



Island County Marine Resources Committee

<http://www.islandcountymrc.org>

MINUTES

February 5, 2003, 4:00 – 6:00 pm

Heller Road Firehall
Oak Harbor

Present: Chair Tom Campbell, Sayed El-Sayed, Mike Gallion, Phyllis Kind, Don Meehan, Tom Roehl, Roger Sherman, Dick Toft, Benye Weber, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen. **Absent:** Martin Behr, Hi Bronson, Jeff Tate, Exec. Director Gary Wood. **Visitors:** David Roberts, Assistant Region Manager, Department of Natural Resources; Joni Cameron, Creosote Project Coordinator, City of Bellingham; Barry A. Wenger, Environmental Planner / Shorelands Specialist, Department of Ecology, Bellingham Field Office; Elizabeth Davis, League of Women Voters; Rich Melaas, NAS Whidbey Island; Frank Roberts, Greenbank.

Call to order: 4:05 pm, Chair Campbell called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.

Agenda: Adopted with one addition – Joni Cameron and Barry Wenger request 15 minutes to discuss a creosote removal proposal.

Minutes of 2003-01-22: Adopted with two changes. In the final paragraph of page 1, the word "says" is changed to "said." In the fourth paragraph on page 2, the following sentence is added: "He explained that MPA is the generic term for a broad range of protection designations which can have an assortment of names or labels." Motion to adopt as amended by Roehl, second by Meehan, no objections.

Speaker: David Roberts, Assistant Region Manager, Department of Natural Resources. Roberts is making the rounds of the MRCs with this PowerPoint presentation to introduce the DNR's aquatic lands program. DNR is the land management agency of the state, overseen by Commissioner Sutherland, now in his third year. He oversees four primary areas – uplands, aquatic lands, regulatory, and policy & administration. The aquatic lands steward is Fran McNair. This is the area in which Roberts works. Roberts' district encompasses the northern coast, the straits, northern Puget Sound and Hood Canal. However, he explained that management of the geoduck program and of Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grants is handled by the DNR's headquarters staff in Olympia.

Aquatic lands are comprised of tidelands and bedlands (the marine component), and shorelands (the freshwater component). The deeper areas of the sound are the bedlands – none of which will ever be sold. The job of the field staff is to manage the aquatic lands when someone wants to do something on them. These uses fall into five areas: leases, easements, rights of entry, material sales (such as dredging spoils and sediments), and conservation easements. Typical activities the DNR authorizes are docks, marinas, wharves and outfalls from municipal waste facilities; power and fiber-optic cables; fish farms and shellfish operations; gas lines; buoys (if not residential); and at one time log storage.

DNR looks at authorizations in two broad categories – those that are water-dependent, such as a dock, and those that are non-water-dependent, such as a restaurant on the waterfront. A restaurant with a view doesn't have to be on the water – it could be upland – so the DNR's fee structure assesses a relatively heavy cost to a restaurant that is going to be built over the water on the public's land.

Fees collected go into two main accounts. The Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) receives about 65% of the money generated off state aquatic lands. This money is earmarked

specifically for enhancement, acquisition and public access. Many of the more beautiful public access sites along the water around Puget Sound have been paid for by the ALEA funds. This is a relatively large pot of money – around \$8 - \$10 million a year. The other main fund is primarily for administrative and staff support.

Roberts' district manages about 950 aquatic lands leases.

Geoducks are a tremendously important revenue source for the DNR. In Roberts' district, they contribute almost 50 percent of the total. It's a hugely lucrative business for the growers and the state. It's also the most regulated agricultural business in the United States, with extremely tight requirements on the people who harvest them. They're under constant scrutiny by DNR inspectors and cannot take any geoducks unless the DNR boat is on scene. The DNR weighs all the geoducks before they go to market. DNR also works closely with the Department of Fish & Wildlife to identify the harvestable beds and maintain a sustainable level of production within them. The estimate for all of Puget Sound and the Strait is that there are about 840 million pounds of geoducks, making them the largest single biomass of any organism in Puget Sound. They grow all the way from very deep depths into shallow water. Harvesting, however, can occur only between 18 – 70 feet, and the harvest must be at least 200 yards offshore for noise and privacy reasons. Under a typical harvest contract the state might get about \$8 a pound, and the harvesters will sell the geoducks in the Asian market for \$20 or \$30 a pound. Two of the largest geoduck beds in the state are located off northeast Whidbey Island and Possession Point.

In addition to geoducks, DNR manages clams, oysters and hanging culture.

DNR priorities at the present time are:

- > Residential use – live-aboards at marinas – DNR goal is a limit of about 10%
- > Aquatic reserves – DNR wants to work with MRCs on these
- > Derelict vessel removal – DNR now has a budget and set of priorities
- > Land transactions – DNR is working on a bill to establish the right to accept tidelands
- > Tribal shellfish – tribes are negotiating with the shellfish industry on a buyout program on commercial private lands.
- > Marina rent – DNR is trying to resolve inequities in the formula for determining rents.
- > Contaminated sediment cleanup

DNR has about 46 leases in Island County and generates about \$170,000 a year in the county from leasing activities, not including geoducks. The county has received a couple of ALEA grants totaling about \$100,000. Roberts encourages us to look to the ALEA program as a potential source of grants.

DNR's objectives in Island County are:

1. To foster excellent working relationships with the county, ports, agencies, tribes, MRC
2. To work closely with the county and MRC on future MPA proposals
3. Support shellfish restoration and management for all interests
4. Continue assisting with derelict fishing gear removals.

Presentation by visitors: Joni Cameron, Creosote Project Coordinator, City of Bellingham and Barry A. Wenger, Environmental Planner/Shorelands Specialist, Dept. of Ecology

The Creosote Project removes creosoted rogue logs that have washed onto the beaches of Whatcom County. The project is now applying for a grant of about \$200,000 from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to expand its cleanup into Island, Skagit and San Juan counties. Rogue logs are a particular problem because they are typically found on the upper beach areas where sand lance and surf smelt spawn, and they leach toxic chemicals into nearshore waters where juvenile salmon forage. These chemicals are commonly called PAHs – polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons – and they continue to leach for about 50 years.

The purpose of this presentation is to introduce the project to MRCs in the neighboring counties and assess the level of their support for it.

Barry Wenger is the grant officer and the project was his idea. The removal work has been done by the Washington Conservation Corps, which has already removed over 62 tons of creosoted logs from the beaches of Whatcom County. The logs removed are taken to the Rabanco Hazardous Waste site in Eastern Washington, with transportation paid for by grant funding.

Meehan asked Wenger to please share with our MRC any research he has about creosote. He said when this issue has been raised in the past and he has asked for research, he has often been sent newspaper articles instead. "If you've got (research) please share it, because we're interested in this. My issue has always been that if we are going to invest in something, we ought to invest in making the habitat work better for the species we have here."

Meehan said he attended a recent US Fish & Wildlife Conference in Olympia on treated wood. "My first reaction after going to that was, well, the jury's out on this – the scientists can't even agree on what's going on. One of the big things I got out of that conference is how bad copper is. This is essentially an organic compound."

Wenger replied that the Department of Ecology objected to that conference because of its one-sidedness – the treated-wood industry was heavily represented. Meehan agreed but added that there was participation by some other authorities on treated wood. "We need to see the bibliography of the research. That's all I'm asking for." Wenger said he would e-mail the information to Meehan.

Wenger said, "What we're looking for is to see if there is any public support." In Whatcom County, he said, the project has a long list of partners. It's been an efficient, effective program with a lot of volunteer support. He believes it makes sense to capitalize on the experience of this one project, and export it to the other counties, than to develop and operate separate, independent projects in each county.

Campbell said he wanted to restate Wenger's request to make sure he understood: "So what you're proposing is to get a grant from NOAA to identify and remove this material. You're not asking the Island County MRC for money for removal. You're not going to leave us on the hook once you identify where they are."

Wegner replied, "No, no, it's not that way." He said this first grant will inventory and identify as many logs as possible. The work is weather dependent -- they'd like to complete as much as possible before next winter's storms. Campbell commented that our group may need some time to discuss and consider our response, and that in the meanwhile Wenger should make sure to forward the scientific material to Meehan. The application for the grant is due March 3.

For more information, The City of Bellingham link to the creosote project is:

www.cob.org/cobweb/pw/ER/restoration.

Unfinished business.

- > Meehan reported that Gary Wood is attending the Shared Strategies conference tonight and is receiving an award for the forage fish project.
- > Tomorrow, Meehan and Gwenn Maxfield will present our Maylor's Marsh project proposal to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board in La Conner.
- > Meehan reported that Sound Waters, a one-day university, last weekend was a great success, with attendance of 262.

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

**Next meeting: 4-6 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2003 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Freeland.
Speaker will be David Palazzi of DNR.**