

To: File
From: Alice Ruby
Date: 3/18/24
Re: Additional highlights re: SWAMC Conference and Board meeting(s)

The Conference included some interesting panel discussions. Eventually the SWAMC staff will post copies of the presentations on the SWAMC website.

A few highlights:

- Shirley Kelly, EDA and I had a long discussion about the need for communities to reach out to her and bring their list of priorities. She's a wealth of knowledge about EDA but also about other funding programs that have been used to leverage recent EDA grants.
- Sean Holland, DOT/PF advised that the 2024-2027 STIP (Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan) has been completed and awaits approval. The STIP hasn't always been of value in competing for funding for projects in our region because it's difficult to compete with the larger population areas. The DOT/PF planners that staffed a booth at the conference suggested that the Southwest Transportation Plan update will be an opportunity for our communities but that is not expected to occur this year. The staff encouraged that our communities engage with DOT/PF under the Resiliency & Coastal Protection Program. There may be funding resources there that will be important. I'll suggest that the planning staff be included in invitations for the Bristol Bay Sustainability Summit in the fall.
- ADFG Commissioner Lang's remarks included that he strongly supports the Joint Legislative Seafood Industry Task Force that has been proposed in Senate Concurrent Resolution 10. Support for creation of that Task Force was also expressed by Senator Stevens and Representative Stutes as well as by Nicole Kimball of PSPA. The Task Force is a proposed 7 member task force made up of legislators, public members (UFA or PSPA) and the Commissioner that will "develop a long-term vision for the seafood industry as a critical element of the state's economic future". Good news that the importance of the seafood industry is recognized but unfortunate that almost every facet of the industry is experiencing challenges.
- Board elections took place at the membership meeting and resulted in some new faces on the SWAMC Board. Kaleb Westfall was elected to a municipal seat and Steven Carriere was elected to an At large seat.
- Resolutions were considered and adopted by the membership and included the following:
 - o 2024-01 Opposing Governor Dunleavy's Executive Order that would reorganization of the Marine Highway Operations Board
 - o 2024-02 Opposing Governor Dunleavy's Executive Order that would transfer the functions of the Wood-Tikchik State Park Management Council to DNR
 - o 2024-03 Supporting the Funding of the Alaska Marine Highway System Operating Budget at sustainable levels and the Re-capitalization of the fleet using IJJA funding
 - o 2024-04 Supporting Government efforts to improve competitiveness and resilience of the Alaska Seafood Industry

Legislators presentations included updates on current issues. The proposed increase to the Education Base Student Allocation (BSA) was discussed and Representative Stutes was vocal about supporting an increase. Senator Stevens seemed to support the increase but was a little less vocal. Both talked about the Seafood Industry Task Force and the need to address wide-spread problems with Alaska's seafood industry. Representative Edgmon attended the President's Reception but wasn't able to attend the conference due to a family emergency. Senator Hoffman wasn't able to attend.

During the post-conference board meeting, the Executive Director submitted his resignation. The Board is in the process of retaining some interim contract assistance and will begin a search for a replacement.