

MADE IN ALASKA

MARICULTURE



Alaska Mariculture Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 29, 2020 @ 9:00am-12:00pm AST
DUE TO COVID-19: ONLINE MEETING ONLY

1) Roll call (Chair McCarty calls meeting to order at 9:03am AST)

MTF Members Present

Heather McCarty – (Chair) Central Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association, Jim Andersen – DCCED, Ed Douville – Shaan Seet Corp, (Craig, Alaska), Angel Drobnica – APICDA, Ginny Eckert – ASG, Sam Rabung – ADFG, Mike Stekoll – UAS/UAF, Kate Sullivan – SARDFA, Eric Wyatt – Blue Starr Oyster Co./OceansAlaska/ASGA, Riley Smith – AFDF. Ex-officio members: Alicia Bishop – NOAA.

Public Participants Present

Michelle Morris – ADFG, Tomi Marsh – OceansAlaska/ASMI Board, Lori Polasek – ADFG, Tamsen Peoples – UAF, Schery Umazor – UAF, Andrew Gregory – USACE, Jordan Hollarsmith – NOAA, ASFC Mariculture Research Biologist, Melissa Good – ASG, Hannah Wilson – ASG Fellow, Andrew Miller – ADNR, Michelle Morris – ADFG, Thea Thomas – Prince William Sound, Julie Scheurer – NOAA, Ken Riley – NOAA, NCCOS, Kim Stryker – DEC.

2) Conflicts of Interest Declared

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

3) Review and approve agenda

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

4) Review and approve minutes: September 23, 2020

Motion (Wyatt/Rabung) to approve minutes from September 23, 2020 with amendments to spelling in three instances. Motion passes with no objections.

5) Public introductions & comments

- Marsh – ASMI All-Hands on Deck Meeting to be held on November 10-13. Open registration through the ASMI website. Important to see what ASMI does, including how helpful ASMI may be to the mariculture industry.

6) Updates by MTF members

- a. AFDF updates (Smith)

- Smith – AFDF has completed the following presentations: 1) PWS Mariculture Training – Kristen Carpenter of PWSEDD and Thea Thomas are hosting open series for mariculture training. A lot of interest in 2020 in PWS (i.e. aquatic farm lease applications). Topics include permitting and leasing, farm design and marketing/processing. I will present on marketing; 2) Presenting at Kodiak Chamber of Commerce – overview of seaweed industries and markets, globally and within Alaska, Hatchery process and technical assistance available via AFDF’s USDA grant to SWAK prospective farmers.
 - AFDF, ASG are working to submit a proposal to the FY21 NOAA SK funding opportunity titled, New Product Development for Alaska Seaweed. Goal to develop 10 new seaweed products, best practices guide and recipe handbook (due November 20, 2020)
 - Project secured via EDA/SWAMC to increase mariculture education and outreach, seaweed processing (including training) and seaweed product development in SWAK.
- b. COVID-19 updates – [USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2](#), [AK CARES Grant](#), [\\$50 M](#) (Smith, Rabung)
- Rabung – spend plan went out for public review which ended on September 23. Then goes to federal agencies before PSMFC (who will administer funding). Will accept comments, tweak the final spend plan. 1% allocated for aquaculture of \$50 million. Applicants must demonstrate 35% reduction in revenue from previous two years (must be operating for at least 2 years). Many public comments regarding the allocation of funds across sport fishing, commercial harvest and seafood processors.
 - McCarty – UFA submitted comment opposing increase in split for the sport or recreational sector. There seems to be an extension to the comment period.
- c. October 26, 2020 Governor Mariculture Briefing (McCarty, Smith)
- Smith/McCarty – initiated by Fred Villa. Purpose was to update on developing mariculture industry, including needs, potential for mariculture industry, including economic development and jobs in coastal communities. Presenters: Denali Commission (Erik O’Brien), AFDF (Riley Smith), ASG (Ginny Eckert), MTF (Heather McCarty), UAF (Mike Stekoll). Governor Dunleavy asked many questions. It went very well. We also underlined the need for steady and long-term funding for the state.
 - Time for MTF to look at Five-Year Action Plan. MTF is on track and has accomplished quite a number of the priority items by the time the MTF sunsets.
 - Rabung – the Governor stated that he wants Alaska to be known as a world leader in mariculture. Asked about competitors.
 - Eckert – action item for MTF could be to provide a summary of the industry growth and needs. 1-page document would be helpful. Stable funding for the University and the State is critical. Need statement for the coming fiscal year.
 - McCarty – letter thanking the governor and providing a summary of progress and needs (including Five-Year Action Plan) is necessary.

Task (MTF) draft and send a letter to the Governor’s Office offering gratitude for holding the Alaska mariculture briefing, and summarizing mariculture progress to date, potential

and needs. Include pertinent MTF documents in update and invitation to MTF meeting and/or potential listening session.

d. Alaska Sea Grant updates (Eckert)

- Eckert – Melissa Good is the new Mariculture Specialist for Alaska Sea Grant. Farm-to-Table Project: meet the farmer videos available online, recipe cards are completed (i.e. kelp salsa) – goal is to connect Alaska consumers to Alaska products. National Sea Grant has a new call for proposals – funding opportunity is to address impacts of multiple stressors on shellfish aquaculture through research and industry partnerships (shellfish grower must be a PI on the project). 2-6 projects will be funded nationally.

e. NOAA updates (Bishop)

- Bishop – internal call for proposals within NMFS, three were submitted: 1) herring deterrence; 2) kelp characterization 3) kelp monitoring. PSMFC Marine Aquaculture Pilot Projects funding opportunity just announced – proposals due on December 15, 2020.

f. Other updates

- Wyatt – ASGA Annual Conference will occur the week of January 18, 2021. Will be virtual. 1 day will be heavily focused on oyster farming.
- Stekoll – Algae Biomass Summit – lasted two months beginning in September. Myself and other colleagues presented regarding the ARPA-E project, which is designed to develop technology to increase the efficiency of growing seaweed with the eventual goal of seaweed as a biofuel. This marks the first time that the Algae Biomass Summit featured macroalgae.

7) Workgroup Updates (10 mins)

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

b. Regulatory Workgroup – (Rabung, McCarty, Wyatt, Decker/Smith, Sullivan, Stryker, Smith) – under old business

c. EVOS Proposal Workgroup (Drobnica, Douville, McCarty, Decker/Smith, Hetrick, Eckert, Stekoll) – Request for Invitation released, update and next steps, timeline (McCarty)

- McCarty – EVOS TC met and RFP has been drafted (planned release of December 2020). Will look very similar to current invitation. Four resolutions to the future of the EVOS fund were released to the public for comment. There is a priority in the RFP that includes mariculture in the EVOS region - up to \$2.5 M per year. Preliminary proposals due by Feb. 1, 2021. Full proposals due March 29.
- Eckert – this proposal is meant to be all-inclusive. Please reach out to Heather or me if you are interested.

d. AQUAA Act Workgroup (Decker/Smith, McCarty, Rabung, Pryor, Eckert, Bishop) – latest draft released, update and next steps (McCarty, Smith)

- McCarty – new draft of AQUAA Act is out. Riley and I have been speaking to putting together a summary of the new draft and implications for Alaska, however, wanted to coordinate with NOAA since they have created a summary in the past.
 - Bishop – NOAA cannot comment on any pending federal legislation. This was made very clear to me when I asked. No summary will be provided by NOAA.

Task (McCarty/Smith) convene meeting of the AQUAA Act workgroup to discuss next steps before next MTF meeting.

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 (Smith) add Jordan Hollarsmith to the Research and AMA workgroups.

8) Old Business (60 mins):

a. Mariculture Research & Training Center (MRTC) – next steps (Eckert)

- Eckert/Stekoll – no update or meetings since September. Will convene meeting of the workgroup between now and the next MTF meeting.

b. Aquaculture Opportunity Areas – is Alaska interested?

i. Presentation by Ken Riley – NOAA @ 10:00am AST – See [PPT presentation](#).

ii. Discussion of AK Letter of Support – working group? Due December 22

- McCarty – what is the coordination between state and federal agencies if state waters are selected? I see that only federal waters are of focus in both Southern California and Gulf of Mexico AOAs.
- Bishop/Smith – the request for information specifically asks if you would like an AOA designation in state waters, federal or both. Presidential EO does not designate state or federal waters.
 - Riley – NCCOS will work in state waters with support of the state.
- McCarty – DCCED has been in regular contact with Riley and me regarding the Presidential EO. What is the state’s perspective?
 - Rabung – in regular communication with John Moller. I need to work with the Governor’s Office to garner support and understanding of AOA program.
 - Riley – state waters seem appropriate for Alaska, due to the inclement waters further off Alaska’s coast. A lot of coordination will be needed between state agencies and NCCOS. Do-able.
- Wyatt – coming from the perspective of a current farmer, with an understanding of efforts to design farms, etc. – what are the actual benefits of the AOA designation to

Alaska? How will it advance our current industry? Seems impressive to those who are trying to advance economic growth, but not for current industry.

