

Trip Report:

Shari Coleman, Unalaska City Council

Washington DC Lobbying Trip, 11 – 13 December 2023.

Contingent (Tri-lateral group):

Sebastian O'Kelly and Rick Marks, Robertson, Monagle & Eastaugh LLC

Vincent Tutiakoff Sr, Mayor, Chairman of Ounalashka Corp., Member, Qawalangin Tribe

Shari Coleman, City Council

Daneen Looby, City Council

Thomas Bell, City Council

William Homka, City Manager

Natalie Cale, CEO, Ounalashka Corporation

Chris Price, CEO, Qawalangin Tribe

Dianna Blumer, Blumer & Associates

Chris Hladick, City Consultant

U.S. Coast Guard

Touched on the recent assessment on the feasibility of the CG using Unalaska as a station base and emphasized how some of the elements had changed since the report was written. Discussed the role the US MSG currently has in town, and possibility of expanding their presence. Reflected on the recent incidents with Russian and Chinese warships within the EEZ, and the increasing maritime traffic through the Aleutian waters, and how Unalaska plays a role as a safe harbor for Arctic and Pacific Ocean passage.

Army Corps of Engineers

Two separate meetings with the COE; one with the Tribal and Regulatory Affairs, and the other with the Pacific Ocean Division Regional Integration Team. Spoke about the progress of the FUDS program, but that to make land safe for development (contamination and unexploded ordnances), the funds and work needs to continue. The channel dredging continues the move forward, with bids going out this spring, and work to begin this summer. It was discussed if the dredging of the UMC would qualify, but only under the tribal consortium. However, that process would take too long to coattail with the channel dredging project, so it was recommended that the City wait until the winner of the bid is announced and then hire them to dredge the UMC as an additional project. The COE now has secured funds to repair the CEM dock. They will send out an assessment team this spring.

Environmental Protection Agency

FUDS and the clean-up of contaminated soils.

National Marine Fisheries Service

Met with Janet Coit and her Alaska contingent on the state of the fisheries. She will be proceeding with the review of the MSA National Standards 4, 8 & 9, stating that they need to be updated to reflect the current conditions. There is a strong emphasis that the salmon stocks have been affected mostly by changes in the climate, but that the review process will include a comment period. At the time of our meeting, Trident had just made their announcement about selling off some of their assets. She did

seem concerned about this development, and we discussed of how global and domestic pressures are affecting business practices. We discussed the Right Whale critical habitat designation and how it could negatively affect the maritime commerce through the trade routes in the Aleutians, however the Heart of the Oceans sanctuary is now a non-issue now and we will not see that returning.

Senator Dan Sullivan

Primarily focused on threats to the seafood harvesting and processing sectors. Sullivan commented that he has been working on closing the loophole that is allowing Russian seafood into the US market by way of China, despite the executive order given by Biden to cease trade with Russia. He said that so far, his efforts have been stalled by east coast legislators, but that he has other strategies, and we should be seeing a positive result very soon. (As a note, about 10 days later Biden issued another EO that did put a stop to Russian seafood entering the US via China). He was also concerned about the depleted salmon stocks in the YKD, which is why he had ordered the salmon research task force. He feels that that will help shed some light on the crisis by using a science-based approach, and to come up with some sound and reasonable solutions by involving all stakeholders.

Senator Lisa Murkowski

The Makushin Geothermal Project was the main topic of discussion. She was interested in the status of the project, and the team gave her the most recent update (OCCP members and City Admin had met with the Department of Energy the previous day). The City continues to move forward with its utility upgrades, and funding is still needed for the Captain's Bay Road project. A summary was given on the status of the contaminated land clean-up, and that EPA has been very responsive and is taking the lead on restoration efforts. Murkowski continues to be a staunch supporter of fisheries-related issues and understands how they affect the people and businesses around the state.

Representative Mary Peltola

Brief update on developments in the geothermal project, marine sanctuaries, and other fisheries issues, and most of the other topics that had been discussed over the previous 3 days, and this was our last meeting of the trip. We did not touch on the salmon issues or trawl bycatch but was acknowledged for her leadership in the American Seafood Caucus.