

MADE IN ALASKA

MARICULTURE

ALASKA DIVISION of
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ALASKA
FOR OPPORTUNITY

ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE,
COMMUNITY
AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Alaska Mariculture Task Force
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 28, 2020 @ 9:00am – 12:00pm AST

DUE TO COVID-19: ONLINE MEETING ONLY

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

MTF Members Present

Julie Decker (Chair) – ADFG, Heather McCarty (Co-Chair) – Central Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association, Ginny Eckert – ASG, Sam Rabung – ADFG, Jeff Hetrick – Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery, Mike Stekoll – UAS/UAF, Kate Sullivan – SARDFa (late), Angel Drobnica – APICDA (late).

Public Participants Present

Riley Smith – ADFG, Melissa Good – ASG, Alicia Bishop – NOAA, Michelle Morris – ADFG, Hannah Wilson – ASG Fellow, Kristen Ceicil – NOAA, Flip Pryor – ADFG, Stacey Buckelew – Axiom Data Science, Brian Stone – Axiom Data Science

2) Conflicts of Interest Declared

Records stand from previous meetings. No other 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: June 26, 2020

Motion (Rabung/McCarty) to approve minutes from June 26, 2020. Motion passes with no objections.

5) Public introductions & comments - none.

6) Updates by MTF members

a. COVID-19 updates – PPP deadline, [AK CARES Grant](#) (biz & NP), [\\$50 M](#)

- Rabung – CARES Act Fisheries Commission Funding. Still working on developing a spend plan for the 50 million. Draft spend plan will be up for public comment by the end of August. Application period will take place in the fall. Links to the [guidance document](#) and ability to sign up for [listserv](#).
- Decker – if the requirements are in line with other CARES Act funding, it will need to be spent by December 30. Needs to get out ASAP to meet this deadline. Potential for hatcheries (including salmon) to be eligible for this funding.

b. Alaska Sea Grant updates (Eckert, Good)

- Good – Farm to Table Project. Connect consumers to Alaska grown seaweed and oysters. Directory for farmers up on [website](#). Informs customers of where you can buy locally grown oysters and seaweed. [Blog post](#) is also live and will be featured on social media. Melissa Good is the contact for interested farmers who would like to be featured in the program. Virtual festival will take place the third week of September. Consumer guides are in development (beginning stages).

c. NOAA updates (Bishop)

- Bishop – Aquaculture permitting portal moving forward and in development. Hannah Wilson, Melissa Good, Michelle Morris have been on project. Permitting and best practices are the primary focus at the moment for the portal. Seafood EO signed May 7th. Laid out broader approach to improve and support the seafood sector and economy. Section 7 pertinent to aquaculture (opportunity areas). Within a year of signing the EO, need to identify 2 promising sites, within 2 years EIS must be conducted. Every 2 years going forward 2 more must be identified. Letters of support from communities have been coming into NOAA. MTF should comment and be aware of this.

d. Presentation to Commonwealth North's Food Security Study Group

- Decker – presented via Zoom. Hour long meeting, smaller group. Number of people online interested on the topic of food security. Mariculture and its role was featured. Group is interested in policies and legislation that could be implemented at the state level to help move mariculture forward.

e. Meeting with Governor's Legislative Liaison, Fred Villa

- Decker – Fred Villa is now working for the Governor. Legislation will be one of his primary focuses. McCarty, Decker and Fagnani met with Villa to update on mariculture industry and pertinent legislation. CSHB 41 was addressed with hope of bringing it back up before the next session.
- McCarty – seemed unlikely that CSHB 41 would be addressed before next session. However, Villa seemed very enthusiastic and supportive. Important to continue conversations with legislators on CSHB 41.

f. Other updates

None.

7) Workgroup Updates:

- a. Legislative Workgroup – none (McCarty, Rabung, Drobnica, Decker, Hetrick).
- b. Regulatory Workgroup – none (Rabung, McCarty, Wyatt, Decker, Sullivan, Stryker, Smith).
- c. EVOS Proposal Workgroup (Drobnica, Douville, McCarty, Decker, Hetrick, Eckert, Stekoll)

- McCarty – no recent workgroup meeting. Competing direction w/in EVOS: 1) keep EVOS at status quo, 2) Align EVOS with state’s desires, 3) Overhaul of EVOS funding and governance (thinktank group). Attorneys for state and federal agencies developing reports regarding the legalities around states proposed changes and thinktank’s. May take over a year until decision and direction is made.

d. AQUAA Act Workgroup (Decker, McCarty, Rabung, Pryor, Eckert, Bishop) - none

e. AMDC Workgroup (Decker, Wyatt, Stekoll, Sheridan, Scheer, Marsh, Figus, Sternberg) – under old business

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

8) Presentations (20 mins @ 10:00am time certain):

a. Mariculture Map – demo of improvements since January (Axiom Data Science)

- Buckelew – project will wrap up at the end of September. Some feedback and changes include – print maps with annotations, draw custom polygons and vectors, integration of information from ADNR, SEATOR, compass add-on, etc.
- Stone - Created project overview button on homepage. Bounds of polygon or shape can be entered via longitude and latitude (also can simply draw a custom diagram). Can draw custom vectors and measure distance. Can download maps and custom site plans, includes legend as well. Note – report download does not show single side of polygon length. Will add leg length info (i.e. side 1, side 2, side 3, side 4) to downloaded report.
- Bishop – in the past, the Stellar Sea Lion critical habitat was cutoff at 144 (SEAK).
 - Buckelew/Stone – we will need to go back to the source data and see if it is available and extract. The original data source did not include SEAK.
 - Bishop – NMFS has the data, would be glad to share. Herring spawning site also does not populate in SEAK. I think we need to have a follow up conversation for ESA species and make sure the mapping info is accurate. ADFG should have herring spawning data.

Task (Buckelew, Bishop) will follow up on critical habitats and ingesting additional data sources available within NMFS into Mariculture Map (critical habitats, ESA species – esp. w/in SEAK).

- Buckelew – user login feature coming in the Fall. Will be able to easily save and store maps.
- Stekoll – is there a layer for existing and pending aquatic farm sites?
 - Buckelew – we have existing sites on map.
 - Morris – ADFG map only shows existing aquatic farm sites, ADNR just added pending leases to their map.
- Buckelew – working with ADEC to get additional data sources into map (wastewater discharge, etc.). ADEC is working with Axiom to get real time data from web server. ADEC has been very responsive, expected by end of August.

- Decker – first phase of project funded by ASG w/ funds from NOAA, second phase is funded by PSMFC. AOOs graciously hosting map on website. When will this be outwardly facing on the AOOs website?
 - Buckelew – we will conduct outreach to aim for the end of August.

9) Old Business (45 mins):

- a. Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA) - AMA draft bylaws – for discussion
 - Decker – highlighted yellow excerpts from draft bylaws are areas needing input from MTF. Membership, finance and dues are focus areas needing input. Proposed membership: organization members (i.e. ASGA, tribe, municipality), individual member (growers, others involved in enhancement efforts), associate members (supporting businesses – non-voting levels). Industry is small and membership dues will be small, stakeholders are growing and evolving with time. Actual amounts of dues should not be in bylaws – Board should set that at a later date. Special assessments should be determined by the Board and voluntary assessment should be voted on by Voting Members.

Decker leaves meeting. McCarty takes over as Chair of the MTF for remainder of meeting.