- Rabung – this would be a fantastic planning tool for regulators to aid in permitting the right sites. New farmers would greatly benefit from this. It isn't the only aspect in evaluating a site.
- Douville – concern with this. Tribal authorities in the areas are not being consulted. Our culture is language. Tribal property owners cannot be impeded by a vast increase in sites due to the AOA designation. Tribal shareholders must have rights to their land. Restrictions of placement – problem of herring spawning on the kelp. Concern with people deterring herring from their natural spawn sites. Herring is a part of the Alaska Native cultural and ancestral diet.
- Stryker – how does this differ from the AOOS Mariculture Map?
 - Eckert – AFDF, AOOS and Axiom Data Science is working to develop a mariculture siting tool.
 - Bishop – Mariculture Map provides information on parameters (physical and biological layers) that inform potential mariculture sites in Alaska. The AOA program is a site suitability analysis, more robust and very thorough (i.e. NEPA).
 - McCarty – coordination **with** the state of Alaska and **within** the state of Alaska is important. A workgroup should be established. Letters of Support are due December 22nd. Potential concerns should be compiled, including a stakeholder list. Several different perspectives are coming to the forefront. Regulatory workgroup?
 - Rabung – regulatory workgroup is a great fit. We need to ensure that state agencies are involved and on the same page. Including a representative from the Governor's office will be paramount to getting state support. John Moller is important.

Task (Regulatory Workgroup) will conduct outreach and education to stakeholders regarding the Aquaculture Opportunity Area (AOA) program, convene workgroup meetings, make recommendations and draft a Letter of Support for the Alaska's consideration as a potential AOA for the MTF's review and approval at the next MTF meeting. Alicia Bishop will chair this workgroup.

Task (Smith) add Julie Scheurer to AMA workgroup.

c. Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA)

i. AMA draft bylaws – for discussion/approval, implementation plan

- Smith – at the September 2020 MTF meeting, the MTF provisionally accepted the AMA bylaws, pending the review of an attorney. Revisions were recommended and the bylaws were revised. See September 23, 2020 minutes for more documentation. No major legal issues were noted. All amendments were noted as tasks or motions in the last MTF meeting.
- Section 1. For filing purposes as a nonprofit with the IRS, the AMA will need to have either a Registered Office or Registered Agent, whichever must have a physical address

in Alaska. AFDF only has a PO Box, not a physical address. I was listed as the Registered Agent; however, I am not an Alaska resident. AFDF is the most appropriate Registered Agent, we need to identify a Registered Agent with a physical address.

Task (Smith/McCarty) to confirm that Julie Decker would like to be the Registered Agent for the AMA, as originally intended. Eric Wyatt is nominated as a backup for the Registered Agent.

Task (Smith) amend Article 6. Section 1. Executive Committee as follows: "The Executive Committee shall include the Officers and four (4) additional members of the Board, selected by a vote of the Board at the annual meeting, representing a diversity of sectors and/or geography, plus the MRTC director. . ."

Motion (Rabung/Drobnica) to accept the Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA) Bylaws in their current form with revisions incorporated, as discussed and agreed to in the October 29, 2020 MTF meeting. Motion passes with no objections.

Task (AMA Workgroup) will develop an implementation plan and bring back to the MTF for discussion during the next MTF meeting.

Task (Smith) add Angel Drobnica to the AMA workgroup.

9) New Business (30 mins):

a. Army Corps of Engineers Public Comment - Revised Standards for Finfish, Seaweed, & Shellfish Aquaculture – review of draft MTF comments (Rabung)

- Rabung – Regulatory workgroup met and with a lot of help from Lori Polasek, drafted the MTF letters:
 - **Regional letter:** finfish 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.

Motion (Douville/Rabung) to approve MTF comment letter to USACE regarding NWP proposed rule in concept. Motion approved with no objections.

c. Recent funding opportunities?
Covered in previous agenda items.

10) Tentative topics for next meeting (5 mins)

- a. AQUAA Act Workgroup Report
- b. MTF AOA Letter of Support – discussion/approval
- c. U.S. State PSP Testing Overview (Sullivan)?
- d. EVOS TC Proposal, Partnerships, Next Steps and Timeline
- e. Mariculture Listening Session?
 - Smith – Ginny brought this up after a webinar series ASG hosted in conjunction with AOOs. Specifically, this was in regard to negative perceptions regarding marine mammal interactions with mariculture. It was proposed to, either through a MTF meeting or separately, invite stakeholders that would have these questions and discuss fully, including providing factual information to quell some questions.
 - McCarty – it was also suggested to hold a listening session with the Governor’s office and other state representatives following the October 26 Governor Briefing.
 - Rabung – we need to address concerns and hold an open and transparent dialogue with the public so there is a better acceptance of the industry.

11) Set next meeting date and time – November 20, 23, 24 (5 mins)
Next meeting tentatively set for November 20 @ 9:00am-12:00pm.

12) Closing Comments & Adjournment (5 mins)

- McCarty/Rabung – thank you to AFDF, the MTF and all of our guest speakers for all of your work.

Meeting adjourned at 11:58am AST.