

MADE IN ALASKA

MARICULTURE

ALASKA DIVISION of ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  ALASKA 

Alaska Mariculture Task Force Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 18, 2021 @ 1:00pm – 4:00pm AST

DUE TO COVID-19: ONLINE MEETING ONLY

1) Roll call

MTF Members Present

Heather McCarty – (Chair) CBSFA, Julie Decker – AFDF, Sam Rabung – ADFG, Jim Andersen – DCCED, Ginny Eckert – ASG, Eric Wyatt – Blue Starr Oyster Co./OceansAlaska/ASGA, Angel Drobnic - APICDA, Mike Stekoll - UAS/UAF, Ed Douville – Shaan Seet Corporation (Craig). Ex-officio members: Alicia Bishop – NOAA, Kim Stryker – ADEC, Andrew Miller - ADNR.

2) Conflicts of interest declared

Records stand from previous meetings. No new conflicts of interest declared.

3) Review and approve agenda (5 mins)

Motion (Rabung/Hetrick) to approve agenda. Motion passes with no objections.

4) Review and approve minutes: October 29, 2020 & January 22, 2021 (5 mins)

Motion (Decker/Rabung) to approve October 29, 2020 minutes with minor amendments in two instances. Motion passes with no objections.

Review and approval of January 22, 2021 minutes postponed to next MTF meeting.

5) Public introductions & comments (5 mins)

Public comments held until pertinent agenda items.

Riley Smith – AFDF, Mike Mastin – Marble Seafoods, Jordan Hollarsmith – NOAA, Tommy Sheridan – Sheridan Consulting/AFDF Board, Michelle Morris – ADFG, John Van Hying – PWS oyster farmer, Caroline Cummings – USFWS, Fred Villa – Governor’s Office, Alaska Development Team, Ari Wiggin – Staff Rep. Snyder, Tomi Marsh – OceansAlaska/ASGA Board, Bobbi Hudson – Pacific Shellfish Institute, Seawan Gehlbach – Craig, Matt Andersen – Blue Wave Futures, Flip Pryor – ADFG, Kristen Gruenthal – ADFG, Angie Bowers – UAS, Amy Kirkham – USFWS, Robina Moyer – JEDC, Johnny Fishmonger – Bristol Bay, Sabrina Farmer – USFWS, Hannah Wilson – ASG Fellow, John Whissel – Native Village of Eyak, Chere Klein – Office of Senators Murkowski & Sullivan, Jennifer Nu – SSP, Justina Hotch – Klukwan, Kevin Foley – USFWS, Alf Pryor – Kodiak

Kelp Farmer, Kristin Ciciel – NOAA, Dan Lesh – McKinley Research, Claire Delbecq – JEDC, Stephen Payton – Seldovia Village Tribe, Joe Arvidson – Blue Wave Futures, Brian Korth - XXX.

6) Updates by MTF members (20 mins):

a. AFDF updates (Decker/Smith)

- Smith – two mariculture trainings to note: 1) 2021 Alaska Seaweed Farm Start-up Training Program – webinar on February 2, 2021 – over 230 registrants. Partners include ASG, GreenWave, ALFA, Blue Evolution, OceansAlaska; and 2) Sustainable Southeast Partnership Kelp and Oyster Farming Workshop. Application period is open. Virtual workshop will occur on March 18-20 for 20-25 Southeast Alaska residents. Priority will be given to Southeast Alaska Natives. Partners include Spruce Root, Sustainable Southeast Partnership, GreenWave, Ecotrust, Organized Village of Kake, AFDF.

b. COVID-19 updates (Rabung, Andersen)

- Rabung – first round of spend plan in final stages of review with PSMFC. Still waiting for guidance from NOAA on the second round spend plan. State's emergency declaration expired on February 14. State agencies have been directed to operate at status quo.
- J. Andersen – CARES Act has been fully expended. AK CARES funds are taxable – everyone who received AK CARES funds should have received a 1099G tax form.

c. Alaska Sea Grant updates (Eckert)

