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**ALASKA MARINE POLICY FORUM**

Summary of July 25, 2012 call

Hosted by Darcy Dugan, Alaska Ocean Observing System

***Alaska Marine Policy Forum: 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 Ocean Observing System and Alaska Sea Grant.***

**Bob King, DC office of Senator Mark Begich**

Senator Begich has expressed concerns regarding low Chinook runs in the Yukon/Kuskokwim, Susistna, and Kenai rivers. The office has received multiple requests for fishery disaster assistance, and is talking closely with the National Marine Fisheries Service. They have appreciated the many comments from constituents on this topic.

Bob recently attended the International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting in Panama. A six-year extension was granted on bowhead catch limits, which was good news for North Slope whalers. The Alaska delegation at the IWC was comprised of Doug DeMaster and Ryan Wulff of NOAA, who Bob said were very effective. People have been frustrated with IWC in the past, but this year’s meeting had a positive outcome, and the IWS has switched to bi-annual meetings.

Bills up for mark-up next week:

* A bill barring the interstate commerce of genetically engineered salmon.
* Senator Inouye’s pirate fishing act, which includes language for international port state measures, addressing IUU (Illegal, unreported, unregulated) fishing.
* A bill to reauthorize the NOAA commission corps, sponsored by Senator Begich.

Other bills of interest:

* The vessel discharge bill, creating uniform standards for ballast discharge, is still being discussed. It currently includes exemptions for fishing and recreational vessels, and has a number of supporters, but there are still a number of issues. Senator Begich hopes it will go out for mark up in September.
* Senator Begich’s staff continues to work on the Coast Guard authorization bill and hope it will move forward for a vote soon.
* Senator Kerry has a bill establishing the Titanic Maritime Memorial
* Senator Begich’s office is continuing work on the second draft Arctic Research Bill, in discussions with the North Pacific Research Board and the US Arctic Research Commission.
* There is a bill on ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives) restrictions on the use of seal bombs, which are non-lethal ways to scare seals from fishermen’s nets. Senator Begich’s staff are working on language to make permit exemptions for uses of the devises. There is pushback in Congress, due to concerns about loosening restrictions on explosive devices.

Senator Begich will be in Alaska in August as well has his staff, talking to people about salmon and other issues.

**Stefanie Moreland, DC office of Senator Lisa Murkowski**

Senator Murkowski is looking forward to the state analysis of salmon research, and is standing by to work collaboratively with Senator Begich and others. They will ensure that the needs of Alaskans are highlighted within federal agencies at the headquarters level.

Other issues:

* Senator Murkowski is also involved with the federal discharge permit issue and is working with Senator Begich’s office to create exemptions in some permanent form.
* Senator Murkowski is aware of the salmon ISA virus and recently contacted NOA asking for a task for report to be publicly accessible.
* New regulations for the cruise and shipping industries regarding sulfur content are expected to be in place starting August 1st, starting with 1% sulfur content and moving towards .01% sulfur content by 2015. This will increase costs to Alaskans as shipping companies will pass on costs to consumers. The Senator is concerned and plans to highlight the issue on the floor.
* Marine debris continues to be an issue of concern, and staff are hearing from Alaskans on standby who are willing and able to help with clean-up. The state is working on a coastal survey and there has for the most part been good coordination on the ground. Senator Murkowski is trying to think creatively about how to dispose of the waste, and will be highlighting these issues before the August recess.
* Senators Murkowski and Landrieu are holding a field hearing in Kodiak on August 5th from 9:30-11:30am focusing on funding for the Coast Guard. The State has been invited, as well as the University of Alaska, Crowley Marine, and others.
* Senators Murkowski, Begich, Snow, and Whitehouse are on the Oceans Caucus which is a good place to educate congressional offices on oceans issues – both on the senator and staff level. Some meetings will be held this fall to discuss what the caucus would like this year with regards to briefings. They are open to ideas on issues that involve inter-jurisdictional or complicated ocean issues, jobs, the economy coastal communities, renewable ocean energy, and other topics.

Stefanie is also happy to talk with anyone interested in the appropriations outlook.

**Peter Murphy, NOAA Marine Debris Program**

Difficult weather recently has created a challenge for the State’s aerial survey to get a baseline idea of existing marine debris, but the efforts are continuing. The survey, funded by the Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation, covers Southeast Alaska to Cold Bay. Many groups are funded by an assortment of other grants are continuing to remove debris, and monitoring results are starting to come in and there is an effort to get the data in the same format. The data from the aerial survey will be sensitive because it is visual, but will be shared publicly in some way.

**Roberta Burns, U.S. State Department, reporting on the Arctic Council**

The Arctic Council is an international forum of eight nations who meet to discuss Arctic issues. The Chairmanship rotates every two years, and the U.S. will next be Chair from 2015-17. Now is the time to start thinking about what kinds of projects and circumpolar issues/impacts the U.S. will focus on during our chairmanship. The chairing state usually emphasizes 2-3 priorities, leading to deliverables during the final ministerial meeting of the session. During the next budget cycle, the US will talk about what budget resources will be required. The U.S.’s last Chairmanship was in 1998 when the interest in Arctic was low; however things are different now and there are far more suggestions than the Council will be able to focus on. To help begin to coordinate these ideas, a workshop on possible themes for the chairmanship will be held during the “Week of the Arctic” sponsored by Institute of the North in August. The facilitator will be Julie Gourley. If you have questions, please email Roberta at [BurnsRR@state.gov](mailto:BurnsRR@state.gov).

