

MADE IN ALASKA

MARICULTURE

ALASKA DIVISION of
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ALASKA
TO OPPORTUNITY

ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE,
COMMUNITY
AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Alaska Mariculture Task Force
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 26, 2020 @ 1:00pm – 4:00pm AST

DUE TO COVID-19: ONLINE MEETING ONLY

1) Roll call (Chair McCarty calls meeting to order at 9:05am AST).

MTF Members Present

Heather McCarty (Chair) – Central Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association, Ginny Eckert – ASG, Sam Rabung – ADFG, Jeff Hetrick – Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery, Mike Stekoll – UAS/UAF, Angel Drobnica – APICDA, Eric Wyatt – Blue Starr Oyster Co., OceansAlaska and ASGA. Ex-officio members: Andrew Miller – ADNR, Kimberly Stryker – ADEC.

Public Participants Present

Riley Smith - AFDF, Julie Scheurer - NOAA, Michelle Morris - ADFG, Flip Pryor - ADFG, Michael Renburg - ADFG, Kristin Ceicel - AFSC, Alicia Bishop – NOAA, Jo Marie – AFSC Sea Grant fellow, Melissa Good – ASG, Tomi Marsh – OceansAlaska, Julie A. - ?.

2) Conflicts of Interest Declared

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

3) Review and approve agenda

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

4) Review and approve minutes: July 28, 2020

Motion (McCarty/Rabung) to approve minutes from August 28, 2020. Motion passes with no objections.

5) Public introductions & comments

Chair McCarty holds a 1-minute moment of silence to honor the Decker family and the loss of Sig and Helen Decker.

6) Updates by MTF members

a. AFDF updates (Smith)

- Smith – The Decker family GoFundMe is active and has raised over 175K. Please pass it along far and wide. Julie plans on returning in some capacity for 1-2 days a week starting in September. Grants: 1) AFDF submitted a pre-proposal to the FY21 NOAA SK grant program titled. Objectives to produce 15 new products, complete nutrient profiling and a best practice guide for seaweed product development. Partners include AFDF, Chris Sanitto (ASG), Seagrove Kelp, Alaska Manufacturing Extension Program (MEP). \$280,000 over 2

years; 2) Denali Commission grant finalized and in progress. Objectives to develop a global seaweed asset map, expansion scenarios for domestic and European seaweed market assessment, complete a demo of processing facility, report on global primary seaweed processing equipment, highlighting equipment existing in AK. Partners include AFDF, ASG, PNNL. \$135,000 over 2.5 years. Five current farmsites up for public comment. Please comment as an industry stakeholder, especially if you are local to the area. National Sea Grant Law Center holding webinar regarding regulations and best practices for processing and handling seaweed for human consumption.

b. COVID-19 updates – [AK CARES Grant, \\$50 M](#) (Smith, Rabung)

- Smith – AK CARES expanded to include 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(6) nonprofits. Businesses and nonprofits that received less than \$5,000 in COVID relief funding are eligible – this may be increased or lifted next month. Commercial fishermen are eligible. Application page changed to www.akcaresonline.org. On August 21, Dunleavy submitted modifications to CARES funding. State noted capacity remaining for small businesses. Proposing less strict administrative criteria and requirements.
- Rabung – CARES Act Fisheries Commission Funding. Revised August 7th update. Draft spend plan will be up for public comment by the end of August, not available yet. Application period will take place in the fall. Links to the [guidance document](#) and ability to sign up for [listserv](#).

c. Alaska Sea Grant updates (Eckert/Good)

- Eckert – Two ASG fellows: Jo Marie and Hannah Wilson.
- Good – Farm to Table Project: active directory online for direct from farms and retailers that are selling Alaska shellfish and seaweed. Continually updated. Hoping to plan a live a live seaweed and oyster festival in Ketchikan, delayed bc of COVID. After feedback from farmers, the virtual event has been postponed as well until Spring of 2021. October is national seafood month – video highlighting Meta Mesdag’s farm will be released in October. Consumer guides are in the works for seaweed and oysters. National Seaweed Hub: four different working groups - Marketing and Regulations work group, Processing and Production work group will be having meetings in the next month. Denali Commission: ASG will be working closely with PNNL on processing techniques and equipment. Proposals in for business and economic planning tools for seaweed and shellfish farms.