- McCarty – Section 2: Classes. Based roughly on UFA’s model. Organizational members Can be growers or any other category within the mariculture industry. E
 - Each eligible organization will have 1 representative. Grower members – vote and designate 3 seats on the Board. Regionally represented (1 SE, 1 SC, 1 SW). Enhancement members vote for 1 seat on Board. Ex-officio (voting) – MRC director. Ex-officio (non-voting) – 1 NOAA Aquaculture Coordinator, 1 ADFG Commissioner, or designee, 1 ADNR Commissioner, or designee.
- Eckert – including the state and federal agencies is important. Can these agencies pay money for membership and join the group.
 - McCarty – no membership dues for state and federal agencies. There are rules and regulations in place disallowing state or federal agency employees voting on organizational Boards. Non-voting members do not have to pay.
 - Rabung – no issues for state and federal agencies sitting in as non-voting ex-officio members (non-paying). ADNR and ADDEC should be added to list as well.
 - Bishop – no issues for NOAA being a non-voting ex-officio member, similar to MTF structure. Recommend added the new AFSC Coordinator to list.
 - McCarty – individual members have 2 categories. Growers and enhancement persons. Enhancement members will be added once legislation is in place.
 - Rabung – May be prudent to leave Enhancement Members off now.
 - Rabung – How are the Grower Members elected? We only have 1 or 2 growers in SW.
 - McCarty – all Grower members will be elected by the growers (ballot). There are more growers in SE than SC and SW. Enhancement Members, 1 at large.
 - Rabung – should the number of seats per region be weighted by grower frequency w/in each region? Without membership dues, the AMA becomes an Advisory Board. Membership dues and special assessments from industry important to illustrate that

- industry has “skin in the game”. Revenues and expenditures are necessary for entity to be a non-profit. Must be a non-profit to apply for and accept funding.
- Bishop – is there a limitation on number of members for Organizational Members? If not, the size of the Board may become unwieldy as the industry grows.
 - McCarty – there would need to be an Executive Committee.
 - Bishop – no designated Board position for ASG. They should explicitly be listed as ex-officio member if MRC Director is not within ASG.

Task (AMA Workgroup) revise AMA draft bylaws to address the below recommendations. AMA draft bylaws will be presented and reviewed at next MTF meeting.

- **Section 2: Classes (A).** Add language with clear distinction between AMA members and Board members at beginning of document.
- **Section 2: Classes (B).** Potentially remove Enhancement Members until clear legislation is in place.
- **Section 2: Composition (B).** Add language on how a Board member may fill the Grower Member Board seat (ballot voting by region, vacant seat, etc.).
- **Section 2: Composition (B).** Add language on potential vacant Board seats (i.e. SW Grower Member – only 2 growers currently).
- **Section 1: Assessment of Membership Dues.** Remove associated membership amounts from Bylaws. This will be determined by the Board at a later date.
- **Add designated Board position for ASG.** ASG should be listed as ex-officio member if MRC Director is not within ASG.

b. MRC – discussion of workgroup meeting (met on 07/27/20)

- Stekoll – Mariculture Research Center Concept paper created during workgroup meeting. MRC is a concept that would include 2-3 people under ASG. Purpose of center would be coordinate research across the state (what research needs to be completed, what is available, who should do it, how should it be done).
 - Concerns: MRC would include a voting member on the AMA. Statement in concept paper that states “MRC needs to be independent from political pressure”. Need to clearly define MRC’s role with AMA in order to meet this. State must be involved; UA needs to be involved. MRC is not the only agency in the state through which research funds are funneled.
- Near term objectives:
 - 1) Determine the procedure to create the MRC located under ASG.
 - 2) Delineate the qualifications and duties for the MRC director and the Mariculture Specialist.
 - 3) Find seed money for the MRC director.
 - 4) Search for and hire the MRC director.
 - 5) Engage with UA to get it to have “skin in the game” with respect to the MRC.
 - 6) Find sources to fund the Mariculture Specialist.
 - 7) Search for and hire the Mariculture Specialist.

