



Island County Marine Resources Committee

<http://www.islandcountymrc.org>

MINUTES

September 17, 2003, 4:00 – 5:40 pm

Trinity Lutheran Church
Freeland

Present: Chair, Tom Campbell; Hi Bronson, Mike Gallion, Phyllis Kind, Don Meehan, Rolf Seitle, Roger Sherman, Dick Toft, Exec. Director Gary Wood, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen.

Absent: Martin Behr, Sayed El-Sayed, Jeff Tate, Benye Weber.

Visitors: Kim Bredensteiner, Island County Public Works; Bill Schmidt.

Call to order: 4:07 pm, Chair, Tom Campbell, called the meeting to order.

Quorum: Declared.

Agenda: Adopted with additions. Toft wishes to share some informational materials he came across while on vacation. Wood will speak about a grant opportunity relating to a possible crab project.

Minutes of 9-03-2003: Adopted. Motion by Bronson. Second by Kind. No objections.

Welcome – Rolf Seitle. Campbell welcomed Rolf Seitle to the MRC as its newest appointed member, replacing Tom Roehl as representative of the Port of South Whidbey.

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

Your Executive Director is still in Seattle at the **Estuarine Research Conference** today, so this quick MRC News update is sent in lieu of my presence:

- Glacier Environmental has examined the Cama Beach boat ramp removal, and is submitting an estimate for the necessary excavation work next week. It looks like we can proceed in October, well within the grant budget.
- I have discussed our PIE proposal for interpretive shoreline signage at various public viewing locations with Mary Lou Mills and Jeff Koenings of WDFW and they are favorably excited, and will partner with us. Now to convert that to assets. I will circulate the application well before the 10/13 deadline.
- I am expecting to examine the printer's galleys of the Shore Stewards handbook here in Seattle this pm. There were some problems with the first set, so I am glad to be here to shepherd the booklet, by sheer coincidence!
- The ceremony for the Coastal America Award turned out to be a big deal. Personal report to follow!
- The Musser Foundation application was duly tendered by 9/15 (Initiative Review Funding), with great letters of support.
- I have some ideas for our Oct. Fort Worden Conference presentation, and have arranged to get use of the amazing Camano Eelgrass display, which will play a leading role in our song & dance. We have seven MRC members registered as attending so far, I hope more of you sign up! Our presentation might just include YOU ALL!
- Looks like the Big Spring Public Conference will be at the new Everett Conference Center June 4th – 5th. Save that date!
- Our PSAT liaison Harriet Beale is recovering well from her aneurysm, thankfully.

Executive Director's Verbal Report

Wood shared a plaque and letter from President Bush awarding the Derelict Gear Project the 2003 Coastal America Award. The honors were received before an audience of 1,500 from 29 countries attending the biennial National Estuarine Research conference in Seattle this week.

Discussion -- Stewardship area proposal (comments paraphrased for brevity):

Meehan: At our last meeting in Oak Harbor, Weber expressed concern that designating a stewardship area would result in a hit against upland landowners in the form of more regulations. She is clearly in support of the concept of educating the public about the resources we have. Her concern is regulation.

Following that meeting, a subcommittee of Weber, Campbell, Sherman, Meehan and Pedersen met Sept. 12 and developed a recommendation to present tonight for two stewardship areas. The Saratoga Passage Marine Stewardship Area would encompass all county waters east of Whidbey Island from Deception Pass to Possession Point, including Port Susan. The Admiralty Marine Stewardship Area would encompass all county waters west of Whidbey Island from Deception Pass to Possession Point. Pedersen then developed an outline of how these two areas would be marketed.

Pedersen: The advantage of having named areas is that shoreline property owners can identify with the body of water they live on; others can identify with the waters they fish on. There appears to be no conflict with the Tribal Policy Statement, since stewardship areas would not diminish anyone's access to the resource. We would spend the fall of this year rounding up the money to do some things – work on either or both of these areas -- developing a map, brochure, signage, etc., highlighting the research the MRC has done and maybe work on a dedicated Web site or linking to resources that already exist on other Web sites, such as Shore Stewards. In the spring and summer of next year we might launch this at Coupeville Water Festival with the commissioners unveiling a sign.

Meehan: I'm curious how some of you feel about the issue of this being a stepping stone to higher levels of regulation – here this whole thing would be a public awareness program, and the boundaries are vague, but I know that some may hold that view.

Gallion: I put up a test balloon with some other sport fishermen – asked what they thought of a Saratoga Passage Marine Stewardship Area if we promised there would be no other regulation, and they said, “Yeah, right.” I probably could have sold the Deception Pass Bridge easier.

Wood: One of the focuses of the Estuarine Conference was that science has gotten ahead of the public. There were two great sessions on non-regulatory alternatives to MPAs. One of the ideas they were recommending was non-designated, not lines on a map, geographic areas that were absolutely just for the word stewardship – meaning this is to be taken care of. As an MRC we have no authority to regulate. But if we don't do something, somebody else will.

Campbell: One of the reasons we're sitting here as an MRC today is because the feds were going to come in and put a lot of regulations on us. I view this as our commitment. The commissioners basically said, ‘Go figure this out, and do it without regulations.’

Toft: I was on the committee with Marty and Dan. We were very sensitive to the term or the phrase we were going to use. I think we talked ourselves into the fact that stewardship was non-offensive. This concept and package you've put together Dan is just nifty. But maybe we need to step back again – maybe identify it as a Marine Heritage Area. Time and again we run into people who are afraid – wondering if this is an educational thing or a step to something else.

