

MADE IN ALASKA

# MARICULTURE

ALASKA DIVISION of  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ALASKA

ALASKA  
COMMISSION  
ON BUSINESS  
AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT

## Alaska Mariculture Task Force Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 26, 2021 @ 9:00am-12:00pm AST

**DUE TO COVID-19: ONLINE MEETING ONLY**

### 1) Roll call (Chair McCarty calls meeting to order at 9:04am AST)

#### **MTF Members Present**

Heather McCarty – (Chair) CBSFA, Julie Decker – AFDF, Sam Rabung – ADFG, Jim Andersen – DCCED (late), Kate Sullivan – SARDFA, Eric Wyatt – Blue Starr Oyster Co./OceansAlaska/ASGA, Angel Drobnic - APICDA, Mike Stekoll - UAS/UAF. Ex-officio members: Alicia Bishop – NOAA, Andrew Miller – ADNR.

### 2) Conflicts of Interest Declared

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

### 3) Review and approve agenda

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

### 4) Review and approve minutes: Jan. 22, 2021

*Motion (Rabung/Decker) to approve January 22, 2021 minutes. Motion passes with no objections.*

*Minutes from February 18, 2021 were not completed and postponed.*

### 5) Public introductions & comments

*Public comments held until pertinent agenda items.*

#### **Public Participants Present**

Riley Smith – AFDF, Melissa Good – ASG, Molly Zeleski – NOAA, Joe Arvidson – Blue Wave Futures, Tommy Sheridan – AFDF/PWSSC, Angie Bowers – UAS, Julie Scheurer – NOAA, Kristin Ciciel – NOAA, Jason Brune – Commissioner ADEC, Griffin Plush – Rep. Snyder’s Office, Bobbi Hudson – PSI, Tomi Marsh – OceansAlaska/ASMI Board, Hannah Wilson – ASG Fellow, Jake Borst – PWSEDD, Sabrina Farmer – USFWS, Chere Klein – Senators Murkowski & Sullivan Offices, Justina Hotch – Klukwan, Nick Mangini – Kodiak Island Sustainable Seaweed, Kristen Gruenthal – ADFG.

## 6) Updates by MTF members (20 mins):

- a. AFDF updates (Decker): Public ed/social license/carrying capacity; USDA-NIFA- SAS proposal
  - Decker – AFDF awarded a grant funded by WWF with support from the Bezos Earth Fund regarding social license for seaweed farming in Alaska. Due to concerns and misinformation related to farm lease application in Homer, a group is collaborating on a FAQs doc regarding mariculture in Alaska (Alicia Bishop, Michelle Morris, Jordan Hollarsmith, Bailey Moritz, Bobbi Hudson and Decker). Plan is to develop this document then conduct targeted outreach. Document will also be widely shared and transferrable to other areas in the state for outreach and public education. Additionally, AFDF working with partners to submit a proposal for the USDA NIFA Sustainable Aquaculture Systems (SAS) grant program (due April 2). Five-year project requesting \$10 million. Project activities include research to produce seaweed seed that is sterile, strain selection for preferred properties/traits, outreach and education.
  - Smith – AFDF and partners completed two mariculture trainings in February and March 2021. Over 160 participants in virtual workshops. Attendance demonstrates future need.
- b. COVID-19 updates (Rabung, Andersen)
  - Rabung – second round of CARES funding on the horizon, no guidance from NOAA yet. Amount is the same as first round, guidelines and eligibility restrictions may be different. ADFG submitted request for ARPA funding; MTF priorities were included.
- c. Alaska Sea Grant updates (Good)
  - Good – most of ASG efforts have been focused on the EVOS TC proposals. ASG will be hosting an online Oyster and Seaweed Festival on May 17-20.
- d. NOAA updates (Bishop, Hollarsmith)
  - Bishop – NOAA Office of Aquaculture held their annual workshop last week – Jordan and I presented on Alaska mariculture updates. AOA summary document will be submitted next week. NOAA will make selection in late Spring or early Summer. Alaska Aquaculture Permitting Portal in final stages of development, working with a web designer now.
- e. Other updates
  - Wyatt – ASGA updates: Presented at the Business Education Compact Roundtable in March; three ASGA Board members presented during the SSP Kelp and Oyster Farming Workshop. Very important to nurture the next generation of farmers. ASGA will be having a virtual meeting on April 15. All ASGA members welcome and there will be a focus on Q&A for current and prospective farmers.

## 7) Workgroup Updates (5 mins):

- a. Legislative Workgroup (McCarty, Rabung, Drobica, Decker, Hetrick) – old business
- b. Regulatory Workgroup (Rabung, McCarty, Wyatt, Decker, Sullivan, Stryker) – none

- Rabung – ADFG has drafted a letter to the BOF regarding 5 AAC 41.070, Prohibitions on importation and release of live fish. Two minor amendments suggested to include “transport and import” and “research” of oysters in Alaska. Will be submitted in March 2022 to the BOF.