**Robin Dublin – COSEE Alaska**

The National Marine Educators Association (NMEA) held their annual meeting this year in Anchorage June 24-28th. 450 people attended, including international participants. One of the key conference themes was the integration of science and culture. Co-sponsors included COSEE Alaska, the Northwest Aquatic & Marine Educators, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and the North Pacific Research Board.

COSEE Alaska, which specializes in marine environmental education, is in year four of 5-year grant and are looking for new sources of funding. The COSEE program has a nationwide presence with 13 active centers. <http://www.coseealaska.net/>

**Steve Harz, UAF Science Tech Director for R/V Sikuliaq**

The construction of the new University of Alaska research vessel is making progress. The 261-ft ice-capable vessel will have a polar class 5 standard, and is currently being built in Wisconsin by the National Science Foundation. Fabrication started in Jan 2011, the physical build is 60% complete. Below is the rough timeline for the vessel.

* Oct 13th 2012: ‘launch ceremony’ at Marinette Marine Corporation construction site
* April 2013, the vessel will undergo builder’s trials.
* Late July 2013: “delivery of vessel”. This includes an 8-week outfit period through the St Laurence sea way, and science trials off Massachusetts and the Puerto Rican trench.
* Fall 2013: The vessel will be sent through Panama Canal and up west cost
* Dec 2013: Arrival in Seward.
* Jan 2014: Available for research
* April/May 2014: Ice trials in Bering Sea
* June 2014: Vessel in dry dock (for final check up)

**Alida Bus, Coordinator for the Alaska Sea Party**

The ballot initiative to reinstate the Alaska Coastal Zone Management Act will be on the ballot for the August 28th primary election ([language here](http://www.elections.alaska.gov/ei_primary_bm.php)). The Alaska Sea Party, which is promoting the initiative, has been working to increasing ground visibility in Anchorage. Most support for the initiative has come from local governments, Native corporations, city mayors, and legislators. The opposition to the initiative includes the Alaska Oil and Gas Association, Resource Development Council, and Alaska Miners Association. One point of confusion has been over whether there is veto power for coastal districts. As the Act reads, coastal districts do not have veto power. Attached is an impartial description of the initiative with further information. A new state law for ballot initiatives requires ten public hearings hosted by the Lt. Governor around state. These have included Barrow, Anchorage, Kotzebue Bethel, Ketchikan, Juneau, and a number of others. The public hearings haven’t gotten as much media coverage as anticipated.

**Cynthia Suchman, North Pacific Research Board (NPRB)**

NPRB currently has an opening for a communications specialist. Please visit <http://www.nprb.org/> for more information. Also, the NPRB will be finalizing its annual call for proposals this fall. The RFP will be released in early October with proposals due in December.

**Darcy Dugan, Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS)**

* The Alaska Ocean Observing System recently launched a new version of the Arctic Assets Map. This interactive map shows the locations of research instruments and other monitoring efforts in the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas in an effort to help partnerships and collaboration. Learn more about the map [here](http://www.aoos.org/arctic-assets-update/).
* AOOS also launched a [Facebook page](http://www.facebook.com/AlaskaOceanObservingSystem)
* The [Alaska Marine Science Symposium](http://www.alaskamarinescience.org/), one of Alaska’s premier science conferences, is coming up January 21-25th in Anchorage. Abstract submission is open from Aug 21 – Sept 27th. This is also a good time to think about organizing workshops and side meetings during the conference, which draws around 1,000 participants. Meeting space during the conference is free, if scheduled ahead of time.

**Amy Holman – NOAA**

NOAA is unveiling the Arctic Environmental Response Management Application (ERMA) on July 31st.  ERMA is a web-based GIS tool that assists both emergency responders and environmental resource managers in dealing with incidents that may harm the environment. ERMA integrates and synthesizes data—some of which happens in real time—into a single interactive map, providing a quick visualization of the situation and improving communication and coordination among responders and environmental stakeholders. [Learn more](http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/maps-and-spatial-data/environmental-response-management-application-erma/arctic-erma.html)

**Tom Lakosh, citizen** – Tom expressed concerns about the requirements and application of Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA90) in Alaska.

**Upcoming Events**

* **August 5:** Hearing on US Coast Guard - Senator Murkowski - Kodiak
* **August 9-10:** Arctic Research Commission Meeting - Fairbanks
* **August 16:** Bering Strait Management Authority - Anchorage
* **August 13-15:** Week of the Arctic, hosted by the Institute of the North - Anchorage
* **August 24-27:** The Arctic Imperative Summit - Girdwood
* **September 14:** Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council meeting
* **September 15:** Oceans Fest - Cordova
* **September 21:** Oceans Fest - Valdez
* **September 26:** Alaska Marine Policy Forum - by phone

The next Alaska Marine Policy Forum teleconference will be **Wednesday, Sept 26th at 1pm.**