



Island County Marine Resources Committee

MINUTES

November 6, 2002, 4–6 pm

Heller Road Firehall

Oak Harbor

Audio Recorded

Present: Chair Tom Campbell, Hi Bronson, Mike Gallion, Phyllis Kind, Don Meehan, Sayed El-Sayed, Roger Sherman, Dick Toft, Benye Weber, Exec. Director Gary Wood, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen. **Absent:** Martin Behr, Jim Hawley (Roehl alt.), Jeff Tate.

Visitors: Michelle McConnell (speaker), Port Townsend, derelict gear consultant to Northwest Straits Commission; David Roberts, Ass't Region Manager, Northwest Region Aquatics Lands, State Department of Natural Resources; Gwenn Maxfield, Ass't Director, Island County Public Works; Frank Roberts, consulting engineer, Lagoon Point; Lora Mitchell, Oak Harbor.

Call to order: 4:04 pm, Chair Tom Campbell declared a quorum and called the meeting to order.

Agenda: Adopted with these additions:

- > Report on Northwest Straits Conference, Port Ludlow.
- > Discussion of canceling Nov. 20 meeting to attend Keystone Ferry hearing in Coupeville.
- > Discussion of MRC writing a letter expressing its position on the Neah Bay rescue tug.
- > Discussion of proposed gravel pit expansion in Jefferson County.
- > Short announcement on terms of appointment.

Minutes of 10-16-02: Adopted. Moved by Bronson, seconded by Kind, carried unanimously.

Speaker: Michelle McConnell, education and outreach coordinator, NWSC derelict gear project. Synopsis follows minutes.

Reports – David Roberts, Aquatic Lands Manager, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Sedro-Woolley. Roberts' region extends from the Queets River up the coast, down the Strait, down Hood Canal and up through the north Sound from Snohomish County northward. He manages about 1,300 leases for pipelines, fiber optic cables, docks, oyster beds, etc. Roberts says the DNR is excited about the MRC process and impressed with the results, and wants to reach out and work in partnership. The derelict gear project is a cooperative effort with the DNR. Early in 2003 the DNR will launch a derelict vessel program as a result of recent legislation dedicating some funds for this purpose. The program will focus primarily on those vessels that are a hazard to the environment or navigation. Roberts said he also wanted to let us know that the first step in DNR's reserves program has been completed – the environmental impact statement – and the process will move forward first by evaluating the five areas former commissioner Belcher set aside as reserves. The nearest of these to our MRC is Fidalgo. There will be public hearings to collect input and determine their future. After that, the reserves program will be handled by a nomination process. Roberts explained that in the first round, the reserves were primarily set-asides that didn't allow DNR to do any leasing. On another topic, Roberts said geoduck operations have been under way off Whidbey Island recently. If our MRC would like to have a presentation on this, he will help with the arrangements.

Reports – Executive Director Wood

- > The Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) is having its first programmatic grant round, which is non-watershed oriented. Not all projects fit neatly into a watershed, such as the derelict

gear program. Except for Island and San Juan counties, which are unique, no one watershed speaks for one county – the political boundaries don't coincide with the watershed boundaries. This keeps nearshore projects at a disadvantage because they're based on the river systems that are in the watershed. The commission has pledged \$40,000 as seed money in a serious attempt, competing in the same pond as the regular grants. These programmatic grants won't necessarily be nearshore.

> Maylor's Marsh. Our SRFB proposal has been reviewed by the lead entity and ranked fourth of four projects submitted. The others were the English Boom and Kristoferson Creek Beaver Marsh projects on Camano Island and Maxwellton estuary on Whidbey. While our ranking is disappointing, anything can happen, including the withdrawal of other projects, and it is still possible the SRFB will fund our proposal.

> Neah Bay rescue tug. The federal and state governments have provisionally set aside funds for continuation of a full-time rescue tug at Neah Bay for the next fiscal-budget year, but the federal money is left to the Coast Guard's discretion to determine whether a rescue tug or some other oil-spill prevention program would be more effective. Motion (Roger Sherman): To ask the Island County Commissioners to write a letter in support of keeping the rescue tug in Puget Sound or the Northwest Straits. Second: none. Motion to amend the motion (Phyllis Kind), that this letter be directed not only to the Coast Guard but also to U.S. Senator Patty Murray and her committee. Second (Roger Sherman). **Action. Island County MRC asks the Island County Commissioners to write a letter to the Coast Guard with a copy to Senator Patty Murray, saying we support the stationing of a tug to protect the waters of Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Carried. In favor: Campbell, Bronson, Kind, El-Sayed, Toft, Weber. Opposed: Meehan, Gallion.** Wood will draft the letter.

