



Island County Marine Resources Committee

<http://www.islandcountymrc.org>

MINUTES

July 16, 2003, 4:15 – 6:12 pm

Heller Road Firehall
Oak Harbor

Present: Chair Tom Campbell, Martin Behr, Sayed El-Sayed, Mike Gallion, Phyllis Kind, Don Meehan, Roger Sherman, Jeff Tate, Dick Toft, Benye Weber, Exec. Director Gary Wood, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen.

Absent: Hi Bronson.

Visitors: Kim Bredensteiner, Island County Public Works; Ginny Broadhurst, Northwest Straits Commission; Mike Sato, People for Puget Sound.

Call to order: 4:15 pm, Chair Tom Campbell called the meeting to order.

Quorum: Declared.

Moment of Silence. A moment of silence was observed in honor of Tom Roehl, committee member who died last Saturday. All those present then spoke, in turn, of their individual, personal memories of Tom.

Agenda: Adopted with three additions. Wood will show the derelict gear video. Sherman requested we appoint someone to run the next meeting in the absence of the chair and vice-chair. Meehan suggested we invite Ginny Broadhurst to address the group. Motion by Toft. Second by Behr. No objections.

Minutes of 6-18-2003: Adopted. Motion by Kind. Second by Toft. No objections.

Reports: Wood e-mailed his director's report earlier in the day, as follows:

Executive Director's Written Report to the MRC

Attached Reports:

Feeder Bluffs Project Report: I attach the full update submitted June 30, on the completion of the MRC's Phase 3 Action grant. Phase 4 is underway, and the letter of intent for Phase 5 will be completed in the next weeks.

Correspondence re Spill Response Data: This correspondence relates to the inclusion of our Forage Fish spawning habitats maps into the system that decides what gets 'boomed' during a spill.

Saratoga Passage Marine Stewardship Area

An interested MRC subgroup (Behr, Campbell, Meehan, Toft, Wood & Pedersen) met again July 14th to discuss this prospect. Adam Flamiatos, a GIS Intern with Island County Planning & Community Development, is assisting with maps for the proposed area. Full MRC discussion of the following is now proposed for today's meeting.

Derelict Gear video

The video produced with Island Co. MRC funds (Phase 3) will be shown at today's meeting.

Executive Director's Verbal Report

Shore Stewards Grant. Wood shared a copy of our grant application to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). NFWF is partnering with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in a grant program that seems to be a perfect fit for Shore Stewards. NRCS put \$3 million into a fund to have NFWF issue grants to support private landowners in stewardship projects. In this proposal we are partners with the Whidbey Island Conservation District and the Snohomish County Conservation District. The Snohomish District is responsible for Camano Island. The intent is to introduce farmers, ag properties, ranchers and foresters to the Shore Stewards program. We will find out how our application was received Nov. 30. The grant asks for staffing for each of the conservation districts and for each island at the Shore Stewards level. If it comes about, we'd have a very professionally run program. If this is funded it will happen about February. Meanwhile, we will use our Phase 5 Action Grant funding for

Shore Stewards to fund it from end of August till end of this year. Everybody loves the program. 13% of the county's real estate is in agriculture, so getting ag people involved is important.

Derelict gear video. Wood showed the derelict gear video, which was produced for the purpose of attracting funding for the derelict gear project. This video has been shown to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), which awarded \$150,000 to the program. It was also shown to King County, which has \$10 million available to award -- we are waiting to hear on that. It was also shown to the Army Corps of Engineers, which also wants to award some money.

New / unfinished business

Saratoga Passage Marine Stewardship Area. Campbell pointed out that a suggestion was raised at the MRC's Coupeville retreat a few weeks ago to designate a stewardship area in Saratoga Passage as a focus for our educational efforts. A sub-committee has met twice since then to flesh out the idea, and today's discussion is to explore the full committee's reaction. Behr commented that in other parts of the US where such areas have been created, they encourage a higher standard of individual care and also bring economic benefits to tourist-based businesses that operate within them. Toft commented that the geographic area the sub-committee has in mind includes all Island County waters from Deception Pass through Saratoga Passage to Possession Point. Wood said he's interested in the signage we could create identifying this area for visitors, giving it recognition, which is worth a great deal. Toft added he envisions handouts – maps and brochures to distribute on the ferry, for example – drawing on all the research we've done on forage fish, eelgrass, history, etc. Wood added that all the main cities in the county would border it, as would the biggest harbors, ports and marinas, and the newest state park in the county. Pedersen pointed out the fabulous tie-in to the Shore Stewards program. Having a stewardship area would make the Shore Stewards participants feel part of something big and meaningful. The proposed area also brings together both parts of Island County – Camano and Whidbey – around the same project and same body of water.

Meehan pointed out that the sub-committee had considered including Port Susan within the stewardship area as well, but felt it was of very different character than Saratoga Passage and adjacent waters. At a future time it might be appropriate to identify additional stewardship areas for Port Susan and the outside waters of Admiralty Inlet. Weber commented the stewardship area is a fabulous idea -- her only concern is a proliferation of signs. Behr commented the signage he's thinking of would not be along the water but at the access points, such as marinas or launch areas. Gallion said his personal feeling is that the beaches should be left as natural as possible, free of signs, but that this seems to be contrary to the Shore Stewards program. Meehan acknowledged we need to think about Shore Stewards — about how we want people to exhibit their signs. Behr said perhaps decals are a better option. Kind suggested maybe the place for a sign is the property-owner's driveway.

Much interest was expressed in the kinds of features that could be pictured with icons on a map – distinctive landforms, resorts, parks, boat launches, eagles' nests, sea lion areas, etc.

Speaking as “the MPA guy” on our MRC, Sherman asked whether the concept of the stewardship area would be strictly educational, or whether it might lead to additional levels of protection for certain areas within it at some future date. Behr said his thinking at this time is strictly recognition and education, but that this designation would not preclude some further level of protection in the future.

Toft commented that in San Juan County, the move to establish a stewardship area throughout the entire county mentions a “second phase” in which certain areas will be identified for regulatory protection. He acknowledged that some Island County people may fear a similar outcome here if a stewardship area is identified – that it would be a first step to be followed by new restrictions on boaters and property owners.

Kind said maybe we should avoid the word “stewardship” – that maybe it implies something threatening. Perhaps a word is needed that highlights the attractions of the area. Tate said that if we identify boundaries on a map, no matter what the intended purpose is, the county commissioners will ask us how we can ensure that at some future time, some agency won't come to us and say this is obviously a more important area than some other, and therefore it ought to have additional protection.

Toft said this is why he favors a somewhat ambiguous map – a caricature or cartoon map – rather than something that shows precise boundaries.

Tate asked about the possibility of having the concept sponsored by an economic organization, such as the Economic Development Council. If it came about this way the commissioners wouldn't even be asked to designate it. Could we avoid regulatory baggage by going about it this way?

Gallion pointed out that if we create something analogous to a state park or "special" area, the next step will be to impose a charge for an extra decal on boats. Island County already is heavily involved in managing the marine resource. "Dozens of other state, federal and tribal agencies are involved – you can hardly walk on the beach without buying a permit anymore. We're heading down a slippery slope that will lead to more permits and more restrictions."

Sherman commented, "I'm a farmer. All the stuff that's been thrown at farmers is unbelievable. Every time a comprehensive plan comes along our net worth goes down. When it comes to regulations, I don't like to see them, but this is a different ballgame. This is about education and economics. One of the things this MRC is charged with is education. Maybe this is a chance to take on a bigger project to do it."

With this, Campbell called the discussion to a close because of the shortage of time and thanked everyone for their contributions.

Next meeting. Campbell noted that neither he nor vice-chair Roger Sherman can attend the next meeting, August 13 in Freeland, but that Meehan will run the meeting.

Guests

Kim Bredensteiner explained she has been with Island County for three months now and is getting more involved with salmon recovery. The salmon technical advisory group (TAG) wishes to get a better hold on the data that could be incorporated into salmon strategy. Bredensteiner said she would love to have participation from the MRC in salmon TAG meetings and would welcome adding members of the committee to the e-mail list. Campbell asked Bredensteiner to give the dates of salmon TAG meetings to Pedersen a week or two ahead, so that he can e-mail the information to MRC members. Bredensteiner also said that if the MRC forms a subcommittee at some point to analyze the data that has been collected on nearshore habitat, she would very much like to be a member. Wood said the time for this will come later this year after Doug Kelly is done with mapping and building the databases on forage fish and eelgrass. – and that it would be a great idea to have Bredensteiner involved.

Ginny Broadhurst, formerly of Puget Sound Action Team, explained she is now working for the Northwest Straits Commission, putting together a gaps analysis to help prepare for the evaluation and Congressional reauthorization next year. She is rounding up information on the major accomplishments and outcomes of activity by all the MRCs. The purpose is to look at the benchmarks comprehensively across all the MRCs and identify any weaknesses before somebody else points them out.

Mike Sato left copies of a brochure for the committee members, "The Sea, The Strait and The Sound: Preserving Washington's Marine Communities." It was produced by People for Puget Sound, Surfrider Foundation Northwest and Ocean Wilderness Network.

Adjournment: There being no further business, Campbell declared the meeting adjourned at 6:12 pm.