d. NOAA updates (Bishop)

- Bishop – Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOA): NOAA announced first two AOA regions in Gulf of Mexico and Southern California. Over 5 years, NOAA will announce a total of 10 regions, this is just the beginning. Mariculture Map: working with Axiom to update the Mariculture Map with important GIS datasets and NOAA staff (NCCOS) to begin working on the siting stage of the portal. Lays foundation for AOA development in Alaska if we decide to move forward with Letter of Support. AQUAA Act: highly unlikely that anything will be passed this year, however, revised version should be out next month. NMFS has not reviewed the AQUAA Act yet. 5th circuit ruling: decision on Monday August 3rd on the challenge of NMFS jurisdiction to manage EEZ aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico under the

MSA FMP. 5th circuit decided that NMFS does not have jurisdiction in the EEZ for aquaculture. Not a prohibition on marine aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico, just a question of management. Important to note that this is the 5th circuit not the 9th circuit (Alaska). Pacific Islands region just announced that researchers were successful in replacing fish meal and fish oil food for farmed raised fish. Primary ingredient is algae oil. Funded by a previous NOAA SK grant. May be a new market for Alaska seaweed.

Task (Bishop) – will forward article and announcement on algae oil replacing fishmeal and fish oil for farmed fish in the Pacific Islands region.

e. Other updates

7) Workgroup Updates:

a. Legislative Workgroup – (McCarty, Rabung, Drobnica, Decker/Smith, Hetrick) – none

b. Regulatory Workgroup – (Rabung, McCarty, Wyatt, Decker/Smith, Sullivan, Stryker, Smith) – none

c. EVOS Proposal Workgroup (Drobnica, Douville, McCarty, Decker/Smith, Hetrick, Eckert, Stekoll) – none

- McCarty – EVOS TC is still in conversations on how funding should be spent going forward.

d. AQUAA Act Workgroup (Decker/Smith, McCarty, Rabung, Pryor, Eckert, Bishop) – none

- McCarty – waiting to see the latest version to come out.

e. AMA Workgroup (McCarty, Decker/Smith, Wyatt, Scheurer, Sheridan, Scheer, Marsh, Figus, Sternberg) – under old business

f. Research Workgroup (Eckert, Stekoll, Wyatt, Foy, Decker/Smith, Bishop, Hetrick, Sternberg) – under old business

Task (Bishop) – will be new chair of AQUAA Act group and will organize next meeting once the latest version is released for review.

8) Old Business (80 mins):

a. Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA) draft bylaws – for discussion/approval

- McCarty – both work groups met, it became clear that both the AMA and MRTC workgroup needed to coordinate on progress on each document. Notable changes below.
 - McCarty – Registered Office and Agent – AFDF is listed as Registered Office, Riley Smith listed as agent.
 - McCarty – Membership Classes (structure from UFA bylaws) – new structure has the following membership classes: A. Organizational Members, B. Individual Members (Grower Members, Enhancement Members) and C) Associate Members. This may be

overly complicated and the BOD representation between Associate and Individual Members seems duplicative. For discussion later.

- Wyatt – Initial thought was to reflect type of membership with the cost of membership (cheaper for growers), however, the Individual Member class is overly complicated. Dues should not be exceedingly expensive in order keep membership inclusive.
- McCarty – Membership dues – idea is to set the dues low to begin with and let the BOD review annually and potentially increase them.
- McCarty – BOD Composition: Organizational Members: must delegate a BOD representative. Individual Members: 3 elected BOD per region (SW, SC, SE). Ex-officio (voting) – (1) MRTC director. Ex-officio (non-voting) – (1) NOAA Aquaculture Coordinator, (1) ADFG Commissioner, or designee, (1) ADNR Commissioner, or designee, (1) Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) Aquaculture Coordinator, or designee.
- Eckert – seems overly complicated. How does this interplay with ASGA? We should not be looking to replace ASGA, rather work with them. ASGA support is important along with a less complicated model.
 - Wyatt – an importance difference between AMA and ASGA will be involvement in and resources to address legislative and regulatory issues, research priorities, economic development. Coordinated effort with ASGA and communications will be important.
 - McCarty – if any entity is allowed to be an Organizational Member, could this lead to an unwieldy BOD? With the current state of the industry, the current model would not lead to too large of a BOD. However, that may change down the line.
- McCarty – Nominations, Elections and Appointments: complicated as stands with two-tiered membership composition (Individual Members).
- McCarty – Terms of Office: staggered terms need to be addressed.

