

MADE IN ALASKA

MARICULTURE



Alaska Mariculture Task Force

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 23, 2020 @ 12:00pm – 3:00pm AST

DUE TO COVID-19: ONLINE MEETING ONLY

1) Roll call (Chair McCarty calls meeting to order at 12:08pm AST).

MTF Members Present

Heather McCarty (Chair) – Central Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association, Ginny Eckert – ASG, Sam Rabung – ADFG, Mike Stekoll – UAS/UAF, Eric Wyatt – Blue Starr Oyster Co., OceansAlaska and ASGA, Riley Smith – AFDF, Kate Sullivan – SARDFA. Ex-officio members: Kimberly Striker – ADEC, Alicia Bishop – NOAA.

Public Participants Present

Tomi Marsh – OceansAlaska and ASMI Board, Schery Umanzor – UAF, Kristen Ceicel – AFSC, Flip Pryor – ADFG, Hannah Wilson – ASG Fellow, Melissa Good – ASG, Jo Marie – AFSC ASG Fellow.

2) Conflicts of Interest Declared

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

3) Review and approve agenda

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

4) Review and approve minutes: July 28, 2020

Motion (Rabung/Wyatt) to approve minutes from September 23, 2020 with amendments to spelling in two cases and altered listing of Riley Smith as AFDF’s MTF member alternate for Julie Decker. Motion passes with no objections.

5) Public introductions & comments

None.

6) Updates by MTF members

a. AFDF updates (Smith)

- Comfish mariculture panel on September 17 – AFDF, Tamsen Peoples, Paul Dobbins, Alf Pryor, Lexa Meyer
- SE Conference: Markos Scheer (Seagrove) and I were asked to give a very brief presentation at the upcoming SE Conference annual meeting on September 24 regarding mariculture opportunities and progress to date, including MTF activities.

- APICDA technical training webinar through the Aleutians forum small business marketplace on September 30.
- DOE AMO presentation on October 20: a host of industry representatives, including Seagrove Kelp, Melissa Good, SWAMC, Denali Commission, Chris Sanitto and many more have been asked by PNNL to present. DOE AMO is the funder for PNNL, Denali Commission and SWAMC's current grant, *Seafood Processing Pilot Project: Kelp Processing and Product Forms*.
- Meetings continue between Oceanium and Alaska stakeholders to scope out potential site for demo plant; geographic focus in Alaska is narrowed to Ketchikan, or Craig; expert consultants and AFDF have provided cost estimates. Oceanium is moving forward with a feasibility study for demo plant.
- Coordination between AFDF, Melissa Good, PNNL and other stakeholders continue to investigate seaweed processing techniques and assess available processing equipment in Alaska.
- FY20 NOAA-SK grant, *Hatchery Capacity & Technology Development to Secure Seed Supply for Oyster Farming in Alaska*. Start date of October 1. Moving forward with revised timeline due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.
- The upcoming Alaska Mariculture Permitting Portal may be a great place to post MTF updates and others once launched.

b. COVID-19 updates – [USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2](#), [AK CARES Grant](#), [\\$50 M](#) (Smith, Rabung)

- Smith – AK CARES: Notably, the Governor's proposed changes to the AK CARES Act were approved, eliminating the \$5,000 limit on PPP/EIDL funds and allowing businesses/individuals with a secondary income to apply. 501(c)3, 501(c)6, and 501(c)19 nonprofits that received any amount of PPP/EIDL funding are eligible to apply.
 - USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP): Opened September 21. USDA is implementing CFAP 2 for agricultural producers (including aquaculture) who continue to face market disruptions and associated costs because of COVID-19. USDA will accept CFAP 2 applications from September 21, 2020 through December 11, 2020. Learn more at farmers.gov/cfap. Covers roughly 10% of sales.
- Rabung - 50M spend plan should be posted for limited comment period in the next couple weeks. Encouraged to sign up for the email notification, on the ADFG landing page.

c. USDA/DCCED RFI on COVID-19 impacts on Alaska shellfish industry (Smith)

- Smith – September meeting with USDA, DCCED, DNR Department of Ag regarding COVID-19 impacts on the U.S. shellfish industries. Information provided detailed decrease in sales volume in 2019 and 2020. There was great East Coast representation, however, none from Alaska. Matt Fagnani facilitated this RFI. Melissa Good was asked to send out a survey to growers in an attempt to glean this detailed information. USDA wants to get more involved with funding opportunities/support for shellfish farming and an immediate focus regards the impacts of COVID-19 on the industry.
 - Eckert – survey closes on Monday. If you know anyone who would respond, please pass this along – important questions.

- Wyatt – spoke to president and past president of ASGA on this. Problem was the scope of the request – 2019-2020 wasn't representative. 2017-2020 would have been best.
- Smith – continued efforts on documenting the impacts of COVID-19 on the mariculture industry need to be documented sooner rather than later. Impacts have been long-lasting and will continue for years to come. Funding opportunities and any ask on behalf of the industry would be bolstered by noting this impact.
 - McCarty – agreed. Does the COVID-19 ASMI report on seafood industry include mariculture or just commercial fisheries? We should utilize the past work by McDowell Group, AFDF and MTF on the economic feasibility/analysis.
 - March – shellfish is included.
 - Smith – metrics for these reports only go up to 2015, however, would be a great baseline and starting point for further research/documentation.

d. Alaska Sea Grant updates (Eckert)

- Eckert – hosted the monthly Alaska Marine Policy forum in partnership with AOOS. Last call was in regard to mariculture. McCarty presented on the AMA and MRTC and Bishop presented on the May 07 Presidential EO and AOAs. Was a comment on marine mammal interaction with mariculture sites. A listening session with folks from Alaska on concerns for mariculture development in Alaska – i.e. address concerns, address research needs, dispel rumors. ASG would love to provide information on the topic going forward.
- McCarty – part of the Plan – outreach and education. Robust discussion should be on next agenda. Set the record straight and keep it straight.

e. NOAA updates (Bishop)

- Bishop – this week is NOAA Aquaculture Week. A topic for this week NOAA is planning to post recipes for mariculture products to the website.
 - Ceicel – ASFC updates, Milford Laboratory from CT is looking for any oyster farmers from Alaska to participate in a study to research a probiotic that may increase survivability of oyster strains.
 - Pryor – send this requests and others to Michelle Morris or Flip Pryor. We have a listserv that will BCC all farmers.

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)

- McCarty – discussions still stalled. A few different proposals at play – EVOS TC had a meeting with all of their lawyers to address the question of “can they do anything greatly different under the current statutes”. The answer was no. The TC asked staff to make their findings publicly available. Letter of Invitation should be going out soon.

d. AQUAA Act Workgroup (Decker/Smith, McCarty, Rabung, Pryor, Eckert, Bishop)

- Bishop – still waiting to see the revised version. NOAA Aquaculture Office has not acted on this yet. Bishop is now the Chair of the regulatory work group.

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) – none

8) Old Business

a. Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA) for discussion/approval, next steps, implementation

- McCarty/Smith – Section 2: initiation of the AMA: MTF will implement the AMA (solicit membership, set timelines, accept membership and Board, etc.). Timeline for the dissolution of the MTF and implementation of the AMA has hardened (July of 2021). Implementation will be on the next meeting agenda. Key highlighted areas will be reviewed by an attorney.

Motion (Wyatt/Eckert) to amend superscript¹ under Article 2: Membership, Section 2: Classes, to the following: “Shellfish and seaweed enhancement permit holders will be incorporated into AMA membership upon approval of enabling legislation and relevant regulations.” Motion passes with no objections.

Task (Smith) – add “ADCCED Commissioner, or designee” to list of Ex-officio members to the AMA.

Motion (Rabung/Stekkol) to amend Article 4: Board of Directors, Section 6: Absences and Vacancies to the following “If any member of the Board of Directors or his/her substitute is absent from two (2) regular consecutive meetings of the Board of Directors, without having been excused by the President, the Board of Directors may contact the member or organization regarding a replacement representative. When a vacancy occurs, or a Director has submitted a written resignation, or died, the President shall approve a new member representative as needed, subject to approval of the Board of Directors, to fulfill the unexpired term.” Motion passes with no objections.

Task (Smith) – amend Article 5: Officers, Section 2: Term, to the following: “The terms of office of the President and Vice President shall be two (2) years. The terms of office for the Secretary and Treasurer shall be three (3) years. Officers may serve consecutive terms. Any Officer may be removed, either with or without cause, at any time by action of the Board of Directors. An Officer may resign at any time by delivering notice to the President or Vice President. A resignation is made effective when notice is accepted by the Board of Directors, unless the notice specifies a later date.”

Task (Smith) – amend Article 4: Board of Directors, Section 5: Officers, to the following: “The Secretary shall keep and maintain, or cause to be kept and maintained, an accurate record of all the proceedings of the membership meetings and meetings of the Board of Directors and a record of decisions of the Executive Committee. The Secretary shall carry out the voting process for Officers of the Board of Directors and for other issues requiring Board action outside the regular meetings. The Secretary shall give notice of all meetings of the members, the Board of Directors, and Executive Committee and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors.”

Motion (Rabung/Stekkol) to alter Article 7: General Provisions, Section 1: Procedure to Amend, to the following: “Except as otherwise provided by law, the Board of Directors may amend or repeal these bylaws or adopt new bylaws by three-quarters majority vote of the Board of Directors present at any properly noticed meeting of the Board.” Motion passes with no objections.

Task (Smith/McCarty) will bring the entire AMA bylaws to an attorney for review with particular focus on key sections.

Motion (Rabung/Stekoll) for the MTF to provisionally accept the AMA bylaws, pending the review of an attorney. If any revisions are recommended, the revised AMA bylaws will be up for approval at the next MTF meeting. Motion passes with no objections.

MTF Member Vote: Ginny Eckert – Yes, Heather McCarty – Yes, Sam Rabung – Yes, Mike Stekkol – Yes, Eric Wyatt – Yes, Riley Smith – Yes.

- b. Mariculture Research & Training Center (MRTC) – final version, next steps
- Smith – discrepancies in final version. Smith, Stekkoll and Eckert will compare and revise versions and send to MTF at next meeting.
 - Eckert – have circulated MRTC concept paper within NSG – first step is to fund a Mariculture Specialist Position, then a proposal to NSG. A small workgroup within the MTF would be beneficial to help form Industry Advisory Group.

MRTC Implementation Work Group: Eckert, Stekkol, Wyatt, Smith, Bishop, Foy.

c. May 7th Presidential Executive Order

- Bishop – Aquaculture Opportunity Areas – is Alaska interested? Discussion of AK Letter of Support
 - Section 8 and 9: work underway with joint sub-committee on Aquaculture within NOAA to address regulatory efficiencies, research and economic development. Intent is to roll together within the Aquaculture Development Plan. EO directs NOAA to come up with Plan within 180 days of signature.
 - Section 7: 1) within 1 year of the date of the EO, 2 regions must be chosen for AOA; 2) within 2 years of identifying each region, a EIS must be completed; and 3) each of the following 4 years, identify 2 more geographic areas and complete EIS within 2 years.

- First two regions (EEZ waters off of the Gulf of Mexico and Southern California were primarily selected because of existing spatial analysis data and current industry interest to develop sustainable aquaculture.
- NOAA RFI will be released as early as this October. Need to know where to select development in existing AOAs, and future AOAs. Previously selected AOA regions had support from state legislators, industry and universities.
- AOA can be located in the EEZ, state waters OR a combination of the two.
- Looking at resource use (minimal conflict), existing spatial data (NCCOS siting analysis and mapping tools), interagency coordination. No predetermined sizes for AOAs. First two locations selected may accommodate 3-5 locations. Public process to decide number of sites, configuration, size, species, annual farm production (considering carrying capacity), location within AOA, etc.
- AOAs are a planning process. This is not about pre-permitting areas. All of the existing federal and state regulatory requirements will apply, does not lessen the environmental review. Benefits include the resources directed at development – 1) in-cost siting tools to minimize user conflicts/maximize production, 2) NEPA and environmental analyses streamlined, 3) research funding. Internal call for aquaculture funding has already identified the two previously selected regions for future funding.
 - Wyatt – what are the benefits for communities and individual business owners?
 - Bishop – siting process, public comment, NEPA are major investments into AOAs. Still would have to go through the state and federal permitting process, would greatly streamline applications.
 - Rabung – reminds us of the pre-approved DNR sites. Build it and they will come? Or will they not? The public process may be the most beneficial part of this to raise awareness. Spoke to the Commissioner, then Muller – both are in support for federal support and momentum.
 - Bishop – first step is identifying the region, second is to inquire on exact locations via public comment. Can be a brief letter.

Task (Bishop) – put together bullet list of elements that would be beneficial to include in a comment letter.

Task (MTF) This must be on the next meeting agenda, MTF should communicate with associated constituencies, bring back comments for direction at next MTF meeting.

9) New Business

a. Army Corps of Engineers September Notice - Revised Standards for Finfish, Seaweed, & Shellfish Aquaculture – public comments (Smith, Bishop)

- Bishop/Smith – USACE recently circulated a draft proposal to renew its existing NWP as well as create two new NWPs that would authorize seaweed and finfish aquaculture in coastal waters. Currently, the only NWP approved for aquaculture is NWP 48, associated with commercial shellfish aquaculture activities. USACE is proposing to revise NWP 48 to address concerns raised by a Washington federal district court in *Coalition to Protect Puget*

Sound Habitat v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which recently invalidated NWP 48 in Washington State. If approved, the proposed NWPs for seaweed and finfish aquaculture activities could significantly reduce the barriers to entry for emerging seaweed and finfish industries and reduce the timeframe and cost associated with obtaining USACE authorization for such activities. The USACE Public comments are due November 16.

Task (Bishop) – pull in a representative from USACE to speak to regulatory work group (now including Bishop), prepare comments for review at next MTF meeting.

b. FY21 NOAA SK proposal status

- Smith – AFDF was encouraged for a full proposal on our FY21 NOAA SK grant proposal titled, New Product Development for Alaska Seaweed. Any other MTF SK proposals in the works?

c. [Seafood Trade Relief Program](#)

- Smith – fishermen are getting relief from USDA for trade impacts similar to relief given to farmers. You will need to show your 2019 landings which USDA will apply to a pre-determined formula. See USDA website for a complete list of species and rates. Applications are available from Sep 14 - Dec 14 on the USDA website. The USDA has announced this is NOT a first-come-first-served situation. The monies awarded were already calculated to cover all permit holders and fisheries. Only mariculture species eligible is geoduck.

10) Tentative topics for next meeting

- a. AQUAA Act workgroup report
- b. MTF AOA Letter of Support – discussion, approval
- c. Next steps for AMA bylaws, implementation
- d. U.S. state PSP testing overview (Sullivan)?
- e. MTF USACE NWP comments
- f. AOA Opportunity areas – Alaska Letter of Support

11) Set next meeting date and time – October 27, 28, 29, 30

Next meeting date set for October 29 @ 9:00am-12:00pm

12) Closing Comments & Adjournment

None.