> Jefferson County gravel pit expansion. The Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) received a presentation from a Jefferson County organization opposed to expansion of a current gravel operation in Thorndyke Bay. The NWSC took no position. Wood invited our group to consider whether we wish to take a position on extra-county issues such as this. David Roberts of DNR pointed out that any expansion probably couldn't begin production for about 10 to 15 years. Following discussion, no action was taken.

New / Unfinished Business

> Meehan reported that terms of appointment expire at year-end for Toft, Sherman, Gallion and Campbell. Those who wish to be considered for reappointment by the county commissioners should express their interest to Meehan in writing, by e-mail.

> The regularly-scheduled Nov. 20 MRC meeting in Freeland will be cancelled so that our MRC can turn out in numbers for the Department of Transportation's meeting that day from 6 – 8 pm at the Coupeville Recreation Hall regarding relocation of the Keystone Ferry Landing.

> Weber complimented Wood on a "fabulous, very well done presentation" last Monday to the Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team.

> Bronson suggested the MRC meet only once in December. The date was set for the second Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2002, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Freeland. This will be an educational meeting – Meehan asked El-Sayed and Kind to consider arranging a science program, perhaps a speaker to talk about bottom fish.

> Meehan distributed copies of the MRC's new logo.

> Kind said the discussion of Marine Protected Areas at the NWSC's Ludlow conference showed that as we think about creating any marine reserves in the future, we need have clear goals in mind – we can't propose a reserve unless we know what its purpose will be.

Adjournment. There being no further business, Campbell declared the meeting adjourned at 6:21 pm.

NEXT MEETING: 6-8 pm, Wednesday, Nov. 20, at Coupeville Recreation Hall with Department of Transportation, regarding Keystone Ferry Dock relocation.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: 4-6 pm, Wednesday, Dec. 11, Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland.

Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project

Michelle L. McConnell, Education & Outreach Coordinator, Northwest Straits Commission

The Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project addresses both commercial and recreational harvest equipment. Earlier references to “ghost nets” are being avoided now because some commercial fishers felt the term pointed the finger of blame at them and omitted the recreational component. Derelict gear includes all types of nets, pots and traps, netting from fish-farm nets, trawl doors from trawl nets, downrigger wire and lead balls.

One of the reasons this gear is such a problem is that since the 1940s, it has been made from synthetic material – plastic and Dacron—materials that could take up to 600 years to degrade. The hazards are many to divers and swimmers -- it continues to trap and injure fish and shellfish, seabirds that dive, marine mammals, and to entangle the propellers and rudders of boats.

Right now the project is developing protocols. The pilot project is under way in the Northwest Straits region and Puget Sound from Everett northward, but eventually, it will extend to all the marine waters of Washington. It is estimated that Puget Sound’s waters hold hundreds of tons of derelict fishing gear.

Early this year the Senate passed SB 6313, derelict fishing gear legislation, that called for developing protocols to direct how to safely and effectively remove the gear, as well as urging agencies to work together with Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife as the lead agency, and to remove regulatory barriers, waiving the normal approval of permits. The bill also calls for minimizing future losses.

Funding for the pilot project totals about \$150,000, of which \$75,000 is from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) Community-Based Restoration Program for improving fish habitat, with an additional \$75,000 of in-kind match from various groups. The focus is to develop and test the removal protocols called for in the legislation as well as to launch the public information and reporting side of the project – brochures, posters, website, hotline and presentations such as this one.

There are four basic steps to the project: 1) Locating and reporting derelict gear, 2) Verifying and prioritizing, 3) Removing, and 4) Reusing, recycling and disposing.

Volunteers can play a role, especially in reporting. Divers will often be in the best position to come upon derelict gear. The public is strongly cautioned not to attempt removal, but to gather as much information as possible about location, type of gear, water depth and distance from nearby landmarks and reefs. Global Positioning System coordinates are optimal. Also helpful is date and time of sighting, the activity in which the discovering party was engaged, the size of the gear, number and types of invertebrates, fish, birds or mammals entangled in it, and the perceived level of threat to humans or vessels.

The reporting party’s contact information is not required but greatly appreciated. Anonymous reports will be accepted. There is no longer any penalty for the loss of gear by commercial or recreational fishers, so there’s no reason to delay reporting nor to conceal the loss.