

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Caitlin Budd

April 4, 2017

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

PRESENT: Barbara Bennett, Co-chair, presiding, Ed Adams, Ed Halloran, Ruth Richards, Lois Farrington, David Thomson (WebEx), Frances Wood, Tom Leschine (WebEx), Florian Graner, Dawn Pucci, Caitlin Budd Temporary MRC staff, William Bell (Port of Coupeville)
ABSENT: Jill Johnson, Todd Zackey, Linda Rhodes, Tony Turpin, Kestutis Tautvydas, Tim Lawrence, Lori Clark, Elsa Schwartz

VISITORS: Sasha Horst, NWSC (WebEx), Matt Colston (IC Intern), Albert Foster (Eelgrass Sonar), Linda Ridder (Sound Water Stewards), Sarah Murphy (Prospective Intern), Gregg Ridder (Eelgrass Aerial, Underwater, and Sonar)

CALL TO ORDER: Bennett called the meeting to order at 3:33 pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were done. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Wood moved to approve the agenda. Halloran seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Bennett introduced edits to the Minutes. Wood moved to approve the minutes with edits of the Island County MRC meetings held on March 7, 2017. Halloran seconded. The minutes with Bennett's edits were approved.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- A letter requesting permission from the Naval Air Station Whidbey Island for base access for the Pigeon Guillemot Survey was presented.
- Bennett signed the letter and Budd will mail the letter to the Commanding Officer as well as email the letter to John Phillips.

ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **ACTION:** Wood moved for the letter requesting PIGU survey access to NAS Whidbey and John Phillips to be sent. Halloran seconded. The motion passed unanimously

EELGRASS MONITORING PRESENTATION

Ridder presented on eelgrass monitoring and potential future directions for monitoring. Albert Foster also spoke in regard to use of Multi-beam sonar and obtaining a BioBase license for housing the data. Presentation available online: <http://www.islandcountymrc.org/agenda-minutes/>

Discussion points included:

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- A paper was published in the Journal of Ecology: *Forty years of seagrass population stability and resilience in an urbanizing estuary*. This was actually a forage fish survey, but their methods included raking the seafloor every 200m, so they collected eelgrass data as well. They covered a large area over a long period of time and found that eelgrass beds have been quite stable.
- Albert Foster equipped his boat with sonar gear, which provides ICMRC with a new tool for mapping habitat. Foster and Ridder are hoping to continue using this monitoring method. This method does require a BioBase license, which is \$2,500 a year, for housing the data.
- The multi-beam sonar method provides a 100% cover map of what is present and detects changes at the sub 1 km scale. Aerial and underwater photography is limited in its accuracy in comparison to sonar. Due to the low resolution of aerial imaging, incremental losses or gains are not detected. The resolution from sonar is 5 square meters.
- Plant height is helpful for determining which type of eelgrass is detected by sonar.
- Results of 2016:
 - o Cornet bay: Not much has changed - around 20 hectares of eelgrass. Foster drove the entire site and the sonar results (17.3) were close to the aerial results (17.1). There is evidence of damage from boats/recreation. Parks wants to extend the dock beyond the eelgrass boundary that was set by divers.
 - o Penn Cove: Lots of eelgrass just outside mouth, especially north, of the cove but not much inside.
 - o Freeland Park: Most studied site and consistent eelgrass bed size. 14.9 hectares by aerial vs. 17 hectares by sonar.
 - o Camano Is State Park: Two sites and not much eelgrass, but dense population of kelp.
 - o Maxwellton: Dynamic shoreline and shifting of sediment due to littoral drift. There appears to be an increase in eelgrass. *Zostera japonica* near Dave Mackie Park is a feeding ground for Brandts.
 - o Useless bay: Near Double Bluff there is a lot of kelp. It is likely that phyllospadix, which has strong attachment points to substrates and is thereby more wave resistant, is most abundant in this area.
- Proposed Sites for 2017 (capacity for 10 sites): Cornet Bay, Monroe Landing, Windjammer Park, Barnum Point, Barge Beach (where a sunken barge is being removed/seahorse siesta), Waterman, Ala Spit, Dugualla Bay, Utsalady Bay
- Sites suggested by MRC members: DNR is interested in Port Susan, Graner - Baby Island site (will be monitored again at some point), Pucci - near Port Susan where tidal inundation project implementation, Sunlight Shores (where another salmon recovery project is being implemented), convergence of Iverson and Barnum Point
- May monitor sites North of Whidbey where shrimp farming caused damage. These beds are recovering, but the team could monitor the recovery.

ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **ACTION: DNR asked to display IC MRC results on their website. Adams moved to approve giving DNR the eelgrass monitoring results with the contingency that credit is given. Wood seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

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BUSINESS ITEMS

2017-2018 WORKPLAN

2017/18 Workplan items:

- Seining has been removed from the workplan.
- The Creosote Removal Project needs about \$100 for app development and \$400 for a database to house information. Additional funds may be needed for outreach efforts associated with encouraging use of the app, so \$750 was penciled in for this project.
- The eelgrass sonar project's \$2,500 BioBase license cost for the 2016-2017 grant period will be covered by transfer of funds from the seining budget. The cost for next grant round's license has been penciled into the 2017-2018 budget.

Points clarified:

- Inventory of Island County Monitoring: It would be useful to have this include monitoring done by all agencies and organizations. The inventory would provide a comprehensive picture of monitoring work and findings in Island County. An intern will possibly be hired (supported by Outreach budget) to assist with this process. Adams suggested that this inventory would be useful for BOICC.
- In the current grant period, Outreach, through NWSF Opportunity Fund, is hiring a Communications Intern and also has the capacity to hire a monitoring inventory intern through the MRC Annual Grant. Continuation of these positions into the next grant period depends on the yet to be determined final budget for 2017-2018.
- Outreach is currently building capacity and requires more funds than it has received in past Workplans. Long-running monitoring projects already have many costs of project establishment covered from previous budgets.

Process moving forward:

- Anticipating funds from both the NWSF MRC Annual Grant (~\$69,000) and the NWSF Opportunity Fund for 2017-2018. Budget details will become clearer once finalized by NWSF, DOE, and NWSF.

ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **ACTION: Budd/Pucci to review the 2017-2018 Workplan with IC Commissioners at the April 5th BOICC Work Session. Budd to submit the Workplan and other Quarter 2 deliverables by April 10th.**

NWSC GRANT REPORTS:

Forage Fish Monitoring: Continuing to monitor and work with WDFW to map the data.

Pigeon Guillemot Survey: Hired Govinda Rosling as the PIGU Coordinator and in the process of hiring a summer intern. Moving ahead with new research questions focused on breeding behaviors.

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OTHER REPORTS:

NW Straits Commission/Foundation: April 10th Padilla Bay Forage Fish Survey training
April 15th Kelp Workshop in Port Townsend
April 21st Oyster Restoration Workshop with Lisa Kauffman
April 28th NWSC meeting with all seven MRCs presenting on a project. Adams will contact Albert Foster to propose that he present on the new multi-beam sonar eelgrass monitoring.

Creosote Removal: See project updates document for details.

Shoreline Restoration and Armor Removal: Planting at Cornet Bay: Wednesday, April 26th.

Working with kids from South Whidbey Academy that are planning a whole day of activities at Deception Pass Park. They will assist us with planting at Cornet Bay as one of their tasks. Likely starting around 9:30am. Lisa Kauffman will distribute a final timeline ASAP.

This could be the first outing for those interested in becoming Cornet Bay stewards. If a handful of MRC members join, and possibly Sound Water Stewards, it would be a good opportunity to kick this off while also connecting with a new group of students.

Salmon Recovery Technical & Citizen Committee: May 5th site visits for projects.
April 19th Open house 4:30-5:30pm at the Oak Harbor Library.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair: No update.

Meetings: The next meeting is May 2nd.

Reminder: None.

County Lead: No report.

County Commissioners: No report.

COMMUNITY COMMENT FORUM AND Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC: None.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:27 pm.