Kind: I agree – I think stewardship is a word that is trouble. How about Marine Habitat, something like that?

Meehan: Stop and think. Stewardship. This is not about restoration, this is about taking care of what we have. We are stewards of our own families. How this got a negative connotation is beyond me. But I am intrigued with heritage or habitat.

Pedersen: I would fight for stewardship. It's not a dirty word and it describes exactly what we're talking about. And it ties in with Shore Stewards.

Gallion: It doesn't make much difference what you call it. Eventually the public is going to figure it out and it is a marine protected area. Stewardship is an active term rather than passive – it means you're actually doing something. And if you want to take care of an area, one of the things you're going to have to do is stop any of the things that are detrimental to that area. That leads to regulation. That's the problem.

Wood: You lost me when you went from stewardship areas to marine protected areas.

Gallion: In one of your e-mails you said it more succinctly than I have. Any type of protection, whether a stewardship area, no-take zone, marine protected area or whatever, involves one level or another of protection by defining an area.

Wood: We're not doing protection, we're doing recognition. If we could do protection we would have gone off on an MPA. Where stewardship came from was in reaction to the hot button that MPAs had created. An MPA is any level of restriction. What we're saying is that this area is so special we want to recognize it, and by the way, here's what's in it. Here are the resources you're looking at and how they work together.

Bronson: Whatever term we pick, the challenge will be to describe what we really mean by it. Gary has pretty much described what we want to do. We've spent all these years collecting all this information. We should be sharing it. People should be aware of these eelgrass beds and the forage fish areas.

Settle: I think stewardship is an excellent term. It feels good to me. It really indicates that if we will be stewards of the environment we will avoid regulation. It must be one or the other.

Bredensteiner: I see the issue here not so much the word choice as designation or no designation. I hear a lot of good reasons to stand up for the word stewardship. If you go with some kind of designation you're going to threaten certain groups who feel any kind of designation is a bad thing because it will bring some kind of regulation.

Wood: I am very sensitive to the notion of creating resistance we don't intend. Mike is doing us a favor by pointing out how a lot of folks think about this. One of the comments at the meeting this morning was the "Don't Mess With Texas" example. Texas didn't single out any region or zone or map; they had the worst littering problem in the United States, and this slogan worked. What we want to tell people is, "Don't mess with us," right? If we can come up with the right sizzle, an equivalent notion, a message like the Shore Stewards thing, that doesn't threaten anybody...

Gallion: Keep in mind that "Don't Mess With Texas" had some regulations with it...

Wood: We already have dozens of regulations.

Toft: Back to stewardship. I think it's a good term. A good concept. It's worth fighting for. We have to be aware of the pitfalls of it and build on some stuff we have on paper right now. We could put the word voluntary right in the middle of it.

Meehan: The thing I like about this whole non-regulatory focus is that it's driven by citizens. It's not driven by WDFW or National Marine Fisheries. I think that's what this whole NWSC initiative is all about. I still hold the view that stewardship is a good term.

Wood: Look at our logo – science, education, stewardship.

Campbell: I think the benefit of setting up these areas is that the commissioners can say, "We have done this." If somebody comes along, such as the feds, the commissioners can say, "We don't need your regulations because we're trying this other thing." Can I divide the issues here? One is whether these waters are worth recognizing. Two is what we call them.

Meehan: This whole thing about the regulations concerns me. The message we need to build into this every time we communicate about it is that this concept avoids regulations in the future if we have good behavior.

Kind: I agree with Tom's idea that the first issue is whether we want to do this. The second is what we are going to call it. **ACTION: MOVED by Kind to pursue a recommendation to the Island County**

Commissioners for areas that recognize the marine resources of Island County. SECONDED: Toft. CARRIED with all in favor except Gallion, who voted no.

Campbell: I would like to hear a motion for the name.

Meehan: **ACTION: MOVED by Meehan to associate the words “Marine Stewardship Area” with Saratoga Passage, representing the eastern waters of Island County and Admiralty Inlet, representing the western waters. SECONDED: Seitle. DEFEATED. Voting yes: Meehan, Campbell, Seitle, Toft, Sherman. Voting no: Bronson, Kind, Gallion.**

Bronson: I think we should define the animal a little better before we give it a title.

Meehan: We need to have a name that works for this group.

Kind: I think it's better to figure out a name after you have the thing written.

Wood: What's needed is a comprehensive proposal to the county commissioners. What Dan created is a marketing plan. Would the chair designate maybe three people to work on this?

A subcommittee of Toft, Pedersen, Behr and Sherman will meet at Sherman's home in Coupeville at 4 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 25, to work further on this proposal. An e-mail will be circulated to the entire MRC in case any others wish to participate.

Other business.

Wood reported that the Department of Natural Resources is offering a \$10,000 grant to each MRC for any of several projects the DNR has put on a list. This includes juvenile crab surveys and creosote log removal. Snohomish MRC has asked if we'd like to pool our grant with theirs for a juvenile crab survey. Skagit may also want in on this.

Meehan invited MRC members to visit the Shore Stewards Web site at www.shorestewards.org and give him their comments about the attitude that comes across in it.

Adjournment: 5:40 p.m. There being no further business, Campbell declared the meeting adjourned.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, October 1, Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor.