

MADE IN ALASKA MARICULTURE

ALASKA DIVISION of
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ALASKA
GOVERNMENT

ALASKA
COMMERCE
COMMUNITY
AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Alaska Mariculture Task Force

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 15, 2020 @ 9:00am – 12:00pm AST

DUE TO COVID-19: ONLINE MEETING ONLY

1) Roll call (Chair McCarty calls meeting to order at 9:06am AST)

MTF Members Present

Heather McCarty – (Chair) Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association, Julie Decker – AFDF, Sam Rabung – ADFG, Jim Anderson – DCCED, Ed Douville – Shaan Seet Corp, (Craig, Alaska), Ginny Eckert – ASG, Jeff Hetrick – Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery, Kate Sullivan – SARDFA, Eric Wyatt – Blue Star Oyster Co./OceansAlaska/ASGA (late), Angel Drobnica - APICDA (late), Mike Stekoll - UAS/UAF (late). Ex-officio members: Alicia Bishop – NOAA.

Public Participants Present

Riley Smith – AFDF; Tomi Marsh – OceansAlaska/ASMI; Andrew Miller – ADNR; Matthew Anderson – Blue Wave Futures; Bryan Delay – kelp farmer (Juneau); Brent Reynolds – ADNR; Flip Pryor – ADFG; Hannah Wilson – ASG fellow; Julie Scheurer – NOAA; Jake Borst – PWSEDC; Joe Arvidson – Blue Wave Futures; Jordan Hollarsmith – NOAA, ASFC Mariculture Research Biologist; Kristen Grunthal – ADFG; Melissa Good – ASG; Michelle Morris – ADFG; Mya Pavloc – Poll Arctic; Bob Foy – AFSC; Schery Umanzor – UAF; Sean Den Adel – Blue Wave Futures; Thea Thomas – aquatic farmer (Cordova); Tommy Sheridan – AFDF Board/Sheridan Consulting; Alf Pryor – kelp farmer (Kodiak); Brenda Konar – UAF; Tony Gallegos – Ketchikan Indian Community; Jan Conitz – ADFG.

2) Conflicts of Interest Declared

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

3) Review and approve agenda

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

4) Review and approve minutes: October 29, 2020

Minutes were not completed. Will be reviewed and approved at January meeting.

5) Public introductions & comments

Public comments held until pertinent agenda items.

6) Updates by MTF members (20 mins):

a. AFDF updates (Smith)

- Smith - Two training programs: 1) Alaska Seaweed Farm Start-up Training Program – webinar on February 2, 2021. Series of virtual technical workshops week of February 22. Open registration for webinar. First 150 registrants will be selected for technical workshop; and 2) Sustainable Southeast Partnership Kelp and Oyster Farming Workshop. Application will open in January. March 18-20 virtual training for 20-25 Southeast Alaska residents. Priority will be given to Southeast Alaska Native residents. Partners include Spruce Root, Sustainable Southeast Partnership, GreenWave, Ecotrust, Organized Village of Kake, AFDF.

b. COVID-19 updates (Smith, Rabung)

- Rabung – state spend plan for \$50 million fisheries has gone through two public reviews and has transferred to Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC). \$500K allocated for aquaculture. Biggest changes are to the allocation to residency requirements for fisheries groups, allocation between commercial harvesters/processors and sport fisheries within the \$50 million pot.
- Anderson – AK CARES beginning to wind down. \$280 million issued. Over \$75 million to fishermen. Some mariculture operations were funded. Unsure if further funding will be allocated to this program.

c. Alaska Sea Grant updates (Eckert, Good)

- Eckert – ASG has a state fellowship program. Hannah Wilson funded for entire year. NOAA has agreed to fund the position for year 2. One of Wilson's projects, the Mariculture Siting Portal, will be continued.
- Good – ASG co-leading the National Seaweed Hub processing working group. Feasibility study for regional processing hub (seaweed), identification of primary processing equipment technology. Seaweed Hub marketing group meeting today. Working on PNPL on a global seaweed kelp asset map (farms, processing facilities, species and products around the globe). Report will be issued early in the new year. Two proposals funded regarding marketing and economics for aquaculture: 1) business and planning tools for seaweed farmers; and 2) economic status and contribution of U.S. aquaculture in a global market.

d. NOAA updates (Bishop, Hollarsmith)

- Bishop – AOA informational session on Dec. 2nd was very successful. Permitting portal – close to finalizing main pages. Siting guidance proving to be the most complicated portion. Industry beta testing in January. Focus of NOAA position is stakeholder coordination, regulations, policy, liaison between regions and national headquarters. Focus on research.
- Hollarsmith – AFSC aquaculture strategic plan in dev. Will draw on priorities from the MTF and the Plan. Please reach out with important research priorities for consideration

(jordan.hollarsmith@noaa.gov). Focus of NOAA position surrounds coordinating, conducting and collaborating on research.

7) Workgroup Updates (5 mins):

- a. Legislative Workgroup – (McCarty, Rabung, Drobnica, Decker/Smith, Hetrick)
 - McCarty – workgroup focusing on reintroduction on CS HB 41 – allows for marketing of mariculture products by ASMI and shellfish enhancement. Will add PSP testing fee issues to scope with AK legislature resuming in early 2021.
- b. Regulatory Workgroup – (Rabung, McCarty, Wyatt, Decker/Smith, Sullivan, Stryker, Smith, Bishop) – under old business
- c. EVOS Proposal Workgroup (Drobnica, Douville, McCarty, Decker/Smith, Hetrick, Eckert, Stekoll, Rabung) – under old business
 - McCarty – EVOS workgroup has been involved in monitoring the priorities and status of the EVOS TC, including facilitating the addition of mariculture development in the Invitation for Proposals (IFP). Has largely been inactive since.
- d. AQUAA Act Workgroup (Decker/Smith, McCarty, Rabung, Pryor, Eckert, Bishop)
- 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

8) Old Business (100 mins):

- a. [Aquaculture Opportunity Areas](#) (A)– discussion/approval of MTF AK AOA Letter of Support, other activities and feedback
 - Smith – ASG/AFDF/NOAA hosted informational webinar on Dec. 2. Stakeholder list compiled. Extensive outreach conducted via surveys and one-on-one communications. A lot of interest expressed across target regions.
 - Good – two surveys completed. One for attendees at the Dec. 2nd webinar and another general survey to stakeholder list. Most respondents indicated preferred areas of SEAK, PWS and Kodiak. Aleutian Pribilof Islands also garnered interest. Many respondents indicated a preference for both state and federal waters for consideration. Some needed more information to make a decision.
 - Rabung – State is supportive of Alaska state waters as an AOA. Letter will reflect this and underline importance benefits of planning process, reduces potential conflict of use in site selection and application process.
 - McCarty – best for the MTF to support Alaska as general for an AOA. Not specific region.

- Bishop – first step is to show interest for Alaska generally. The site suitability study will consider specific regions. The designated area within Alaska will be of topic at a later date. AOA selection driven by stakeholder and industry.
- McCarty – it is important to also list any concerns with AOA development.
- Smith – to use this current RFI as an example, NOAA is asking for more information on the two previously selected regions. If selected, this will be an opportunity to provide more information on specific regions in Alaska.
- M. Anderson – what is the Alaska Native involvement in this process?
 - Good/Smith – Alaska Native groups were included in our outreach for the informational session. A lot of PWS Alaska Native representation during the AOA informational session on Dec. 2.
 - Bishop – NEPA stage will solicit much more feedback from all stakeholders, including Alaska Native groups.
 - Gallegos – have been following the MTF for the last 5 years. Want to make sure that the MTF know of the underlying concerns within some of the tribes. Some tribes are not strongly engaged in economic development. As I broached the subject of the tribe getting involved in kelp farming, I ran into concerns that keep coming up from a large proportion of the community and other tribal leadership regarding the commercialization of traditional foods, including impact on the tribes. In order to avoid strong opposition from tribes, especially with the increased interest in tribal development of traditional food programs, concerns for over-commercialization and over-harvest need to be addressed by the MTF at the onset.
 - McCarty – thank you for bringing this up in this setting. The MTF has very deeply considered those concerns. They have been on our radar since the conception. Ed Douville is an Alaska Native representative on the MTF. It is good that Alaska AOA outreach and education may have sparked this conversation. Creating an Alaska Native workgroup is later on the agenda. The MTF has and will continue to take these concerns seriously.
 - Rabung – I have fielded many calls from Alaska Native representatives regarding the potential impact of seaweed farming on wild populations and traditional seaweed harvests. It seems that there is a general misconception of mariculture. Seaweed farmers are growing their own seaweed and harvesting that stock on gear away from the beach, not wild harvest. ADFG issues the permit to collect wild broodstock. ADFG requires that 50 individual blades are collected within 50 kilometers from the farm site. Cannot be from one singular plant and must be collected across the area.
 - Gallegos – that has been communicated to tribal leadership but does not alleviate the concern. As interest continues to grow, the fear is that this collection process will negatively impact the wild stocks from the beach. If not addressed in a proactive way, tribal concerns have the potential to derail some of what has been accomplished and planned for the industry growth.
- Smith – MTF Letter of Support for Alaska AOA, generally supports appropriate state and federal waters for consideration as potential AOAs. Outlines the history of the MTF,

state support, industry growth and outreach/stakeholder input from specific regions guiding this letter.

