

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Anna Toledo

June 7, 2016

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

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

VISITORS: Blain Reeves (WA DNR), Kristin Swenddal (WA DNR), Tim Callison (Mayor of Langley), Colin Campbell (public), Sandy Dubpernell (Orca Network), Courtney Baxter (NW Straits Commission), Bill & Cheryl Bradkin (Public, Sound Water Stewards), John Calambokidis (Cascadia Research), Evan Thompson (South Whidbey Record), Mike Morgan, Randy Linard (Wahoo Enterprises), Jacob Linard (Wahoo Enterprises), Sonny Linard (Wahoo Enterprises), Rick Baker (Whidbey Watershed Stewards), Bonnie Gretz (Orca Network), Susan Berta (Orca Network), Jan Bell (Orca Network), Jill Hein (SWS, Orca Network), Gregg Ridder

CALL TO ORDER: Wood called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm. Wood acknowledged Dickson's resignation from the MRC, and thanked him for his 7 years of service.

INTRODUCTIONS: Introductions were done. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared.

AGENDA: Tautvydas moved to approve the agenda. Thomson seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Richards moved to approve the minutes of the Island County MRC meeting held on May 3, 2016. Tautvydas seconded. The minutes were approved. Thomson moved to approve the minutes of the Island County MRC meeting held on May 17, 2016. Farrington seconded. The minutes were approved.

CORRESPONDENCE: Toledo received an invitation from Deception Pass State Park for MRC members to present during their summer educational programs.

ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **MRC members** should contact Toledo if interested in hosting a talk at Deception Pass State Park.

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION: UPDATE ON GHOST SHRIMP HARVEST

Blain Reeves, Assistant Division Manager with Washington DNR, Aquatic Resources Division, and John Calambokidis, Research Biologist with Cascadia Research presented on DNR's decision to authorize limited ghost shrimp harvest in the East Whidbey Island Region after a temporary pause. The presentations included information on the research conducted to reach the decision, and plans for future research. Both presentations are available online:

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<http://www.islandcountymrc.org/uploads/pdf/Resources/2016-0607%20DNR%20Ghost%20Shrimp.pdf>
and <http://www.islandcountymrc.org/uploads/pdf/Resources/2016-0607%20Cascadia%20Gray%20Whales.pdf>. DNR's technical report is available at:
http://file.dnr.wa.gov/publications/aqr_aamt_shrimp_whale_0616.pdf.

The research showed no statistical difference in ghost shrimp biomass at whale feeding sites, harvest sites, and sites without feeding or harvest. The total estimated ghost shrimp stock was 30 times greater than the shrimp biomass extracted from whale feeding and commercial harvesting combined. These findings suggested there is enough biomass available for whale feeding as well as commercial harvesting.

DNR decided to issue three-year authorizations to the two ghost shrimp harvesters who previously worked in the area. Harvesting will be prohibited from February 1 through June 10. DNR plans to conduct ongoing monitoring. Future research includes evaluating how quickly the shrimp population recovers after harvesting, and determining the tidal height where whales feed and whether harvesting could occur at a separate tidal height.

Discussion points included:

- DNR is working with tribes to draft a management plan which will define areas where fishing can occur and will describe protective measures.
- The authorizations include a 25 foot buffer for eelgrass beds to prevent damage to eelgrass from harvesting.
- Support for conducting more research on tidal height differences between where whales feed and where harvest can be conducted, to provide further protection for the whales.
- Concern that whales will abandon feeding areas if the ghost shrimp density is too low.
- Suggestion to restrict the area between Sandy Point and West Langley from harvesting.
- An observation that whales also harvest spot shrimp.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Work Plan (Toledo): Toledo presented the work plan of proposed projects for 2016-2017, which have been developed and discussed by the MRC through the retreat and planning process. The work plan provides an overall outline of the goals and activities for the upcoming year.

ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **Adams moved to approve the 2016-2017 work plan. Farrington seconded. The work plan was approved unanimously.**

Coordinator's Update (Toledo): Toledo reminded members of the draft plan Turpin developed for the MRC's engagement in identifying creosote and large marine debris for removal by WA DNR. Turpin would like to work with existing groups and organizations whose members are frequently on the beach.

Toledo announced that she submitted the 2016-2017 MRC grant proposal. Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) will review the proposal and provide feedback in the upcoming weeks.

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The Board of Island County Commissioners approved the request to have members' terms aligned with the Operations & Procedures Resolution. Rhodes, Walsh, and Bennett's terms will expire 12/31/2016.

Toledo will be meeting with City of Oak Harbor and Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) on Friday to discuss elements of the proposed Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) application. A pre-application site visit with the ESRP Implementation Team is scheduled for June 28th.

Toledo introduced Courtney Baxter, Social Media Project Assistant with NWSC. Baxter is leading the regional #CatchMoreCrab social marketing campaign, and requested input on areas to conduct in-person outreach with recreational crabbers. She will be stationed at Cornet Bay on July 1st. Suggestions included: Langley Marina, Naval Air Station, Maple Grove boat launch, Camano Island State Park, provide materials to Ace Hardware and other areas where licenses are sold.

ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **MRC members** should provide any feedback to Turpin on the draft plan for creosote and marine debris identification for removal.
- **MRC members** should contact Courtney Baxter if interested in volunteering for crabber outreach at Cornet Bay or other areas on weekends during crabbing season.

NWSC GRANT REPORTS:

Eelgrass Monitoring (Tautvydas): The team met on 5/4/16 to discuss (1) choice of sites, (2) equipment needs, and (3) project sustainability. They also welcomed a new member to the team, Albert Foster, who has degrees in Biology, Ecosystems Analysis, Posbac Certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and has worked for NOAA as a hydrographer. Albert recently bought a 20' boat with lots of electronic equipment, including sonar imaging, that he is willing to use in the project. He will be working in parallel with the eelgrass team this summer so he could take over from Ken Urstad next year and will be testing to see how useful the sonar imaging may be. Albert is also a new member of Sound Water Stewards.

Underwater videography sites for 2016:

1. Flats 29 – Cornet Bay – core site
2. Swh0888 – East of Monroe Landing – Penn Cove core site
3. Swh0898 – West of Lovejoy Point, Coupeville – known eelgrass beds in Penn Cove
4. Swh0900 – Mineral Springs – known eelgrass beds in Penn Cove
5. Swh0919 – Pratt's Bluff South, Greenbank – new baseline for future Beach and Boat Club construction
6. Swh0932 – Freeland Park – core site – recent activity at Nichol's Brothers
7. Cps0761 – Dave Mackey Park, Useless Bay – site of littoral drift into eelgrass beds
8. Swh1567 & swh1568 – Camano Island State Park – new baseline
9. Useless Bay – reconnaissance only
10. Penn Cove – reconnaissance only

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No additional equipment needs for 2016 anticipated. However, the equipment is 9 years old and we will need to update for next year. Gregg R., Neal C., and Albert F. will investigate and make recommendations.

Project sustainability: Gregg will focus his attention on aerial photography next year. The underwater videography data gathering and processing tasks will be transferred to Albert Foster who will see if the workflow can be improved and if underwater sonar imaging might be useful to the project.

Seining (Tautvydas): The last seining day at Cornet Bay will be June 10th at 7am. The Chinook salmon count has been high this year (over 150), but the juvenile pink salmon count has been unusually low, 15% - 20% of expected for an even year when juvenile pinks are expected to be high. Chum and other fish numbers are about the same as in previous years.

Pigeon Guillemot Survey (Wood): The summer survey began the week of June 6th. The team has 70 volunteers trained and ready to survey 28 colonies on Whidbey Island. Weekly one hour surveys will continue for 10-12 weeks, depending on how long the birds remain at the colonies. In addition, intern Emily Terao will be surveying two colonies for four hours each morning for more in-depth data collection.

On June 5th, Wood conducted a five hour training for a new team of volunteers in Sequim (Clallam County) in coordination with that MRC and the Dungeness Spit National Wildlife Refuge. Phyllis Kind, Ann Casey and Elsa Schwartz are looking for colonies on Camano Island to initiate a survey team there in the future.

Guillemot Appreciation Days are coming! **Friday, June 24th, drop in at Ott & Murphy Tasting Room** in Langley from 3:00 to 5:00 pm for a celebration of the birds. Family friendly activities, drinks and beautiful photos by Govinda Rosling. **Saturday, June 25th, field trip to guillemot colony.** Meet at 8:00 am at the Freeland Park and Ride (at Trinity Lutheran Church) to carpool to a nearby colony.

OTHER REPORTS:

Smith and Minor Island Aquatic Reserve (Rhodes): Planning for the informational kiosk at Libbey Beach Park continues. Prospective designs have been obtained from WA Dept. of Natural Resources. IC Public Works will waive the permit and will install the kiosk.

Salmon TAG (Thomson): The Salmon TAG is finishing the process of scoring and ranking the four proposed projects.

Island Local Integrating Organization (Bennett): Toledo updated that the ILIO walked through a process to develop conceptual models for the 2 Very High Pressures identified in Island County: Runoff from the built environment, and Marine shoreline infrastructure. These models highlight the elements that cause the pressure to exist, and potential strategies to achieve recovery.

Outreach (Bennett): Bennett is developing a list of projects and investigating details to prepare for action as time and funds allow: First, investigating educational signs that have already been

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developed but not yet posted. Second, a short film as a start for others, introducing the MRC to the community.

Sound Water Stewards (Farrington): Planning for Sound Waters University 2017 is underway, and the planning team is currently seeking outstanding speakers for the event. Suggestions are especially welcome early in the planning process. The "one-day university for all" will be held February 4, 2017 at South Whidbey High School.

The SWS board recently attended a workshop led by Rex Porter to guide the organization through grant application processes and looked at issues for long range planning.

Kelly Zupich is now coordinating most project requests, and the new Education and Outreach Committee is conducting training for volunteers to lead public walks and talks to fulfill our agreement with Parks.

Current trainees are already out on the beaches volunteering. Their energy and commitment is much appreciated.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair: Wood noted that the MRC is on its summer schedule, meeting just once per month, on the first Tuesdays in June, July, and August.

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 5:34 pm.