



Island County Marine Resources Committee

<http://www.islandcountymrc.org>

MINUTES

February 19, 2003, 4:00 – 6:00 pm

Trinity Lutheran Church
Freeland

Present: Chair Tom Campbell, Martin Behr, Mike Gallion, Phyllis Kind, Don Meehan, Tom Roehl, Roger Sherman, Exec. Director Gary Wood, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen.

Absent: Hi Bronson, Sayed El-Sayed, Jeff Tate, Dick Toft, Benye Weber.

Visitors: David Palazzi (speaker), administrator, Aquatic Reserve Program, Department of Natural Resources, Olympia; Jay Udelhoven, Assistant Manager, Aquatic Resource Program, DNR, Olympia; Steve Jennison, Orca Northwest Region District Manager, DNR, Sedro-Woolley; Harriet Beale, Puget Sound Action Team, Olympia; Carol MacIlroy, Shared Strategy, Seattle; Elizabeth Davis, League of Women Voters of Washington; Gwenn Maxfield, Island County Public Works; Bill White, Beach Watcher; Mike Snow, Gareth Snow, Benjamin Snow, all of Langley; Frank Roberts, Lagoon Point; Nancy Waddell, Maxwellton Salmon Adventure.

Call to order: 4:10 pm, Chair Campbell called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.

Agenda: Adopted.

Minutes of 2003-02-05: Adopted. Motion by Roehl, second by Kind, no objections.

Speaker: David Palazzi, Manager, Aquatic Reserve Program, DNR.

The DNR hopes within several weeks to finish developing its new aquatic reserve program. As soon as the program is complete, details will be explained in a published document made available to all the MRCs and anyone else interested in proposing a reserve. DNR views the MRCs as very important cooperators in proposing reserves.

An ad hoc committee will evaluate all proposed reserves and provide a scientific, objective evaluation of each proposal based on the scoring of four criteria – general, environmental, scientific and educational. Washington Administrative Code recognizes three specific categories of reserves – environmental, scientific and educational. Currently, six reserves exist in the state, and these will be evaluated under the new implementation guidance during the first year of the program. The two closest to us are at Cherry Point and Fidalgo Bay.

The DNR manages sub-tidal lands typically below mean low low water, called aquatic bedlands. This is because such lands are navigable waterways. The state also owns and manages some tidelands. All aquatic reserves from DNR's standpoint will be established on state-owned lands. All the bedlands are available as potential aquatic reserves, plus any state-owned tidelands. Even if the tidelands were privately owned, it would be possible to develop an aquatic reserve on the adjacent bedlands. The DNR has a bill before the legislature at this time that would give it clear authority to acquire gifted land. In Fidalgo Bay the Skagit Land Trust acquired an option on tidelands adjacent to DNR-managed bedlands to make up the aquatic reserve.

The implementation cycle will start in 2004, at which time DNR will begin accepting aquatic reserve proposals. In February 2004, the DNR will review letters of intent from interested parties. If DNR concludes from a letter of intent that a proposal is not appropriate for an aquatic reserve, it may recommend alternative protection strategies. For those proposals that appear to hold promise as aquatic reserves, the DNR will request full proposals due in about May. The full proposals will then receive another DNR internal review. DNR will work with the project

proponents to strengthen the proposals before they are sent to the ad hoc committee for full evaluation in September 2004.

The ad hoc committee will score and rate the proposals, reviewing them on paper and also visiting the sites. It will compile a prioritized list of nominations and send it to the commissioner of public lands in November 2004. Because of limited budget and staff resources, the DNR will limit on the number of reserves it can accept – at a minimum, two in every biennial cycle. In March, 2005, management plans will be developed. In July, SEPA review will occur, and by October of 2005 the commissioner will sign the orders creating the new reserves.

Palazzi emphasized that DNR manages bedlands, whereas DFW manages the water column – fish and shellfish. So in the creation of an aquatic reserve, the more cooperation there is among multiple agencies, the stronger the proposal. This could include county government and the tribes, as well as state agencies.

