

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Anna Toledo

April 5, 2016

COMMISSIONERS' HEARING ROOM B-102, COUNTY ANNEX, COUPEVILLE

PRESENT: Frances Wood, Chair, presiding, Ed Adams, Barbara Bennett, Lois Farrington, Ed Halloran, Linda Rhodes, Ruth Richards, Elsa Schwartz, Kestutis Tautvydas, David Thomson, Anna Toledo MRC Coordinator (staff) **ABSENT:** Lori Clark, Leal Dickson, Florian Graner, Richard Hannold, Tim Lawrence, Anthony Turpin, Stan Walsh, Todd Zackey

VISITORS: Peg Urstad (Sound Water Stewards – SWS), Linda Ridder (SWS), Joe Hillers (former member), Ken Urstad (SWS), Albert Foster (SWS), Debra Paros (bull kelp monitoring), John Githens, Gregg Ridder (presenter)

CALL TO ORDER: Wood called the meeting to order at 3:33 pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were done. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Schwartz moved to approve the agenda. Tautvydas seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Adams moved to approve the minutes of the Island County MRC meeting held on March 1, 2016. Rhodes seconded. The minutes were approved.

CORRESPONDENCE: Wood read a letter from Bob Gentz thanking the MRC, Sound Water Stewards, and WSU Extension for the honor of being named 2016 Jan Holmes Island County Coastal Volunteer of the Year.

Wood requested approval to send a letter to the Navy requesting access for pigeon guillemot volunteers. Halloran moved to approve and send the letter. Bennett seconded. The letter was approved.

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION: 2015 EELGRASS REPORT AND 2016 PLANNING
Gregg Ridder presented on results from the 2015 eelgrass monitoring project. The eelgrass team conducted underwater videography at 10 sites chosen in collaboration with the MRC and DNR, and aerial photography of the entire shoreline of Whidbey and portions of Camano.

Results showed most areas are fairly stable. There is evidence of damage from boating activity at Cornet Bay. The MRC might consider a prevention mechanism, such as a voluntary no anchor zone like the Jefferson MRC has implemented at Port Townsend. Patches of damage at Honeymoon Bay and along the Brooks Hill Rd site have been showing signs of recovery. Ridder also took aerial photographs to assist with the kelp monitoring project.

Ridder noted the team needs to evaluate the plan for future monitoring, including who could lead the data collection and analysis efforts, and what type of data to focus on. Suggestions included:

- Working with the same pilot Suzanne Shull uses or other private pilots

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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- Capturing oblique images
- Using drones
- Collaborating with LightHawk
- Monitoring areas that seem stable through aerials, and focusing underwater videography on areas of potential change

The MRC suggested several potential sites to consider for monitoring in 2016:

- Continue monitoring at Waterman
- Maxwellton Beach
- Camano Island State Park
- Double Bluff
- Ala Spit

BUSINESS ITEMS

Retreat Debrief and Work Plan Development: Toledo reported that the overall priorities identified from the retreat were around outreach, refining monitoring projects for components like project length and evaluation, and using monitoring as a form of outreach in addition to data collection and synthesis for long-term data sets.

Toledo distributed the list of potential projects identified at the retreat that MRC members stepped up to research and provide additional information on, as well as the list of outreach strategies developed by Bennett. Toledo asked the Bennett along with Turpin and Graner, who have expressed interest in outreach, to determine a scope and budget to focus on for the 2016-2017 grant cycle.

Tautvydas noted that in regards to the storm surge project information he provided, the MRC could best serve to partner with USGS in outreach to develop a network of volunteers.

Halloran and Schwartz reported on the Derelict Crab Pot Advisory Committee meeting. The committee is looking at two issues: removing current derelict crab pots, and preventing future loss. The bulk of the work will need to be in educating recreational crabbers. The NWSF is leading the effort, and the MRC could play a role in local outreach.

Rhodes encouraged MRC members to think of project leads as conduits of information, not necessarily leading an entire project, and the MRC can be tuned in to multiple larger projects. Adams added that the MRC, as an advisory group to the County Commissioners, serves to connect the Commissioners with ongoing efforts and emerging topics.

Schwartz volunteered to join Richards on a sub-committee to meet with Toledo, Lisa Kaufman, Dawn Pucci, and Lori Clark to develop a strategy for identifying and being involved with a future restoration project.

Budget Update: Toledo reminded current project leads to be thinking about their current budgets, and to coordinate with her to spend the money by September, as grant funds do not roll over to the next year.

Coordinator's Update: No further updates.

