



**Alaska Mariculture Task Force (MTF) Meeting Minutes  
January 10, 2018**

**Attendees**

Mariculture Task Force members attending: Mike Stekoll, Heather McCarty, Angel Drobnica, Sam Rabung, Julie Decker, Micaela Fowler, Jeff Hetrick, Paula Cullenberg, Eric Wyatt

Members of the Public: Clayton Hamilton (JNU), Maggie Allen (NOAA) Education, Kirsten Shelton-Walker (McDowell), Cherie Klein with Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, Michelle Morris (ADF&G), Tomi Marsh (OceansAlaska), Amanda Compton, Charlotte Regula-Whitefield (Sen Murkowski's office)

Materials distributed to task force members included: MTF Minutes, November 8, 2017 – DRAFT, Advisory Committee Agendas/Minutes/Notes (see [MTF website](#)), Senator Wicker's Aquaculture Bill – DRAFT, ASGA presentation 2017-12-07, Public Perception of Aquaculture – Email from Maggie Allen - NOAA Affiliate, Public Perception of Aquaculture – PPT, Email from Alyssa Rodrigues – DCCED, Comp Plan – Drafting Committee version 1 (TBD), Spreadsheet summary of AC recommendations – updated, Diagram of Comprehensive Planning Process – Updated, NOAA In-Kind Match Form

**10:36am Chair Julie Decker called meeting to order**

Review and approve agenda

Micaela Fowler motioned to approve, Angel Drobnica seconded; no objection

Review and approve minutes: November 8, 2017

Angel Drobnica motioned to approve, Micaela Fowler seconded; no changes, no objection

**Public introductions & comments**

10:37 public comment opened

10:38 public comment closed

**Old Business**

**Updates from Advisory Committee (AC) Chairs**

- R&D Mike reviewed the recommendations- the committee recommended that the title be changed to a Mariculture Development Council; they also recommended a funding committee be set up with coordination with the Mariculture Task Force to find funding for projects and to continue the work of the Mariculture Task Force to emphasize the importance of this work being funded

- They continued work on their document on the existing research that is already published. They are some outstanding parts but they are still working on it and hope to have it inserted as an appendix.
- Sam- noted that their AC sent some final thoughts on the fact that they would like to continue focus on federal regulations with regards to aquaculture; will continue the discussion after the federal portion of the agenda

### **Other Updates**

#### State Legislation –

- Senator Stevens, a co-sponsor of the bill, is now on S-Finance Committee
- Julie Decker updated the MTF that the legislature convenes on the 16th of January; the two bills are sitting in Senate Finance committee- Senator Stevens is now sitting on the finance committee so that should help the movement of the bills. the MTF should continue to stress the importance of the bill
- Micaela let the task force know Elizabeth Harpold will now be the contact in Rep Ortiz's office for the bills as last year's contact is no longer there.
- Heather is working to have the Central Bearing Sean Fisherman's Association (CBFA) weigh in with Sen Hoffman the importance of the bills and they are also hoping to get support from Commissioner Cotten in F&G

#### Federal Legislation - Senator Wicker's Aquaculture Bill - DRAFT

- Charlotte Regula-Whitefield provided an update on Senator Wicker's Aquaculture Bill- she has been coordinating and communicating with Senator Wicker on this bill'
- This is an issue for Alaska, but we are tracking what is going on and they are looking to provide
- She is hoping that the MTF would be able to provide input on the bill, as they have concerns about the bill
- Benefits- new granting source for aquaculture and has priorities for Alaska; it would mandate NOAA to have a regional aquaculture expert to be located in Alaska; also state exemptions (section 9) states that have concerns will have their wishes and state laws respected
- Their office has not agreed to sign on to the bill as of yet as they are looking for input from different parties as there are a lot of things that it could do- they would like formal comments by Friday, January 12 but would also take comments after- the bill is not ready for introduction and won't be for another few months
- Heather asked if the funding source would be available for inside the three miles and not just federal waters; Charlotte said that it is for all marine aquaculture
- Julie asked that Charlotte clarify the concerns from Sen. Murkowski's office- Charlotte commented on the historical issues with mariculture; spacial issues, offshore development, environmental issues, poor maintenance of facilities, nothing formal, they also want to make sure that the fisheries councils are represented at the table- they have nothing in writing at this point
- Mike thinks the idea is great but he would like more time to closely read the bill
- Julie asked what other groups Senator Murkowski's office has sent the bill to or would like input from- they have not yet sent it out further but is working with their major

fisheries groups to send it out; Charlotte requests that the MTF let their office know who they forward it to