- McCarty – important that the MTF support any and all people’s efforts regarding this AOA opportunity.
 - Rabung –Similar language will be used for the state of Alaska Letter of Support. Will only support state waters for AOA designation as a way to further underline the state prohibition on finfish farming.

Motion (Rabung/Anderson) to approve the conceptual framework of the MTF Letter of Support for potential AOA designation in appropriate state and federal waters off Alaska for the cultivation of shellfish and seaweeds. Any grammatical or editorial suggestions will be accepted by COB on Dec. 15, 2021. Motion passes with no objections.

b. Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA) - next steps for AMA bylaws, implementation, timeline

- McCarty – Riley and I worked to draft an implementation plan. Bylaws have been reviewed by an attorney and approved by the MTF. AFDF has been facilitating and administrating the MTF. Most of the MTF members have been volunteering as MTF members. Hope is to continue this relationship between AFDF and the AMA. First step is to begin the process to register the AMA as an organization with the State of Alaska. Then solidify the non-profit status with the IRS. Next step is to create a 2-page “glossy” for outreach to potential members. ASG has been identified as a potential entity to help with the design of the “glossy”. Outreach plan is important to reach member sectors.
 - Anderson – timing of March thru May for membership approval is appropriate.
 - Rabung – AO 297 states the MTF must make recommendations to the Governor by May 1, 2021. MTF will sunset on June 30, 2021.
 - McCarty – Continued work allowed through end of June after formal plan is presented to the Governor. This will be added to the AMA implementation plan.

Task (AMA workgroup): will meet before the next MTF meeting and expand on the implementation plan to report back to the MTF at the next meeting.

c. EVOS TC proposal status and progress (McCarty, Eckert, Smith)

- McCarty – Decker and McCarty met with the State repeatedly to express funding needs for the mariculture industry. It was apparent that the state did not have the budget to funnel money directly to address these needs. Focused discussions with the EVOS TC to include mariculture as a priority in future programs. EVOS TC draft IFP clearly defined mariculture as a priority in the upcoming cycle. EVOS workgroup was heavily involved in this iterative process. Since then, some research-oriented members of the MTF have been meeting to develop a proposal.
- Eckert – group has begun proposal planning and includes Heather McCarty, Ginny Eckert, Katrina Hoffman - PWSSC, Riley Smith, Brenda Konar, Jordan Hollarsmith, Sam Rabung, John Whissel – Native Village of Eyak.

Structure mirrors the Gulf Watch program, administered by PWSSC. Contains science review panel, outreach coordinating committee. Data management must be a central theme. Two scales of studies: 1) regionwide which can be done anywhere but would be applicable to the spill zone; and 2) location-specific studies will engage local communities, stakeholders, interested current and potential industry members. Will leverage existing research, monitoring programs and partnerships (i.e. KBNERR, EPSCOR, Gulfwatch, others). Extremely interested in addressing site suitability for mariculture operations.

Regionwide studies: Genetics – population genetics, genetic impacts on wild stocks, genetic diversity in wild, strain selection; Socio-economics – economic sustainability, market studies, product development; and Production Techniques – techniques for hatcheries and farms to breed, culture and rear invertebrates, seaweed, multi-species

Location-specific studies: Socio-economics – distance to markets, logistics, existing uses/conflicts, scale and revenue projections; Water quality - primary productivity, Harmful Algal Blooms, Vibrio, contaminants, Ocean Acidification, temperature/salinity, nutrients, currents/flow; and Ecosystem studies – ecosystem services and ecological impacts of mariculture – marine mammals, benthic communities, photo/zooplankton, herring spawn, carbon capture, water quality enhancement

- Rabung – there are not any current commercial mariculture farm operating in PWS. A lot of interest and applications in the works. Great opportunity to get more answers on potential benefits and impacts of commercial mariculture farms. Before and after studies will be crucial to inform future permitting and support for the mariculture industry.
- McCarty – much of the project results will be transferable to other regions outside the EVOS region. Great opportunity.

d. Mariculture Research & Training Center (MRTC) – revisions, next steps

- Eckert – MRTC workgroup met in mid-November. Reviewed whitepaper. How to meaningfully incorporate Alaska Native communities and tribal entities. Looking for ways to do this in the future. Annual Research and Development meeting – must ensure that industry has avenue to participate. Ensure fundraising for event.

Task (MRTC workgroup): develop implementation plan for report at future meeting.

e. USACE Revised Standards for Finfish, Seaweed, & Shellfish Aquaculture – MTF comments submitted (Rabung, Smith, McCarty)

- Smith – large contribution by ADFG staff. Submitted to via email to Danielle Blacklock and via the online portal.

Regional letter: finish farming prohibition, not in support for NWP B for finfish mariculture activities in the waters off Alaska. Requested regional condition for the use

of appropriate criteria in assessing marine mammal interactions (potential for entanglement, competition for space and proximity of farms to pinniped haulouts to determine if section 7 consultation is necessary. Regional conditions should align with the standards implemented in state issued permits. Preliminary determination on a state lease/permit application should be received by applicant prior to submission of a USACE permit application. All permit authorizations in Alaska should be issued under NWP 48 or A.

Nationwide Letter: similar statement regarding upholding state authority, prohibition on finfish farming, not in support of NWP B. Does support the removal of the ½ acre limit for impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation in areas that have not been used for commercial aquaculture in the last 20 years. Supports the removal of the Pre-Construction Notification (PCN). Request that conditions in NWP 48 and A be consistent and combined into one NWP for both shellfish and seaweeds.

f. FY21 NOAA SK proposal status (Smith)

- Smith – AFDF successfully submitted a proposal for the FY21 NOAA SK grant program titled, New Product Development for Alaska Seaweed. Focuses on developing 10 new seaweed product prototypes, best practices and recipe guidebook.

9) New Business (30 mins):

a. Alaska Native Mariculture Workgroup (McCarty, Smith)

- McCarty – It has become abundantly clear that the MTF needs to increase outreach, communications, and involvement with Alaska Native entities. Including understanding of interests and concerns. Ed Douville and I have been speaking to this. I would like to propose solidifying an Alaska Native workgroup within the MTF.
- Douville – food security is a big concern for Alaska Native communities. Alaska Native corporations and tribes are a huge asset for the mariculture industry. Wide participation by Alaska Native representatives important to gather all perspectives.
- Wyatt – this is an incredible outreach opportunity for the AMA.

Motion (Rabung/Douville) to create an Alaska Native workgroup within the MTF. Ed Douville will Chair the workgroup. Motion passes without objection.

b. Mariculture stakeholder webinar with state/federal agencies regarding industry update/needs and potential USDA programs/subsidies for mariculture as an agriculture industry (Smith)

- Smith – Heather and I met with Matt Fagnani, the Division of Agriculture and USDA regarding potential USDA and ADNR programs/subsidies available to the mariculture industry. They would like to hold a webinar with the MTF, ASGA, leading mariculture industry to provide status updates and overview current and potential programs and subsidies for the mariculture industry.

c. Governor's Office Mariculture Briefing – follow-up materials, next steps

- Smith – in addition to the May 1 briefing, it is important to keep the momentum with the Governor's Office. Follow-up with materials, potential follow-up briefing or listening session?
- d. Others?

10) Tentative topics for next meeting (5 mins)

- a. AQUAA Act workgroup report
- McCarty/Eckert – legislation is not going anywhere. We should prioritize the AMA and MRTC priorities first.
- b. U.S. state PSP testing overview (Sullivan)
 - McCarty – this is important to address in future meetings. Most recent budget released by the state suggested further cut to PSP testing funding.
 - Rabung – most recent state budget suggests further cuts to state PSP testing funding for industry.

Task (Sullivan): overview the U.S. state PSP testing fee structure, including current status and immediate needs with Alaska Legislature resuming in early 2021. Pertinent topic for next meeting.

Task (Legislative workgroup): will begin communicating the need for PSP testing funding to Alaska Legislature.

- c. COVID-19 impact on mariculture industry surveys
- d. MRTC workgroup report - whitepaper (review changes), implementation plan
- e. Mariculture listening session?
- f. AMA workgroup report – implementation
- g. Alaska Native workgroup report
- g. Others?

11) Set next meeting date and time – January 7, 8, 11, 13? (5 mins)

Task (Smith): Doodle poll will be sent out for next meeting to be held after the ASGA annual conference (January 19-22). Next MTF meeting set for January 22nd @ 1-4pm AST.

12) Closing Comments & Adjournment (5 mins)

None.