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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NWSC GRANT REPORTS:

Seining (Tautvydas): Seining continues at Cornet Bay. Chinook numbers are as follows:

22-Jan	12-Feb	26-Feb	11-Mar	25-Mar
0	0	15	94	41

Pigeon Guillemot Survey (Wood): The scientific paper that was submitted to Northwestern Naturalist has been accepted, and is scheduled for publication in the Winter 2016 issue.

The spring training is scheduled for May 4th at 7:00 at the Unitarian Church just north of Freeland. The meeting is open to returning and potential volunteers as well as anyone interested in learning more about the survey.

Applications have been received from two promising candidates for the summer intern position. Additional interested candidates are welcome to apply until the second week in April. More information about the position is available on the web site: www.pigeonguillemot.org.

Potential volunteers from Camano Island have been contacted to mentor a similar survey there. One of the coordinating team, Ann Casey, will be giving a presentation to Pilchuck Audubon on April 8th and potential volunteers have been invited to that talk.

Guillemot Appreciation Days will be held June 24th and 25th. The program will be similar to last year's, with social time at Ott & Murphy Winery in Langley on Friday late afternoon and field trips to see guillemots on Saturday morning.

Kelp Monitoring (Rhodes): Kelp bed selection is still in process for Island County MRC. Ridder will be transferring his 2015 shoreline images and GPS data, and Rhodes is working to develop an easier pipeline for linking the 2 data sets. The team also needs to develop criteria for identifying bull kelp beds from the photos. Once developed, volunteers will be needed to examine images to identify bed locations.

Vern Brisley (2015 survey volunteer) has planned and procured hardware to enable infrared imaging for aerial photography for bull kelp beds. He is working with Ridder on this effort.

The Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) has enough funding to support a bull kelp survey coordinator for about 5 months. The coordinator will be revising the protocol, facilitating the safety training, and managing any data that is generated. The safety training is being developed, and will focus on kayaks, instead of other kinds of vessels. Vessels that require support boats will NOT be included for surveys. The Northwest Straits Commission goals for this year are to understand reproducibility in the survey, which will be reflected in the revised protocol.

OTHER REPORTS:

Smith and Minor Island Aquatic Reserve (Rhodes): Planning for the upcoming Spring/Summer work is underway, and there will be 2 components to the program. One will be a "Harvester Monitoring & Outreach" effort to interview harvesters during specific low tide days about their perspectives and practices. The second component will be a "Kelp Research/Harvester Monitoring & Outreach" to estimate harvestable biomass and effects of harvest method on growth. Currently, the first research day is April 10th at 10 am on Libbey

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Beach. Anyone wanting to participate should contact Rick Baker at Whidbey Watershed Stewards: rickbaker17@gmail.com.

Data from the seabird disturbance study are beginning to trickle into the website: <http://whidbeywatersheds.org/stewardship/aquatic-reserve-watch/>.

Baker is meeting with WA DNR on March 31st to vision and budget for signage in the Reserve. He'll give a full report at the next SMIAR meeting on April 20th. Birdie Davenport at WA DNR recently received a new grant to support Aquatic Reserve activities, and she will be updating Aquatic Reserve committees on funding utilization on April 18th.

Baker is presenting at the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference in Vancouver, BC on last year's SMIAR project. Title of his talk is "*Assessing Habitat Impact of Recreational Kelp Harvesting, a Tom Sawyer Approach to a Culturally Sensitive Citizen Science/Outreach Project, Smith & Minor Islands Aquatic Reserve, Whidbey Island, WA*".

Salmon TAG (Thomson): The Salmon TAG will be attending site visits on April 6th and 7th for projects proposed through Salmon Recovery Funding Board. There are 5 projects proposed on Whidbey and 2 on Camano.

Island Local Integrating Organization (Bennett): Bennett reminded MRC members to complete the ILIO survey distributed via email. The survey will help the ILIO refine priority ecosystem components and vital signs.

Sound Water Stewards (Farrington): The SWS Project and Science Review Committee is reviewing all current projects and verifying leads and contact information. The Project Committee and the SWS board are evaluating mechanisms to assure they have active, trained volunteers to fulfill present commitments and future requests.

The SWS Education and Outreach Committee is developing training specifically for volunteers to participate in public outreach with State Parks and other organizations. The current training class of 2016 is enthusiastic, and will soon be participating in summer projects. The classes are full, with 24 attending the Whidbey training, and 18 attending on Camano Island.

Farrington asked for project leads to think about their volunteer needs for each project, and get that information to her and Toledo to facilitate coordination with SWS.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair: No report.

County Lead: No report.

County Commissioners: No report.

COMMUNITY COMMENT FORUM AND Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC: No comment.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm.