leadership and they still do not have any information on transition impacts yet. Eileen Sobock, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, is the political lead for Fisheries and will be in Anchorage for the next North Pacific Fishery Council meeting, December 6-13, to celebrate the 40-year anniversary of the Magnuson Stevens Act.

Mark Everett, US Coast Guard

- A dispersant use plan was signed into place in January 2016. The USCG has been conducting an outreach program to captains in western Alaska and Prince William Sound. Dispersants are used on crude oil spills. USCG wants to determine where more protection is needed; they are listening to residents, industry and others about potential avoidance areas (where dispersants would not be used). Upcoming community meetings will be held in Kodiak, Dutch Harbor, and Valdez.
- The EPPR (Emergency Prevention Preparedness and Response) working group has prepared a survey for communities to assess resilience to oil spills, including eight arctic nations. This survey

will be open for another week. The targets for the survey are leaders of small arctic communities from all eight arctic nations. A final report on this project will be produced through the Arctic Council and should be provided at the May ministerial.

Tara Borland, Alaska Sea Grant

- The [Symposium on Climate Displacement, Migration, and Relocation](#) is happening in Manoa, Hawai'i December 13-14 and is bringing together policy and legal experts to discuss these issues.
- Alaska Sea Grant fellowship host applications are going out soon and more information can be found on the [Alaska Sea Grant website](#).

Paula Cullenberg, Alaska Sea Grant

There will be a [Harmful Algal Bloom \(HAB\) Workshop](#) sponsored by Alaska Sea Grant and Alaska Ocean Observing System held in Anchorage on December 8-9. Today's speakers are focused on HABs in Alaska.

Rick Thoman, National Weather Service

- A dramatic decline in sea ice is a factor in warming seawater which is often associated with an increase in HABs.
- Alaska has had the warmest sustained seawater temperatures during the last three years than has been seen since 1900.
- Rick provided a [supplemental information sheet](#) describing sea ice decline and warming sea surface temperatures.
- The sustained nature of the warming sea water has the biggest impacts to the environment.
- The rate of warming in the Bering Sea has increased significantly.

Holly Kent, Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS)

- Kris Holdereid of NOAA's Kasitsna Bay Lab worked with several partners to develop a [Harmful Algal Bloom Information System for Kachemak Bay, Alaska](#) which is housed on the AOOS website.
- This system provides information on current water temperatures in Kachemak Bay and how these temperatures may correlate with the development of HABs and resulting shellfish toxicity.
- The online system is updated regularly and provides graphs showing the potential for HAB growth in Kachemak Bay based on current water temperatures and concentrations of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) toxins measured in shellfish tissue at several Kachemak Bay locations.
- Additionally the web page provides extensive information and links to more information regarding PSP in Alaska.
- The intent of this system is to provide information for recreational shellfish harvesters useful in making informed decisions regarding harvest safety.

Chris Whitehead, Sitka Tribe

- The Southeast Alaska Tribal Toxins (SEATT) partnership began monitoring HABs in 2014.
- SEATT collects phytoplankton and environmental data once per week at several different monitoring sites which are then uploaded to the SoundToxins database managed by NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center.
- The Sitka Tribe of Alaska built an Environmental Research Lab (STAERL) to give shellfish harvesters around Southeast a way of testing subsistence shellfish.
- The tribe also maintains the Southeast Alaska Tribal Ocean Research (SEATOR) website with all of this information and more.
- The focus of the upcoming [Harmful Algal Bloom \(HAB\) Workshop](#), December 8-9, is to pull information from all of the varied HABs monitoring efforts across the state, share information and

develop a plan to attack this problem statewide. Representatives of monitoring efforts across the state will be present.

- Currently in Southeast Alaska phytoplankton counts are down but Sitka is experiencing a large bloom of *Alexandrium*, a phytoplankton species that produces toxins.

Bruce Wright, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association

- APIA began monitoring for PSP and domoic acid, a toxin produced by phytoplankton, in 2006 with assistance from Alaska Sea Grant as baseline data.
- Environmental conditions for HABs have been improving pretty consistently over the last several years.
- APIA has been providing education and information on this issue as its main strategy and they have seen communities change their behavior regarding subsistence harvests of shellfish. There have been no deaths since this program was started eleven years ago.
- They are now starting to see unusual blooms in the middle of winter for instance, Sand Point is experiencing high levels of toxins right now.
- Monitoring beaches in his area is very difficult and risky since HAB occurrence is so variable; they suggest that harvesters send a small sample of fish tissue harvested to a lab for analysis before consuming them as the safest method of avoiding poisoning.

Kimberly Stryker, ADEC Food Safety and Sanitation program

- Kim manages ADEC's program and has seen some unusual things recently including the presence of toxins in commercial shellfish samples from areas where they have not been seen before.
- The state's program does not have a research component and as such they rely heavily on partners doing monitoring and research.
- Alaska may be the only coastal state without a beach monitoring program for recreational harvest.
- Due to the recent budget cuts Kim does not see that state implementing any new programs with regards to this issue, but ADEC continues to be active and supportive of other programs in the state

Important Dates

November 30–December 1: [Alaska Ocean Acidification Network Workshop](#), Anchorage

December 8–9: [Harmful Algal Bloom Workshop](#), Anchorage

December 13-14: [Symposium on Climate Displacement, Migration, and Relocation](#), Manoa, Hawai'i

Next Marine Policy call: January 18, 2017, 1 pm Alaska time