Evaluation criteria for proposed reserves

General criteria for all three types of proposed reserves: Size/sustainability, Threats, Habitat significance, Connectivity of species/habitat/other MPAs, Geological/chemical/physical aspects of site, Conservation targets, Ability to persist over time, Absence/presence of upland buffers, Management/oversight plan, Consistency of management of adjacent uses, Local and statewide values of site's features, Value of reserve vs. other uses.

Environmental Reserve: Limited priority habitat, Habitat used by valued species during critical life stages, Is habitat modified and if so is it reasonable?, Modified habitat could support critical life stages if restored?, Cultural/archaeological resources?

Scientific Reserve: Research goals and how they relate to the proposed reserve, Degree of habitat and ecological processes that make the site unique, Degree of habitat disturbance, Viability and manageability of the site, Can site be manipulated without doing irreparable harm?, Does the site have a history of scientific monitoring or research?

Educational Reserve: Distribution of reserves among habitat types regionally and statewide, Compatibility with adjacent areas, How ecological integrity maintained, How curriculum will be applied – tailored to unique features of the site.

Meehan commented that the approach of setting aside a few scattered reserves seems inadequate to the challenges facing salmon. In Saratoga Passage we have tremendous eelgrass beds growing on DNR-managed bedlands, and the salmon use this area as a migration corridor to and from the Stillaguamish estuary. He wondered aloud whether the entire region ought to be protected by a reserve. Palazzi responded that if the MRC could bring together enough agencies and get them to cooperate on a reserve of that scale, then the MRC should propose it. Udelhoven commented that the reserve program isn't the only tool available to help marine species – it is one of the tools.

Meehan said he believes a lot of our eelgrass problems are associated with upland activities. In looking at reserves and developing a management plan, we should be including local government along with state agencies so that uplands are part of our thinking. Local government may need to fund a program to assure that we keep our marine waters clean. Palazzi encouraged the MRC to think big and work with other MRCs on a larger approach.

Public Input

> Harriet Beale, Puget Sound Action Team liaison to Island County, distributed several handouts including copies of Sound Waves, registration materials for the Puget Sound Research Conference, and information on the Puget Sound Nearshore Project. Beale also mentioned that Judy Broadhurst from her agency has spoken to a number of MRCs on the MPA process and would be happy to give us a presentation.

Unfinished business

- > Gary Wood displayed a diving loon silkscreen by Tony Angell. It was presented to him, and another copy was presented to Dan Pentilla, at the Shared Strategy conference in recognition of our forage fish project.
- > Wood said we will learn in April how our Maylor's Marsh proposal fared in the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) review process.
- > Executive Director's report was distributed by e-mail and is pasted to these minutes.
- > Wood commented that the congressional budget conference report of Feb. 13 resulted in a reduction in funding for NWSC, from \$950,000 down to \$795,000, but that if our program is truly worthwhile we should be able to be self-sustaining, and we are making good progress in that direction.
- > Meehan commented that Island County's Deer Lagoon acquisition project was allocated \$600,000 by Congress and the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund received \$28 million.
- > Behr asked if it would make sense to hold a full-day retreat or strategy session to look at big ideas such as a proposal to DNR for the reserve program, perhaps in late spring or early summer. Kind cautioned it would be easy to fill a whole day with loosely structured discussion, when the same amount of work might be accomplished in two hours if well planned. Meehan said prior to the retreat, we should make sure we have the data maps being developed by Doug Kelly. Wood said, the critical thing is that we've developed all this data – now what are we going to do with it; what are we going to advise the policy-makers?
- > Wood asked whether Brittany Stromberg is on the schedule yet to present Shore Stewards. Meehan said not yet – the March 19 speakers are from Whidbey-Camano Land Trust – but that he thinks one of our Oak Harbor meetings would be more convenient for her.
- > Meehan said our recent Maylor's Marsh presentation to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board's technical team seemed to go well.

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

NEXT MEETING: March 5, 2002, Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor.

Attachment: Executive Director's Report to the MRC, February 19, 2003

There is an abundance of news to share. As we will have limited time for a verbal report after the presentation today, a detailed Director's report is submitted to enable independent MRC review, at your leisure.

News:

- The **Puget Sound/Georgia Basin Research Conference 2003** will be held in Vancouver, B.C., Monday, March 31 to April 3. GW will participate with Dr. Andrea Copping in a thorough presentation about the Straits Initiative and MRC projects, reporting on the Forage Fish Surveys. This biannual event is the largest and most comprehensive on the subject matter of our interest. All MRC members are invited, and PSAT is offering one conference scholarship per MRC (fees only). We could flip for it. Discounted rates apply to registrations before March 10. Find details, agendas, program info and registration materials at: www.wa.gov/puget_sound/Publications/2003research/RC2003.htm
- The congressional budget conference report (adopted 2/13) resulted in the first ever *reduction* in Initiative funding to \$795,000 for FY 2003 [cut by nearly 20%, down from \$950K, with \$1.2MM sought by Senator Murray]. FY 2003 started last October, and the 2004 budget was just submitted.

In anticipation of developing alternative funding sources, the **Northwest Straits Foundation** is fully established as a qualified Section 501[c](3) nonprofit organization. The foundation therefore qualifies for NGO & nonprofit-designee grants. New proposals are in preparation at the NWSC level for submission to the SRFB (derelict gear), LWCF (derelict gear), and the Russell Foundation (operations).

- The sunset provision of the Initiative requires a peer-review-type evaluation and report to congress in 2004. Selection of reviewers is under discussion. The Commission intends to sponsor a **major public conference** with the MRCs (250+ attendees) Spring, 2004, at which the innovative saga of the MRC/NWSC process will be (self-)examined.
- Prior to that ultimate public conference, the Fall 2003 annual MRC training retreat/workshop will be oriented around MRC presentations, with an emphasis on sharing integrated, collaborative projects and plans. Input and ideas for our showcased work are encouraged.

MRC Projects Update:

- **Derelict Gear** – The parent project brought up over 22,000 lbs. of nets & pots, plus over a mile of drift nets. Formal recovery protocols were established, and adopted by DFW. A non-punitive “Hotline” is operational.
The MRC divided its \$15K local gear-funding in half; pooling the first half with Commission, SeaGrant, & PSAT funds to produce a professional project film and website. The retained \$7,500 is earmarked for gear removal in Island County waters this Spring or Summer. A substantial SRFB application is under preparation to provide enlarged, core year-two funding. A presentation is available for any groups interested in this remarkable effort.
- **Forage Fish** – Three full-time DFW ‘project’ biologists have conducted surveys in eight counties since December. Innovative mapping techniques under development by Doug Kelly will contribute to the impact of the enormous database created by the project.
- **Eelgrass** – Jim Norris completed phase II of the underwater videography last summer. Phase III will be done next summer, and the data are to be mapped as in forage fish, above.
- **Feeder Bluffs** – Two coastal geology firms will interview for this contract tomorrow. Both submitted impressive proposals.
- **Shoreline Hardening** – Camano has been surveyed, and the contract to survey Whidbey has been awarded. This resource layer will also be mapped.
- **Shore Stewards** – Brittany Stromberg has completed the applications, and signage & brochures are underway. This Spring will see the program’s Camano debut!
- **Cama Beach Restoration** – The Action grant to supply beach shading replanting and contribute towards a new boat launch ramp for the restored Wooden Boat Society boathouse is approved. These projects will commence in late Spring & Summer.
- **Penn Cove Spartina** – The same contract will fund a comprehensive eradication program for Penn Cove this year.

Grant status:

1. SRFB # 00-1673N and NWSC Action Grant Phase III are near completion and a total of approximately \$150,000 in final billings will close them shortly.
2. This year’s grants include:
 - SRFB # 01-1252 ~ Net award \$ 257,000
 - NWSC Phase IV ~ Net award 80,000
 - NFWF Forage Fish ~ net award 45,000

Total for 2003 to date..... \$382,000
3. Pending Maylor’s Marsh SRFB Round 4 proposal @ \$ 400,000 net, to be determined March/April.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Wood
Executive Director, MRC
2/19/2003