



Island County Marine Resources Committee

<http://www.islandcountymrc.org>

MINUTES

September 3, 2003, 4:00 – 6:23 pm

Heller Road Firehall
Oak Harbor

Present: Acting Chair Roger Sherman, Hi Bronson, Sayed El-Sayed, Mike Gallion, Phyllis Kind, Don Meehan, Rolf Seitle (standing in for Tom Roehl from the Port of South Whidbey), Benye Weber, Exec. Director Gary Wood, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen.

Absent: Martin Behr, Tom Campbell, Jeff Tate, Dick Toft.

Visitors: Kim Bredensteiner, Island County Public Works; Frank Roberts, Lagoon Point.

Call to order: 4:03 pm, Acting Chair Roger Sherman called the meeting to order.

Quorum: Declared.

Agenda: Adopted with additions. Wood will show the forage fish video. Meehan wants to discuss Saratoga Passage Stewardship Area. Wood will discuss several action items listed in his written report. Sherman requests a discussion of the fall NWSC conference. Frank Roberts wishes to address the group and ask a question. Bredensteiner wants to share some maps and publications from the Puget Sound Nearshore Project.

Minutes of 7-16-2003: Adopted. Motion by Meehan. Second by Weber. No objections.

Reports:

Shoreline hardening. Meehan reported that 40 to 50 miles of Whidbey Island's 160-mile shoreline have now been surveyed using a GPS system by our private contractor, Clyde Johnson. Recently on south Whidbey, Johnson encountered the first individual who didn't want him on his property. Meehan said he has told Johnson we don't want to get into confrontations – he should assess any such situations and avoid conflict. All of Camano Island was surveyed without complaints – many property owners are interested and supportive.

Executive Director's Written Report (distributed in advance by e-mail):

Shore Stewards Launched: With a terrific local Blue-Grass group backing from a beachfront bandstand and an antique fire truck touring Cama Beach State Park, the MRC's inaugural groups of CERTIFIED SHORE STEWARDS were awarded their official memberships on August 7th. A gala WSU Beach Watchers BBQ and celebration marked the event. The launch was a resoundingly happy event, featuring a parallel introduction: Shore Stewards' manager Brittany Stromberg showed off her newborn daughter, Ava, wholly transfixed by the colorful Stewards signs and GW's "solemn" presentations to each new Steward. Apparently the latter induced her first audible chuckle - or catcall. The only flaw in the event was the unfortunate mechanical breakdown of the jetboat, stranding 34 Beach Watchers on Whidbey – who organized impromptu parties of their own.

Shore Stewards at Town Meeting: In a related event, County Commissioner Bill Byrd hosted a packed **Town Hall Meeting** to officially introduce the Stewards program on August 28th. GW presented the project's Power Point talk, accompanied by Camano's new Stewards. Property owner's advantages and benefits derived from the program were examined and shared, and founding participants introduced. The SS program will sponsor workshops this Fall centered on the actual MRC concrete boat ramp removal project at Cama Beach (shoreline hardening issues); the MRC *Spartina* eradication project (invasives vs. natives); and the MRC's shoreline revegetation project.

Year Five NWSC Grant LOI: Island County MRC's *Letter of Intent* for its Year Five NW Straits Grant was submitted in late July, and has been approved. The full proposal will be tendered by September 15th and provides 1) for continued executive director services funding (\$20,000); 2) Shore Stewards management (\$24,000); and 3) a regionally cooperative *Spartina* eradication/training effort with People for Puget Sound (\$6,000) Total = \$50,000.

Derelict Gear Presentation: Thanks to MRC member Dick Toft, on August 1st the OAK HARBOR ROTARY CLUB featured the **Derelict Gear** project at a Yacht Club luncheon attended by a good showing of club members. GW showed the NWSC video, and spoke on the topic. The ensuing questions were extraordinarily supportive, and the talk generated new invitations to give the presentation to other groups. The SOUTH WHIDBEY ROTARY has also requested this talk.