Motion (Stekoll/Wyatt) to change the terms of office for the President and Vice President to two (2) years and Treasurer and Secretary to three (3) years.

Motion (Wyatt/Rabung) – change Organizational Members to Regular Members, completely remove Section B. Individual Members. Remaining Member classes are Regular Members and Associate Members. Regular Members must delegate a representative to serve on the Board of Directors. Motion passes with no objections.

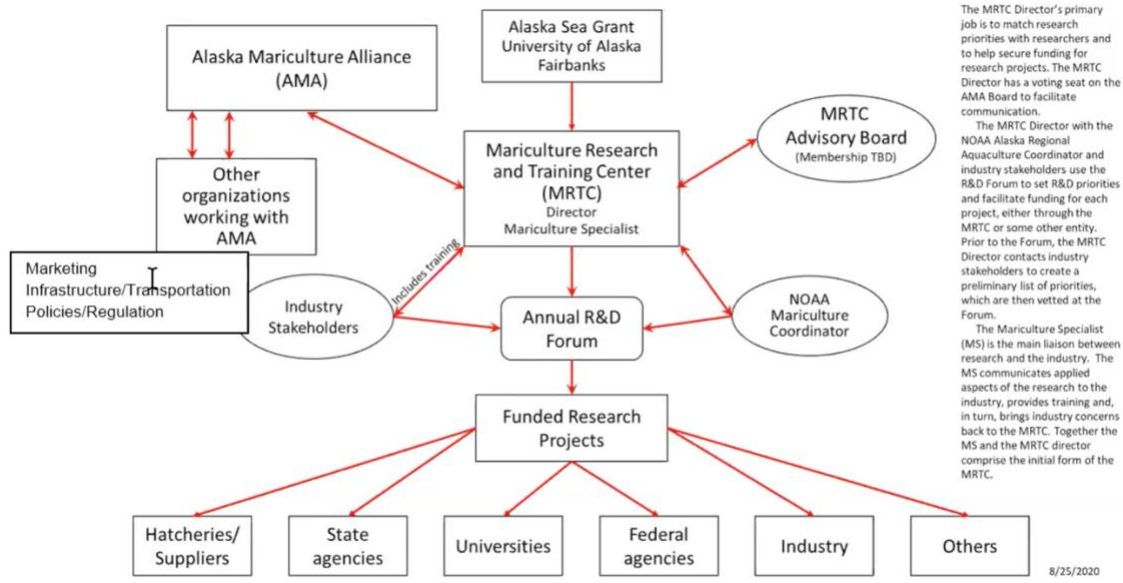
Task (Smith) – add ADEC as an ex-officio non-voting member.

Task (Smith, McCarty) – explore adding another membership class for governmental agencies.

Task (Smith, McCarty, AMA work group) – make relevant changes to the AMA bylaws with the removal of Individual Members. Bring changes to AMA work group for review and discussion. Entire MTF will be CC'ed and included on the meeting to ensure maximum input. AMA bylaws will be on the next MTF agenda for discussion/approval.

b. Mariculture Research Center (MRC), now MRTC – for discussion, next steps

- Stekoll – first, it was decided that the Mariculture Research Center (MRC) will become the Mariculture Research and Training Center (MRTC). Biggest changes from the work group meeting were to the below flow chart, addition of mission statement and description of the MRTC.



- **Near term objectives**

- 1) Delineate the qualifications and duties of the MRTC Director and Mariculture Specialist.
- 2) Engage with UA to get it to have “skin in the game” with respect to the MRTC.
- 3) Prepare proposals to fund the Mariculture Specialist and MRTC Director.
- 4) Work with the AMA (MTF) to gain support for the MRTC from the state.

Mariculture Research and Training Center (MRTC): an entity at the center of a formal network of facilities capable of doing mariculture R&D as part of their mission statements. The envisioned **MRTC** would be administered within the University of Alaska at Alaska Sea Grant, which is a partnership between the University and NOAA. The MRTC would include the various public and private research centers in Alaska, such as the NOAA’s Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Little Port Walter, and Kodiak Lab, the UAS and UAF Labs in Juneau, UAF-CFOS, Kasitsna Bay Lab, Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery, OceansAlaska, Alaska Ocean Observing System, regional science centers, and others.