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

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

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

f. Alaska Native Workgroup (Douville, McCarty, Decker, Rabung, Marsh, Wyatt, M Andersen, Gallegos, J. Andersen, Whissel, Hetrick-Price, Hayden, Lindoff, Booth, Medicine Crow, Blake, Edenshaw) – none

## 8) Old Business (45 mins):

a. AQUAA Act – updates (McCarty)

- Decker/McCarty – AQUAA Act workgroup is drafting a letter on the current version of the AQUAA Act and will submit it shortly as directed by the MTF at the last meeting. Stronger America Through Seafood (SATS) sent letter to MTF.
- Rabung – the SATS letter to the MTF should be shared with the Governor’s Office.
- Bishop – lack of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) in Alaska. Is there any plan or movement to reinstate this? The AQUAA Act requires adherence to CZMA, or we could add language to the AQUAA Act to address the State’s authority in both state waters and EEZ off coast (i.e. prohibition on finfish farming)?
- Rabung – unlikely to add additional bureaucracy to state permitting (CZM).
- Decker/McCarty – the MTF suggested mirroring state law in federal waters in previous versions of the AQUAA Act in conjunction with UFA. At one point, the AQUAA Act did include this language, however, it is not present in this current version. There was uncertainty whether a federal law could be subordinate to a state law.

b. EVOS TC proposal - status report (Eckert)

- Decker – 10-year proposal for \$25 million. Research priorities identified in the Mariculture Development Plan helped inform project proposal. Number of different stand-alone research subjects (8): marine mammal interaction and mitigation, carrying capacity, etc. AFDF’s major role is to manage the 10 farmers collecting samples/data on sites. Melissa Good and ASG will be leading the farm site research, including training on data collection.
- McCarty – partners include ASG, PWSSC, AFDF, NOAA, UAF/UAS, ADFG, Native Village of Eyak, farmers. Economic development and ecosystem services/restoration is also a focus of the proposal along with community outreach, education and training.

c. AMA Workgroup report – implementation, logo survey results, membership application, timeline (McCarty, Decker)

- Decker – membership application drafted. Need to include the 1–2 page glossy with AMA mission, structure, activities, etc. Logo survey results are in (19 responses). AFDF will set up a new competition for logo design based on feedback.

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

- Bishop – NOAA is assessing whether there are resources to support one or two of the potential AOAs identified in the last RFI.
  - McCarty – Hawaii, Virgin Islands, Florida, Alaska are in the running for the next AOA. State of Alaska’s support for AOA designation has been incredibly helpful.

e. Legislative Workgroup: Update on mariculture bills (SB 64 / HB 41; HB 115) (McCarty, Decker)

- Decker – SB 64/HB 41: Shellfish fisheries enhancement and ASMI marketing of mariculture products – SB 64 had a hearing in Senate Resources and has been moved to Finance Committee. HB 41 scheduled for House Fisheries on March 30 at 10am. HB 115: aquatic farm lease renewal and ecotourism – passed House Fisheries and Resources, now awaiting House floor vote before being passed to the Senate.
  - McCarty – this year, lobbyists have been heavily involved in supporting mariculture bills. Many mariculture stakeholders have testified and a diverse set of letters of support have been submitted.

## 9) New Business (30 mins):

a. American Rescue Plan Act – potential for mariculture economic stimulus investments – DRAFT White Paper (McCarty, Decker)

- McCarty – Alaska is receiving \$1 billion in funding. Drafted a short-list of mariculture investment recommendations for the Governor’s Office. \$50 million ask for investment in three categories: 1) AMA & MRTC; 2) Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund; and 3) Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute. No Federal guidelines released yet.
  - Decker – important that this request is for long-term and adaptable funding to support the mariculture industry as needs evolve.
  - Rabung – suggest rounding up the request for ASMI to \$1 million.

***Motion (Decker/Rabung) to accept the Mariculture Investments as Economic Stimulus with one amendment to increase the amount recommended for ASMI to market mariculture products to \$1 million. Motion passes with no objections.***

b. Final Report to the Governor – outline & extension (McCarty)

- McCarty – outline for report content completed. We may need to request extension of due date of the final report to the Governor, pushing it from May 1 to May 15.

***Task: McCarty to reach out to Governor's Office regarding a two-week extension to the final report due date.***

***Task: Drobnica to share APICDA lead design contact info with Decker/McCarty and set aside time within May 1-15 for formatting and design of report.***

c. Comments to NOAA – Making Fisheries, Aquaculture More Resilient to Climate Change, deadline April 2 (McCarty, Decker)

- Bishop – based on EO that came out in January 2021. One item within referenced NOAA's request for information/comment on how to make fisheries aquaculture and resources more resilient to climate change.
- Decker - restoration and positive impact of mariculture (shellfish and seaweed) on ecosystem (ecosystem services) is important to highlight in comment letter. Also, shellfish fisheries enhancement – including shellfish hatcheries.

***Task: MTF and interested others on call will send McCarty/Decker preferred language that they would like to see included in comment letter.***

***Task: McCarty/Decker will draft a comment letter outlining the restorative ecosystem benefits of mariculture in Alaska and distribute to the MTF once submitted.***

**10) Tentative topics for next meeting (5 mins)**

- a. Legislative Workgroup report
- b. Final Report to the Governor
- c. MRTC Workgroup report – white paper, implementation plan
- d. AMA Workgroup report – implementation
- e. Alaska Native Workgroup report
- f. USACE - Nationwide Permits (use and overview of changes).

**11) Set next meeting date and time – April 27, 28, 29 (5 mins)**

***Next meeting set for April 27, 9:00am -12:00pm AST.***

**12) Closing Comments & Adjournment (5 mins)**

***Motion (Decker/Rabung) to adjourn meeting. Meeting adjourns with no objections.***