- Eckert – Farm to Table Project: NSG funding in response to COVID-19. New kelp farming video will feature a Kodiak kelp farmer. Week of May 17 this project will feature a Virtual Seaweed and Kelp Festival, reach out to Hannah Wilson if interested in attending. ASG RFP is out, Addressing Economic and Market Needs of the U.S. Aquaculture Industry Pre-proposals due on March 1.

d. NOAA updates (Bishop, Hollarsmith)

- Bishop – new funding opportunity funding the development of aquaculture education programs: [eeBLUE Aquaculture Initiative](#). Internal call for proposals within NOAA. Two moving forward, related to aquaculture in the classroom: 1) Furthering the Ocean Guardian program in Juneau, focus is to use seaweed for bioplastics, 2) bringing aquaculture into Klukwan classrooms. Alaska Aquaculture Permitting Portal – final edits from state agencies and USACE have been completed. Sent to USFWS for review.
- Hallarsmith – AFSC working on developing strategic plan for aquaculture research. Will be reaching out to mariculture researchers across the state.

e. Other updates - *None*.

7) Workgroup Updates (5 mins):

a. Legislative Workgroup – (McCarty, Rabung, Drobnica, Decker, Hetrick)

- McCarty/Decker – two companion mariculture bills in this session of the Legislature. HB 41 and SB 64 – enabling shellfish enhancement and ASMI marketing of mariculture products. Hearing in Senate Resources on Monday, February 22 @ 3:30pm. Other mariculture bill will be introduced by Rep. Story –ADNR lease renewal efficiency and allowing for ecotourism and educational at farms.
 - Rabung – ADFG put in a request to the Governor to allow formal state support for this these bills.
- Wyatt – is the Legislative Workgroup going to address SB 268?
 - Decker – we will address SB 268 in potential topics for next meeting. Federal bill with support for the bill via ECSGA PCSGA, National Aquaculture Association and others. Major focus revolves around insurance for shellfish operations.
 - Wyatt –Insurance is expensive. Also, there is a question of whether or not shellfish farmers are covered by the Jones Act. Every shellfish farmer (even with no employees) is required to have workers compensation.
 - Decker – this issue is in the Five-Year Action Plan, Matt Fagnani did begin conversations with the state’s Division of Insurance.

Task: Legislative Workgroup review SB 268 and reach out to Matt Fagnani on progress on pertinent issues addressed after the MTF reviews the Five-Year Action Plan.

b. Regulatory Workgroup – (Rabung, McCarty, Wyatt, Decker, Sullivan, Stryker) – under new business

c. AQUAA Act Workgroup (Decker, McCarty, Rabung, Pryor, Eckert, Bishop)

- McCarty – MTF and UFA worked in conjunction to provide comments on the last version of the AQUAA Act. Large concern with upholding the state opt-out for finfish farming in nearby state and federal waters – Alaska’s state prohibition on finfish farming. The new version does not include this provision. It has been decided that the MTF should “re-submit” the previous letter. Should we send the letter to the state first for their submittal? Or send it directly from the MTF?
- Rabung – confirmation from John Moller. Recommended that the MTF send the letter directly and note that the state is keen on developing aquaculture in Alaska while upholding the state’s prohibition on finfish farming.

Task: AQUAA Act Workgroup will review the current version of the AQUAA Act, revise the previously submitted MTF letter and send letter supporting aquaculture development while upholding the state opt-out on finfish farming, include mention of state’s support.

d. AMA Workgroup (McCarty, Decker, Smith, Wyatt, Sheridan, Scheer, Marsh) – under old business

e. Research Workgroup (Eckert, Stekoll, Wyatt, Foy, Decker/Smith, Bishop, Hetrick, Sternberg) – none

Research Workgroup temporarily disbanded until further notice with duties housed within MRTC.

f. Alaska Native Mariculture Development Workgroup (Douville, McCarty, Decker/Smith, Rabung, Marsh, Wyatt, J. Andersen, Gallegos, M. Andersen, J. Whissel, W. Hettrick, W. Hetrick-Price, N. Hayden, A. Lindoff, K. Booth, L. Medicine Crow, B. Blake, D. Nickerson, M Edenshaw) – under new business