- 8) Work with the AMA (MTF) to gain support for the MRC from the state.
- Longer term objectives:
 - 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 AMA in order to facilitate industry participation in setting priorities and providing research platforms and incorporating research results.
 - 3) Create the MRC Advisory Board (AB) – industry, agencies, Universities, others.
 - 4) Poll the AB, AMA and other industry stakeholders to devise a list of near term research priorities.
 - 5) Help set research priorities by co-hosting along with the NOAA Alaska Regional Aquaculture Coordinator and annual R&D Forum using the preliminary priorities from 4).
 - 6) At the R&D Forum, determine the final priorities and match funding sources with researchers.
 - 7) Develop partnerships in order to facilitate research proposal submissions based on the priorities from the R&D Forum and complete the research.
 - 8) Engage with industry to share research results and provide support to incorporate results within industry.
 - 9) Facilitate training (classes, webinars, workshops, etc.) to support expansion and technology transfer to industry.
 - Eckert – (8) in near term objectives. State is excited about workforce development, including building new businesses. There are funds available through technical vocational educational program funding. If we incorporate training into the MRC, we could gain political support and potential funding from the state. (1) in near term objectives. ASG has some aquaculture directed funding to put into this, however, cannot fully fund everything we need (i.e. 2 full time positions), there are existing salaries that can be leveraged (i.e. shift roles and positions to MRC, .25 for Director, .5 for specialist). Obtaining funding is crucial to the longevity of this. ASG's NOAA funding has federal stipulations.

Task (Eckert/Good) draft up concepts, principles and budget in coordination with Research Workgroup, outlining necessary steps to create MRC under ASG. Report to MRC Workgroup.

- Ecker – no ASG employees are under NOAA, rather the University.
- Decker – Workgroup feels strongly that MRC should be independent from any political pressure with AMA. What are the concerns surrounding political pressures? The AMA will not rule over the MRC, they will coordinate and guide each other. MRC will facilitate completing the research by others, not funding whatsoever.
- Eckert – do we have enough people to staff the AMA and MRC Advisory Board. Seems appropriate to have the AMA as the Advisory Board.

- Bishop – there will be a lot of overlap between AMA and Advisory Board in staffing. Keeping the AMA separate and independent from the MRC is important.
- Stekoll – Advisory Board membership will include all industry and agency stakeholders interested in mariculture research (i.e. genetics – ADFG, hatcheries, growers, MRC director, etc.).

Task (AMA and Research workgroups) – will hold a joint meeting to further develop connection and roles between AMA and MRC once AMA structure is more fully developed. Composition of the Advisory Board will be considered. Chairs of the AMA and MRC workgroups, Decker/McCarty and Stekoll, respectively, will communicate on workgroup progress and coordinate joint meeting. Entire MTF will be CC'ed on meeting emails for full participation.

Motion (McCarty/Stekoll) that the MTF approves the Mariculture Research Center (MRC) creation under Alaska Sea Grant (ASG). Motion passes with two objections. Hetrick and Sullivan object to motion to house the MRC within ASG, however, do support the creation of the MRC.

- Decker – motion may be called for reconsideration at later date.

10) New Business

a. Presidential Executive Order: Aquaculture Opportunity Areas – is Alaska interested?

- Bishop – aquaculture opportunity areas designated in both state and federal waters are eligible under EO. Letters of support have been pouring in. MTF should draft this is Alaska wants to move forward.
- McCarty/Rabung – state opt out extremely important. EEZ “donut holes” exist in “close” proximity. State prohibition on finfish farming must be upheld.
 - Bishop – important for the state of Alaska to articulate what they do want (i.e. support for shellfish and seaweed farming, prohibiting finfish farming).

b. Other – none.

11) Topics for next meeting

- Aquaculture Opportunity Areas – Alaska Interest, Letters of Support.
- Review of latest draft AQUAA Act.
- MRC White Paper and structure, hosting MRC under ASG.
- AMA Draft Bylaws – review revised draft.

**12) Set next meeting date and time – August 26, 27, 28, or 31
Next meeting date set for August 26 @ 1:00pm – 4:00pm AST**

13) Closing Comments & Adjournment

Chair McCarty adjourns meeting at 12:01pm AST.