- Charlotte will be transitioning out of this role but will bring Ephriam Freylich who is coming in to replace her up to speed
- Eric asked Charlotte's view on GMO salmon and if there were any provisions to prevent it- Sen Murkowski's office is opposed to GMO salmon and they will continue to work with Sen. Wicker's office but they haven't put it specifically in because there are some states that like it; one thing that would protect Alaska is that the bill still protects us under existing state law due to the fact that finfish farming is prohibited
- Julie asked if support from the governor's office would help the progress of the bill | Charlotte will send the bill to the governor's office so that anything that happens on a federal level will help our state and having full support from the governor's office will help move things forward
- Julie suggested that a draft letter of support will be on the agenda for the next MTF meeting for discussion; Mike will draft the letter saying that the task force thanks Sen. Murkowski's office for the opportunity to comment and that they look forward to working with her office as the bill goes forward

Grant announcements/applications: National Sea Grant Aquaculture, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, USDA NRCS Conservation Innovation Grants

- Paula mentioned that the SeaGrant application is open- due to her office completed by March 2nd- they are going to look favorably on proposals that loop in AK SeaGrant so if they are interested that they need to contact Paula about a month before- this is the grant for developing new systems and technologies to increase the resiliency of aquaculture

Requests for funds to support MTF (McCarty/Decker)

- They are still working on it; there is some interest but it is complicated by the appropriate avenues; it doesn't seem like anything will work to actually drafting of the plan but they can help with the public comment portion after we have a written draft. APICDA through Angel has offered to do graphic and layout once the MTF has a written draft

2017 Permit/Lease applications (Rabung)

- The regulatory issues advisory committee looked at F&G, DNR and DEC primarily. In the latest round of aquatic farm permitting, F&G have been running into federal issues with NOAA. They no longer have the general permit from the Army Corps of Engineers as it has expired. They would like to add a recommendation to reinstate the general permit from the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Farm sighting- the F&G they don't have existing constraints on harbor seal haul outs and pupping areas
- Fed's wont issue a permit if NOAA says that the permit application is located too close to a haul out- there is a one mile buffer
- NOAA considers large applications as big industrial development but from F&G perspective it is not

- Sam thinks that clarification needs to come from NOAA for the distance as well as to update a recommendation that the feds work with the state to accommodate these requests
- Eric asked that there be some updated scientific evidence of the affect that a farm could have on harbor seals haul out spots as the data does not seem to be current
- Heather suggested that the MTF start with contacting NOAA to find out more about the policies that are driving their rulings and work with them to be more realistic and science based; then find out what the rule changing process would be if there is a rule that needs to be updated
- Angel suggested that working with NOAA will be more helpful as the MTF has a wide range of resource to offer them
- Eric would like an exact definition of the size or complexity of the farm so if we can narrow down exactly what the size that they are restricting so then the applicants can reduce their permits size to fit within the restrictions now then in the long term we can tackle the issue
- Sam agreed that it would be good to have more clarity due to the fact that in his example, the surface footprint of the permit application is significantly smaller than the footprint on the ocean floor- there a whole spectrum of views as some people were perceptive and others were not.
- Sam will get with his AC to revise his list of recommendations to address the cooperation with marine mammals and aquaculture

Communications / news: ASGA PPT, Maggie Allen (NOAA affiliate), Alyssa Rodrigues (DCCED, Development Manager)