8) Old Business (100 mins):

a. Mariculture Research & Training Center (MRTC) – implementation, next steps (Eckert)

- Eckert - the MRTC will coordinate industry needs with researchers, universities, identify priority research, including funding opportunities, and host an annual R&D forum designed to support the growth of the industry. The MRTC will be housed within Alaska Sea Grant. ASG presented on the MRTC during the ASGA annual conference. ASGA was supportive and is interested in hosting the MRTC's annual R&D forum in coordination with the ASGA's annual conference.
- McCarty – What is the interaction between the AMA and MRTC? Advisory Committee present in the organizational structure of the MRTC, was there an idea of the AMA's involvement in the Advisory Committee? Should AMA be the advisory committee for the MRTC?
 - Eckert – MRTC director (ASG Director) would have an ex-officio seat in the AMA. Connection between the two via this distinction.

Task: MRTC Workgroup will hold a meeting to further discuss the organizational framework of the MRTC, with focus on the AMA's involvement and the Advisory Committee.

- Stekoll – MRTC should be a stand-alone organization from the AMA, not with the AMA overseeing.
- Decker – AMA and MRTC should be tightly connected. Great that the MRTC Director is an Ex. Officio member of the AMA and it is outlined in the AMA Bylaws. However there is no designated involvement for the AMA in the MRTC yet. AMA in an advising role (not dictating) for MRTC priorities would be beneficial as the AMA will be comprised of industry and researchers.

b. EVOS TC proposal status and progress (Eckert)

- Eckert – Mariculture priority confirmed by EVOS TC for the FY22-FY31 Invitation for Proposals. Current proposal leadership team consists of ASG, PWSSC, AFDF, UAF, Native Village of Eyak, NOAA, ADFG, MTF. Proposal will be submitted by PWSSC. Due March 29. Proposal is designed to be all-inclusive for mariculture industry. Proposal leadership team has drafted region-wide and location-specific research priorities. Focusing on three sub-regions. Looking for approximately 10 farmers to participate – training will be provided for farmers who do participate in project. Reach out if you have interest.

c. AMA workgroup report – implementation, logo recommendation, timeline (McCarty, Decker, Smith)

- Decker – Progress to date: 1) Bylaws completed; 2) Outreach list - beginning outreach list completed for potential AMA membership; 3) AMA logo – the AMA Workgroup conducted a poll of the top four logos and the results are included; 4) All org docs have been filed with the state (Articles of Incorporation, Business License, etc.) Note – the initial biennial report lists four officers – McCarty, Wyatt, Decker, and Scheer. Remaining tasks for the AMA Workgroup, AFDF and the MTF: 1) File for 501(c)6 status with the IRS; 2) Create text for glossy document; 3) Create membership application; 4) conduct outreach to potential new members; 5) review and approve membership applications.
- AMA logo design. Used 99Designs. Four finalists included for discussion.
 - Stryker – it would be nice to underline the importance of Alliance somehow.
 - M. Andersen – would be good to solicit feedback from the Alaska Native Mariculture Development Workgroup
 - Rabung – Design #46 – ask designer to use a lighter background. Have text – ALASKA MARICULTURE ALLIANCE, be same size font.
 - Decker – we had a version on a white background, didn't help define the state.

Task: AMA Workgroup will gather additional input and suggestions on logo design from MTF, Alaska Native Mariculture Development Workgroup, AMA Workgroup. Based on feedback, Decker will create new logo contest with two polls for additional input.

d. Division of Agriculture & USDA programs/subsidies for mariculture industry (Smith, McCarty)

- Smith – Matt Fagnani reached out to Heather and I on programs under USDA and ADNR's Division of Agriculture that are currently available to the mariculture industry and potential for future programs and subsidies previously only available to "terrestrial agriculture". Meeting was on December 16 - topics discussed included: Alaska Grown program, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, Agriculture Revolving Loan Fund, potential crop insurance. Webinar proposed to bring mariculture stakeholders together. Plan is for mariculture industry to provide an update on progress and needs, then for USDA/ADNR Division of Agriculture to overview programs and subsidies available to mariculture industry – to be scheduled in the future.

e. AOA update and next steps (Bishop, McCarty)

- Bishop – amazing to see so many letters of support from Alaska. Alicia and NOAA are now tasked with collecting opportunities and challenges for potential AOA regions. Decision will be made late Spring or early Summer. NOAA regional staff has been tasked to provide a memo on opportunities and challenges in AOA program

implemented in Alaska. This memo will be used in conjunction with the RFI to decide the next AOA region.

- McCarty – it seems that Alaska would be a finalist, what is the nature of the report for opportunities and challenges?
 - Bishop – report will encompass the perspective from regulatory agencies, State of Alaska, Alaska Natives, rural coastal communities, existing mariculture industry, seafood industry, etc. Will also address the challenges and opportunities of designating state waters versus federal or both, the capacity of regional NOAA staff to complete the program and infrastructure limitations.
 - McCarty – how are you reaching out to stakeholders and industry? Would it be helpful for the MTF to outline opportunities and challenges?
 - Bishop – yes, that would be very helpful. There is not a lot of time to conduct outreach on this. In other regions, this is being completed internally. NCCOS will be conducting site suitability analysis. NEPA analysis will inform the environmental side and will be conducted by NOAA regional staff.

Task: Bishop will communicate with Sam Rabung to coordinate on including state's perspective on challenges and opportunities. Bishop will also coordinate with the entire MTF and other mariculture stakeholders on potential challenges and opportunities of moving forward with Alaska as an AOA.

9) New Business (30 mins):

a. Review of [Five-Year Action Plan, AO No. 297](#)

- Decker/McCarty – on track for many of the priority action items. Near-term priorities where the MTF is behind include: 1) increasing the corpus of the MRLF; and 2) reducing ADEC lab testing fees for industry.
- Andersen – initial conversations gained momentum. Current budgetary climate has stalled this. Passing HB 41 and SB 64 will help push this forward.

Task: Decker/McCarty will meet with Matt Fagnani and Alaska Development Team to review Five-Year Action Plan, with focus in areas where the state plays a role.

b. MTF report to Governor Dunleavy, due by May 1

Task: AFDF will initiate a workgroup (Decker, McCarty, Rabung, Drobnic) to review Five-Year Action Plan and draft Report to the Governor. Report will be reviewed by entire MTF.

c. Alaska Native Mariculture Development Workgroup report (Douville, McCarty)

- McCarty – This workgroup met on February 15. Great participation and discussion of concerns and interests. Meeting notes attached to meeting packet. Would be great to get input on research priorities and outreach on the AMA.

- Decker – important to address how we need to expand Alaska Native representation – SEAK heavy. It would be great if the Alaska Native workgroup members could provide an outline of priority areas of concerns and greatest areas of interest.

Task: Smith will email Alaska Native Mariculture Development Workgroup members with MTF materials.

d. Regulatory Workgroup report – update on BOF proposal regarding oyster research (Rabung)

- Rabung – first time that ADFG could submit a proposal to the BOF would be in March 2022. Statute only allows importation of oysters for aquaculture purposes, not research purposes.

Task: Rabung will help ADFG submit a proposal to the Board of Fish (BOF) to amend Statute 5 AAC 41.070a to allow for importation of shellfish for research purposes.

10) Tentative topics for next meeting (5 mins)

- AQUAA Act Workgroup report
- Legislative Workgroup report – SB 268 review (Julie will reach out to PCSGA)
- MRTC workgroup report - whitepaper (review changes), implementation plan
- AMA workgroup report – implementation
- Alaska Native Mariculture Development Workgroup report
- Division of Agriculture & USDA presentation and overview of programs/subsidies
- January 13, 2021 USACE final rule on NWP 48, NWP 55 and NWP 56
- Review of ASGA's 2021 research priorities
- MTF final report to Governor Dunleavy, due by May 1

11) Set next meeting date and time – March 24, 25, 26
Next meeting set for March 26 @ 9:00am-12:00pm AST.

12) Closing Comments & Adjournment (5 mins)
Meeting adjourned at 4:07pm AST.