- **MRTC Mission Statement**

The mission of the Mariculture Research and Training Center is to

- 1) Coordinate research across disciplines (biology, engineering, economics, marketing, food sciences, etc.) for better success of industry development and to improve mariculture management;
- 2) Coordinate with the Alaska Mariculture Alliance in order to facilitate industry participation in setting priorities, in providing research platforms and in incorporating research results.

Tasks (Stekoll, MRTC workgroup) – revise the following: 1) Flowchart: Change NOAA Mariculture Coordinator to “NOAA Regional Aquaculture Coordinator”; 2) MRTC description: change “The MRTC would include” to “would involve” and change “Kasitsna Bay Lab” to “Kasitsna Bay Hatchery”.

- McCarty/Eckert – there may be overlap between the MRTC Advisory Board and the AMA Board. However, the AMA does much more than research. The only way to see if it works is to try it. Does ASG have the ability to dedicate 2 staff to the MRTC?
 - Eckert – we do have funding through the NOAA program to move forward funding the mariculture Specialist with a little funding towards the Director. We could go after future funding in a larger capacity.
 - McCarty – is the MRTC a nonprofit? Or an entity under ASG?
 - Stekoll – yes, the fiscal responsibility and fiscal administration is under ASG.
 - Eckert – the MRTC is just a coordinating and facilitating body. Not an attempt to sequester or secure funding. MRTC does not need to be the middleman. ASG can be the pass through for NOAA funds.
 - McCarty – ASG gets aquaculture funds every year and decide how that will be funded.
 - Eckert – National Sea Grant competitions: ASG just supports and tries to do their best to apply for funds. ASG also receives other funding to distribute in Alaska and is incentivized to distribute since ASG gets additional funding.
 - Stekoll – without a physical center and formal document, it could easily be the case that these dissolves over time.
 - Eckert – the finalized version of the whitepaper would be sufficient within ASG. Could become an actual separate entity down the line. My next step is to write this up and propose to National Sea Grant with MTF approval.

Motion (Stekoll/Wyatt) that the Mariculture Task Force approve this concept paper, mission, and short- and long-term objectives for the creation and operation of the Mariculture Research and Training Center (MRTC) under ASG.

9) Presentation (20 mins time permitting):

a. May 7th Presidential Executive Order (Bishop)

Postponed until next meeting.

10) New Business (30 mins):

a. Presidential Executive Order - Aquaculture Opportunity Areas – is Alaska interested? Letters of Support

- Bishop – In the Fall, NOAA is going to be submitting a Request for Information (RFI) on the first two regions (public comment) and public input on where the next two should be located (Letters of Support). This is a great opportunity to submit Letters of Support. There is a lot of flexibility in where these AOAs are located: EEZ, joint EEZ/state waters and state waters. State AOA would be limited to macroalgae and shellfish. Alaska could propose interest interested in macroalgae and shellfish.
- Rabung – spoke to Governor’s office and the Commissioner and sold the idea of supporting this. With only 10 AOAs, would be an missed opportunity for Alaska if we do not act. If it is in the EEZ, does the state have any say on fin fish farming? May be the best to focus on state waters in order to ensure that state has statutory authority.
- McCarty – if the state is in support, we should look at this. In depth discussion at the next meeting. What is the timeline?
 - Bishop – Fall RFI. Comment on initial two and recommendations for next two. Will repeat each year.

Task (Smith, McCarty) – review next steps for Alaska to submit a Letter of Support as an AOA, potentially draft letter for MTF review at the next meeting.

b. ASG update on housing MRC under ASG (i.e. concepts, principles, budget, next steps)
Postponed to next meeting.

c. Other

11) Tentative topics for next meeting

- a. AQUAA Act workgroup report
- b. In depth discussion of Aquaculture Opportunity Areas
- c. AMA bylaw discussion, approval

12) Set next meeting date and time – September 23, 24, 25
Next meeting set for September 23 @ 12:00pm- 3:00pm AST.

13) Closing Comments & Adjournment
Meeting adjourned at 3:58pm AST.