- Julie Decker gave a presentation to ASGA- not many questions at the time as it was more of a general questions. They left a list of the full set of recommendations for ASGA to discuss
- 11:14am Maggie Allen began her presentation as she requested to be moved up the agenda
- NOAA is trying to start an aquaculture program and they are hoping to engage visitors on the benefits of aquaculture and mariculture- Maggie has been researching public perception so that they can begin to address those issues with the public
- SE Alaskans and KTN residents specifically viewed aquaculture was a threat according to the only written research that she could find. NOAA is looking for more written research to get a broader idea of what people think about aquaculture. They are looking for contacts and more research to continue their work
- Mike stressed the importance of separating finfish aquaculture and aquaculture in general when asking questions about aquaculture because there is such a negative perception of the word “aquaculture”
- Julie mentioned to Maggie that this public perception is one of the reasons that the task force prefers the term “mariculture” as we do aquaculture but it looks different in Alaska. She and told Maggie that the MTF would work with her to craft a more thorough; Julie will follow up with her off line to further assist her in getting information that will help
- Angel has recently been appointed to the board of the AK Sealife Center and offered to help Maggie

- Alyssa Rodrigues is working on issues relating to the state's economic development plan. The MTF will keep in contact with her so that maybe she can present at the next meeting

11:45am the Task Force broke for working lunch (at 11:45am)

12:17pm the Task Force meeting was called back to order

## **New Business**

Review Drafting Committee version of comp plan

### Overview

- The MTF reviewed the comprehensive plan starting at the title and worked through it
- Angel suggested that we follow the elements of the Scotland study as it seemed to be the most clear
- Sam suggested that we look to the AO to assist with the title to make it more catchy
- Heather suggested to take the work done now and make it an executive summary and then take the items listed as appendices and make those sections and not appendices. We shouldn't limit this document to being just as it is right now. Have we captured everything from the subgroups and if not, how do we want to address all of the information? Also, where does the information that is not included in the McDowell group get integrated in the comprehensive plan
- Paula suggested an executive summary that includes the guiding principles, the general recommendations, and short, mid and long term priorities
- Message from the governor- Barbara Blake is working on that
- Message from the MTF- Heather will work on this and get it to the task force; Heather asked that the task force submit any suggestions to her- she suggested that members of the task force and members of the industry submit support messages to be included in the plan. If it is from the MTF, have a list of task force members and the agencies they represent, the need for the plan, discuss the strengths of Alaska and the plan, importance of coordination and implementation
- Angel mentioned that it might be difficult to get endorsement letters due to the timeline and to just do a letter from the MTF
- Paula asked if we want to send the report out for public comment or if we just want to send it to involved stakeholder groups
- Julie suggested that the best way to approach it due to the timeline is to draft the document and then get stakeholders on board once we have a finished product
- Eric would like to keep the focus on the core mission of the MTF and not get lost in the details; focus on the fact that mariculture is good for economic development. If development is good, how do you encourage it? Keep it within the two main points 1. Increase profitability of the industry 2. To decrease the barriers to new people entering the industry. The industry will do better if there are more people involved
- Heather recommended that the MTF send their comments to her and she'll assimilate all of the comments and resend out the task force

Vision and Goal Statements: no changes

Guiding Principles of the plan: Coordination: Eric suggested that the last sentence should be changed to say what coordination is and not so much what it is not

- Eric also recommended that the word “development” occur after every mention of the word “mariculture”
- Protection: Paula suggested that it would be useful to clarify the sentence beginning with “protection” to reflect the importance of maintaining Alaskan values in this section
- Julie changed the section to say “protect and compliment” based on the discussion- the drafting team will finalize the verbiage

#### Elements of the Plan

- Micaela suggested to either have letters to indicate organization or numbers with a note to reflect that these are not in priority order
- Eric recommended that we list them in priority order as people will want to know our top priorities. It doesn’t mean that because it’s listed as a top priority doesn’t mean that it’s going to be the easiest to implement
- Heather recommended to prioritize the pieces of information under the elements and to also give an overview of the top 3 priorities in general- have an introductory paragraph before the elements explaining them and outlining the top three general priorities
- Discussion moved to the discussion of the individual elements of the plan- see drafting document for official names of the elements
- Angel suggested that there be a sentence to indicate that there is crossover from multiple advisory committees on the elements
- Heather suggested that the small wordsmithing details be sent to the drafting committee so that they can meet again to do all of that work but that the MTF focus it’s discussion on elements in general for the sake of time.