Coastal America Partnership Award: On Monday, September 15th, GW will accept an award from the Assistant Secretary of Commerce as a member of the **Derelict Gear Project Team**. The formal presentation will be made at the CONVENTION & TRADE CENTER in Seattle, in conjunction with the *National Estuarine Research Federation* Biennial Conference, following a Breakfast Reception hosted by

NOAA.Fall Conference Program ACTION ITEM: We are planning to present a 15 minute 'show' on Shore Stewards and one additional project/MRC topic at Fort Worden. Who, what, where & how must be determined. This is a real MRC to MRC format, so let us be creative.

PIE Grant Application ACTION ITEM: If approved by the MRC, we could submit a PIE funding request to PSAT to design, fabricate and install informational shoreline displays/scenic signage/maps at several publicly-accessed waterfront sites. In brief, the proposed signs would feature marine resources information generated by MRC projects since 1999. The idea is to visually inform visitors about the eelgrass beds, feeder bluffs, forage fish habitats, bluff bird nesting, derelict gear removal, stewardship opportunities, Orcas, *Spartina*, designated Marine Protected Areas, armoring issues, salmon corridors, etc. The designs should be MRC-branded, durable and extremely attractive, to encourage use. As with SS signage, WA Correctional Dept. Services would be contracted to fabricate the installations. Design would be contracted for separately. The ED requests authority to draft and submit such a proposal. A designated MRC liaison-member is also sought.

MEHP Grant Application ACTION ITEM: Another funding opportunity presents for consideration. GW will report details.

Executive director's verbal report:

NWSC fall conference. Wood asked how many MRC members plan to attend the fall conference at Fort Worden, themed as "Sharing Our Successes." The program is essentially a dress rehearsal of presentations by the seven MRCs from which the NWSC will select the best to share next spring with the review panel, chaired by William Rucklshaus. Each MRC will have about 15 minutes in which to give two presentations. We plan to present Shore Stewards and one other, yet to be determined. Interest was expressed in presenting our eelgrass survey program as the second of our two presentations.

PIE grant. These grants, for Public Information and Education, are available in amounts up to \$50,000 through Puget Sound Action Team to pay for interpretive signage. Wood is considering asking for \$15- to \$20,000. He proposes using the signage to illustrate what the MRC has learned about the nearshore. Weber recommended we take advantage of kiosks for our interpretive signage, as opposed to metal. Sherman commented that the low-profile reader board designs used by the parks are a less-expensive alternative, especially in settings where people need to look over the top of the sign at the view. Seitle commented that the Port of South Whidbey operates the fishing dock at the Clinton ferry terminal and that there is a shelter at this location that might accommodate some signage. **Motion by Weber, second by Kind, all in favor, that Wood proceed with an application for a PIE grant for interpretive signage.**

MEHP grant. Joe Gatos of the Marine Ecosystem Health Program (MEHP) has invited our participation in their new grant round, which is focused on science-based follow-up to assess the effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas. Gatos noted that the Department of Fish & Wildlife had established two MPAs in Island County. Wood will look into this further and determine whether there is a project worth doing.

New / unfinished business:

Saratoga Passage Marine Stewardship Area. Meehan said he wanted to return to the discussion of the proposed stewardship area that was tabled at the previous meeting.

Weber: What would be the advantage of making Saratoga Passage or part of it a stewardship area?

Meehan: Education – and that’s all. No regulation. It’s a way to focus on an area in such a way that the public sees that it’s special.

Weber: I’m concerned about the rush to designate these areas – we need to slow down and think about the advantages and disadvantages.

Wood: I understand your point if you’ve been reading about the San Juan experiment – that’s an example I’d like to contrast ourselves to. They want to do a regulatory thing – declare the whole county a stewardship area and then have it become regulatory. What we were talking about would literally exist in signage and in a resolution by the county commissioners – if it has a name and symbols and information about it, people make a connection.

Meehan: What got me inspired was Dan. He painted a vision of how to think about this. It’s all about marketing. When he described it, it started coming together for me.

