



Alaska Marine Policy Forum

Summary from Wednesday, June 20, 2018

Host: Ginny Eckert

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 dawn.montano@alaska.edu to be added to the list to receive a reminder and agenda for the next call, and summary notes following each call.

Ginny welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda.

Ann Robertson (Knauss Fellow), Sen. Lisa Murkowski's office

- The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced an allocation of \$56M for the pink salmon disaster in the Gulf of Alaska out of \$200M appropriated by Congress for fisheries disasters along the southeast and west coasts.
- Through her work on the Science Appropriations Subcommittee, Senator Murkowski was able to secure \$71M for the National Sea Grant program.
- There have been some increases in the funding for implementation of the Pacific Salmon Treaty and the first increase in funding for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery fund since 2013.
- \$11M was secured for integrated ocean acidification monitoring, the same as last year.
- The Senator was able to get funding for construction of a new heavy polar ice breaker in the appropriations bill for Homeland Security.

Erik Elam and Tom Mansour (USCG Fellow), Sen. Dan Sullivan's office

- The Governor's request for funding for the Pacific Cod disaster is still pending.
- The Senator is still working to wrap up the USCG bill.
- Whaling quotas for the North Slope and Bering Straits regions will be up for the six-year renewal in September at the International Whaling Commission and the Senator's office is working to build their case in the State Department.
- The administration just released an updated National Ocean Policy, which returns ocean leadership to the regional partnerships.

Danielle Meeker, Alaska Sea Grant Fellow, Lt. Governor's Office

- A fisheries task force was established by Administrative Order from the Governor to come together on specific subject matters when needed. The Upper Cook Inlet Task Force is the first one and will reconvene in the fall after the fishing season.

Mike Litzow, UAF College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences: A Research Perspective on the Pacific Cod Crash in the Gulf of Alaska

- The crash of cod species in the Gulf of Alaska is closely related to the marine heat wave, the blob, that was occurred in the North Pacific starting in 2014 through 2016 and is somewhat still present.

- These temperatures were significant to ecosystems as the warm water persisted at depth and not just on the surface.
- John Walsh at UAF reported that this level of heat in the ocean couldn't be generated without anthropogenic inputs.
- The biological response to this increased temperature included:
 - immediate die-offs of some species,
 - delayed response of die-offs as the first wave starts to affect other species, and
 - the potential for an ecosystem flip changing the overall organization of the affected ecosystem.
- The direct effects to cod were low body condition for young cod, affecting their survival and recruitment to older age classes.
- Commercial fishing may have played a role in the crash as it targets an older age class and relies on the younger age class, which was impacted, to replenish the stock.
- The decline is ongoing with the minimum stock amount expected in 2020 with a recovery not expected until 2023-2024.
- Big ecosystem flips like this can also cause booms to other fisheries.
- Cod historically represented about 30% of the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery but now represents about 16% for an 80% decline.
- Research is being conducted in Kodiak on cod to develop a better understanding of how climate variability will affect the recovery of cod.

Bryce Mecum, Yukon Chinook Run Timing Project Update

- Dr. Phil Mundy, the previous director of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Auke Bay Lab, was the main collaborator for this project, which is basically a model using long time series data from the Bering Sea and Yukon River Delta relating air temperatures, ocean temperatures and ice cover to predict the timing of Yukon River Chinook Salmon.
- These fish are of great concern to Alaska for many social and cultural reasons and have been declining over the years, as evidenced by the closure since 2012 of the commercial fishery, which is now in conservation mode.
- Due to the lowest ever recorded ice coverage in May this year the model is working "off-index".
- This year's timing is about five days later than forecasted.
- This project will start to get interesting, as the predicted climate variable continues to drive data to "off -index" conditions.

Roundtable

- Ginny noted that Alaska Sea Grant is interviewing director candidates this week and the interview presentations are available via Zoom for any interested parties, see links below
<https://alaskaseagrant.org/event/alaska-sea-grant-director-candidate-talk-glenn-haight/>
<https://alaskaseagrant.org/event/alaska-sea-grant-director-candidate-talk-heather-brandon/>
- Holly from AOOs noted that the AOOs Ocean Data Explorer data portal has been updated to a next generation user interface and they are looking for feedback.
- Danielle Dickson of the North Pacific Research Board mentioned that the Sikuliaq will be landing in Nome on June 25 in time to have researchers give a presentation for a "Strait Science" talk hosted at UAF Northwest Campus. Folks can access the blog for the cruise at blog.arctic.nprb.org.
- Danielle also mentioned that NPRB is working with NOAA on development of a run timing model for Cook Inlet.

Next Alaska Marine Policy call: August 22, 2018, 1 pm Alaska time