#### Element 1

- Paula suggested that somewhere in the narrative should be the point made that the goal of element one is that the hatcheries should become self sufficient

#### Element 2-

- Mike suggested that the term “Mariculture Development Council” be the term used for this coordinating entity as it is the same term that the Research and Development AC came up with so that we can keep with continuity

#### Element 3

- Paula mentioned that it was important to clarify that research is important to the development of this industry

#### Element 4

- Sam walked through element 4 and mentioned that he thought that the point about amending the Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund was duplicative
- Eric suggested that the Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund be included in element 4- Julie recommended that it be worked into element 5 and put a placeholder into her working document
- Paula suggested that the financial support section of element 4 be moved to element 5
- Julie suggested that the tribal and local outreach bullet point in element 4 be moved to element 7; Angel supported Sam’s disagreement with moving it and recommended that it stay in element 4. Mike suggested removing the word “tribal” so that it would

fit in element 4 so that it would be more all-encompassing and then break down what the word “local” means to include community and native groups

- Eric stressed the importance of effectively communicating to local communities when new mariculture permitting projects are applied for

#### Element 5

- Angel went through this element and asked for input on maybe changing the title of this section
- Julie removed the first recommendation in element 5 due to previous discussions
- Paula recommended that wording be tweaked to promote a positive spin on investment and how increased investment will support the growth of the industry

#### Element 6

- The drafting committee will tweak the format to make it look like the other sections of the document
- Mike recommended that the UAA and the ANSEP program paragraph should be moved to element 8 regarding education
- Eric mentioned that tie-in’s with high school programs will go a long way to increase public understanding of mariculture
- Paula noted that it would be good to not downplay the perceived concerns that people have about mariculture but to emphasize fact based information on the information that will increase support
- Julie suggested that since the GIS map tool paragraph was in element 5 it should be removed from element 6

#### Element 7

- This language was sent to Barbara Blake for her input and the drafting committee won’t go forward without her reply

#### Element 8-

- Paula updated the task force on this section and will work with the drafting committee to edit
- Mike recommended that since all of the recommendations are going to be in the appendices that this section could be shortened
- Angel recommended that there be an addition in this section to mention that as the industry matures, formal education should improve to meet industry needs

#### Element 9

- The drafting committee will soften the language to encourage ASMI to partner with the MTF instead of giving directives to ASMI
- Angel asked how much outreach has been done to reach out to ASMI executive staff regarding mariculture. Tomi will bring it up at the ASMI strategic planning meeting but she doesn’t feel that it will be a high priority item
- Eric suggested that it would be a good idea for ASMI to partner with the mariculture industry to foster a spirit of synergy

Discuss/prioritize AC recommendations and other priorities- will address at a later date

Discuss title of comp plan- The drafting committee will do a title and send it out to the full MTF for review and approval

Direction to Drafting Committee, if any

- Drafting committee will meet again at a later date. Julie will send out an email to schedule this meeting
- They will work to draft the executive summary. Task force was asked to come up with their top recommendations
  1. putting 3 key personnel in place to promote the growth of the industry;
  2. pass key mariculture legislation
  3. permitting issues with regulatory agencies
  4. Alaska Mariculture Development Council
  5. secure seed supply through hatcheries
- Sam recommends that the top recommendations be put to the whole task force to determine the order. Julie will send out an email to the task force to get input
- Executive summary- super short- history of MTF and top 5 priorities
- Chapter 1- executive summary
- Angel suggested that it's important to get our top items in the front and everything else is supplemental and that the goal of the elements section should be one page per element

Review diagram of comprehensive planning process- set aside as time was short

Discuss responsible party for final editing- Angel and staff

#### **Form to document MTF member time for in-kind match to NOAA Grant**

- Form was passed around to the task force members to indicate their time worked

#### **Next Steps and Homework**

##### **Next meeting dates:**

1. February 15 12:30-5:00

**4:53pm Meeting adjourned by Chair Julie Decker**