Pedersen: It’s partly about showcasing the research we’ve done through the MRC – the tremendous information we’ve gathered about such things as eelgrass, forage fish, hardening features. It would enable us to present information to the public in kiosks, maps, brochures, etc. showing what’s special about these waters. Another part is the tie-in with Shore Stewards – engaging them and public in something much larger, all of it voluntary, none of it driven by telling people what they can’t do.

Bronson: San Juan County is calling itself a stewardship area? That’s where all this contention is?

Wood: Yes. They wanted to declare the whole county a stewardship area. Hard on the heels of this was the idea of having regulated areas within it, and they ended up in a conflict.

Weber: The grass roots of a stewardship area is what you’re doing to the land. My fear is that this is going to revert back to the landowners – all of the landowners, surface water runoff, the whole thing, on what they can and cannot do. Homeowners, agriculture, farms, etc. What kind of restrictions are we talking about? Anytime you use the word protection, it comes back to what are you protecting? And who is the root cause.

Seittle: Generally the root cause of problems is people. You have two options – educate or regulate. If people cannot be educated they have to be regulated.

Kind: Instead of designating an area, maybe we should focus on education – do a brochure – the kind of thing the Beach Watchers has, beach etiquette for any part of Puget Sound.

Gallion: Gary distributed a document by e-mail that ought to be required reading for everyone – on guidelines for establishing an MPA. It was put together by the tribes. One of their points is that whatever you call an area, there’s still some level of protection. You need to identify the threat, and once you’ve identified how an area is threatened, then focus on that issue. Secondly, it has not been explained to my satisfaction why Saratoga Passage is of higher value area than any other areas of Island County.

Bronson: With all the contention in the San Juans, maybe we should avoid the word “stewardship.”

Wood: We picked stewardship to avoid being an MPA.

Bronson: We’ve done the scientific work and have much better knowledge of this treasure we have here. Maybe it’s enough that we just draw attention to it--appreciate it—without saying, “Don’t abuse it.”

Meehan: In my view it’s the difference between selling pop and selling Coke. You can sell Coke. It’s about the way we create a vision. We have an opportunity to do this for a special body of water. I recognize there are other areas of the county that have as much value or maybe higher value, and maybe we ought to go there too and designate them as well, but we don’t have to do regulation. We can do education. Focus on an area and have a marketing program. To me it’s a whole lot easier to sell Saratoga Passage than “the waters of Island County.”

Gallion: Why don’t we just call it Saratoga Passage and not anything else? If we want to do some educational things about Saratoga Passage, then do them. We don’t have to draw any lines.

Sherman: I’m going to refer it back to committee and ask them to bring back some recommendations.

Public input.

> Frank Roberts commented he has checked with Meehan periodically for copies of any MRC-funded work available to the public. To date, he has seen only the eelgrass survey and an interim nearshore report. He commented that in his opinion, the MRC has produced very little completed work for the public in return for the grant monies expended over the years, most of which has been paid to various consultants.

> Kim Bredensteiner said she would like to invite the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem project give a one-hour presentation to the MRC on Nov. 19. The project is in the planning stage right now with the goal of implementing projects between 2006 and 2008 for the entire Puget Sound region. They are looking at such issues as what is the percentage of hardening, the key areas, etc. She distributed two informational pieces. Bredensteiner also shared with the MRC two maps she received today from the Shared Strategies for Puget Sound group, which is doing the planning for the key salmon runs. The maps are available on the Shared Strategies Web site. Meehan asked Bredensteiner to talk about the work she’s doing for salmon recovery in Island County. She replied that she wears two hats for Island County. One is the Salmon Recovery Lead Entity coordinator working with several committees, the main one of which is the Water Resources Advisory Committee. One of the more active committees with the salmon recovery process is the Technical Advisory Committee. The other hat she wears for the county is Watershed Implementation for Nonpoint Pollution Action.

Forage fish video. Wood shared the forage fish video, which was funded for \$6,000 by Whatcom County MRC.

Adjournment: 6:22 p.m. At the conclusion of the video, Sherman declared the meeting adjourned.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, September 17, Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland.