



Island County Marine Resources Committee

<http://www.islandcountymrc.org>

MINUTES

February 18, 2004, 4:08 – 6:03 pm

Trinity Lutheran Church
Freeland

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

Absent: Martin Behr, Hi Bronson.

Visitors: Ian Jefferds, Penn Cove Shellfish LLC, Coupeville (MRC committee nominee); Jeanne Koenings, Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR); David Roberts, DNR; Lisa Kaufman, DNR; Kim Bredensteiner, Island County Public Works; Elizabeth Davis, League of Women Voters; Linda Garl, elementary teacher.

Call to order: 4:08 pm, Sherman called the meeting to order.

Quorum: Declared.

Agenda: Adopted.

Minutes of 2-4-2004: Adopted. No objection.

Speaker

Jeanne Koenings

Geoduck Aquaculture Project Coordinator
Aquatic Resources Division, Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Jeanne.koenings@wadnr.gov

Koenings attended tonight's meeting to share information and solicit input. The DNR was awarded \$265,000 by the 2003 Legislature to conduct a feasibility study of leasing public tidelands to private companies for geoduck aquaculture. As part of fact-finding and outreach, Koenings is appearing before groups such as the MRC to explain the proposal and invite comment on what should be studied and asked. Private companies have been growing geoduck experimentally on privately-owned or privately-leased lands for the last 10 years, but good private lands are in short supply. Several shellfish companies have asked the legislature to allow geoduck aquaculture on state-owned aquatic lands. This is a potentially lucrative revenue source for the state, but much is unknown about the impact of geoduck aquaculture.

Koenings explained "geoduck" derives from a Nisqually Indian name, "gwe-duck," meaning "dig deep." Geoducks are the largest burrowing clam in the world, living up to 168 years – frequently 100 years -- but reaching a harvestable 1-1/2 pound size in about four to five years.

Currently, the DNR, the Department of Fish and Wildlife and 18 Treaty Tribes administer the wild geoduck fishery in Puget Sound. They auction harvestable tracts to bidders four times a year. This harvest is managed to be sustainable forever. The bidders generally are Chinese Canadians who ship what they harvest to Asia. They might typically expect to get \$20 for a 2-pound geoduck that will end up a day or two later in China as a \$100 dinner. Whenever harvesting is underway a DNR enforcement boat with divers aboard is on site, overseeing all activity and weighing the catch. The wild harvest is entirely sub-tidal.

Geoduck aquaculture, on the other hand, would occur on state beaches using a large layout of PVC pipes inserted into the ground, each pipe covered with a close-fitting net. The layout of pipes would impact public access, beach appearance and possibly result in some floating debris. Unlike salmon aquaculture,

geoduck aquaculture uses no feed or antibiotics. There are many unknowns about how geoduck aquaculture might affect wild stocks or other marine life on the nearshore.

In the 10 years from 1992-2001, the wild geoduck harvest brought \$62 million in revenue to the state, half of which was returned to local communities through such vehicles as the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grants to cities, counties, school districts, diking districts and other agencies. Other geoduck revenue went to the DFW for enforcement activity, biological studies, management of harvest quotas and locations, spartina control, boating safety and to public health agencies.

In January of 2005, the DNR will report to the state legislature on the feasibility study, at which time she anticipates DNR will ask the legislature for additional funds to conduct an in-the-ground study at several locations in Puget Sound.

As part of the DNR's outreach on the aquaculture feasibility study, Koenings is distributing an e-newsletter about every two months. Would-be subscribers should contact Koenings at her e-mail address: Jeanne.koenings@wadnr.gov

Dave Roberts. Roberts is the DNR's assistant region manager, based in Sedro-Woolley. This year the DNR is making available small grants to the MRCs for cooperative restoration projects, including our proposed project to partner with the Navy in removing a tide gate and improving habitat and beach conditions in Maylor's Marsh, at Oak Harbor. Roberts briefly described six proposed projects in northern Puget Sound, including our own. He also introduced Lisa Kaufman of his office, who will be our project manager.

Ian Jefferds. Sherman introduced Ian Jefferds, general manager of Penn Cove Shellfish, LLC. Jefferds has been invited to become a member of the MRC. Meehan anticipates the county commissioners will approve the appointment when they meet Monday, Feb. 23. Jefferds has been growing mussels in Penn Cove since 1986.

Executive director's written report – Wood

CALENDAR the "**SOUND INVESTMENT**" Spring Conference
at the Everett Events Center Friday evening and Saturday, June 4-5, 2004 – and register on-line.
If you know of any group that might be interested in a \$150 sponsorship, contact me.

ALSO note the "*Second National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration*" is coming to Seattle's convention center September 12-15, 2004. The MRC has submitted Abstracts for the Forage Fish Surveys and Shore Stewards, and will be presenting.

New Shore Stewards Coordinator. We have secured the extraordinary talents of Madeline Johnson to coordinate the Camano Shore Stewards program. The newly assembled Shore Stewards Committee – comprised of 20 Beach Watchers -- meets this date, February 18th, 10 AM - noon at Cama Beach. The applications are underway and soon some 100 new Shore Stewards will initiate the program.

Forage Fish Survey data complete: Doug Kelly is completing the final steps to incorporate three years of field work by the DFW biologists into a coherent GIS database that will be shared with DFW and all county planners. This data will be the source of valuable and reliable information for years to come.

Eelgrass Surveys complete: Jim Norris has completed all the field work in Phase 3 and his final data is in post-production, with a spring completion expected. This too will provide a science-based mapping capability for the county's vital eelgrass meadows.

City of Coupeville Shoreline Management Committee: GW has agreed to represent the MRC on the newly formed committee that will undertake the update of Coupeville's Shoreline plan. The first meeting is

scheduled for Monday, February 23rd at 6:30 PM at the Coupeville Rec. Hall. I am also planning to attend the *Shared Strategy Salmon Recovery Plan Workshop*, Feb. 25th in Edmonds.

DNR Project: The Department of Natural Resources (per Dave Roberts) has preliminarily approved the MRC's \$15,000 grant for a pilot Oak Harbor beach restoration project: a smaller, feasibility-oriented version of our Maylor's Marsh SRFB project, to be partnered with the Navy. The documentation is in preparation.

Outreach: Your Director briefed the WRAC on our SRFB nearshore projects at their February 5th meeting, and the work was well received. Wednesday 2/18 the Oak Harbor Kiwanis breakfast will feature the MRC/Derelict Gear story. On March 10th Campbell and Wood are dinner speakers for the Whidbey Island Fly Fishing Club.

New Grant Opportunity: The Private Stewardship Program provides grants and other assistance on a competitive basis to individuals and groups engaged in local, private, and voluntary conservation efforts that benefit federally listed, proposed, or candidate species, or other at-risk species. *This fits our Shore Stewards funding need.* For Fiscal Year 2004, the Service will award more than \$7 million in Federal funding under the Private Stewardship Program. A ten percent (10%) match of cash or through in-kind contributions is required. The program is available to private landowners and their partners. I propose to resubmit a tailored version of our Natural Resources Conservation Service proposal, partnering with the Conservation District.

New DFW and Action Team grant applications are also contemplated in March, as we discussed.

Billing season: The county reimbursements for bills to the SRFB for MRC grants 1673 and 1252 were approximately \$55,000+ and \$102,000+ respectively. The NW Straits Commission/Ecology grant yielded bills of approx. \$9,000 and \$32,000; the admin grant \$10,000; and the NFWF billing will total \$45,000 – for a total of \$244,000.

Hotel/Motel Tax for Signage: I propose that we consider a signage proposal to the County for 2% Motel tax funds. May take until year's end. Let's discuss.

Power Point -- GW has begun the design of a new Power Point presentation on the Stewardship Areas, as planned. Any terrific digital photos of our shores & waters that y'all may wish to send me would be greatly appreciated.

County lead's report -- Meehan

The MRC bylaws are now on the MRC Website, as requested by several members who said they had been unable to find a copy.

Sound Waters drew over 400 attendees, including Whidbey News-Times editor Jim Larsen, who wrote a great follow-up article with a photo of Weber and Russel Barsh, quoting liberally from one of our own press releases.

The MRC 5-Year Report, drafted by Pedersen, is now complete. Meehan will convert it to a pdf and e-mail it to the members, who are invited to submit input for any changes or improvements.

Chair's report - Sherman

Stewardship subcommittee report. Sherman invited Kind to report on a meeting of the stewardship area subcommittee, which was held at Sherman's home Feb. 11. Kind said the subcommittee determined that a promotion budget should be developed to include the cost of about 15 or 20 interpretive signs, a map, brochure, Website, and a major launch event for the stewardship areas. Most of the subcommittee's discussion on Feb. 11 concerned the launch event. As envisioned, the MRC would charter a large boat during the late morning of Friday, June 4, opening day of the Northwest Straits Commission conference in

Everett. Elected officials, MRC members, the press, NWSC members and others would tour the Saratoga Marine Stewardship Area and hear from on-board naturalists and speakers about the significance of the areas visited.

Launch event chair needed. Sherman pointed out that a chairperson is needed to manage overall planning for the proposed stewardship area boat tour. He invited Weber to consider taking this role, and she said she would think on it.

Address list. Sherman thanked Pedersen for updating the MRC address list and pointed out that with the pending appointment of Ian Jefferds, it will need to be redone again.

Executive committee. Sherman reported he has formed an executive committee of himself, Campbell, Kind, Meehan, Wood and Pedersen.

Other new / unfinished business

Whidbey Institute, Whidbey Audubon Lyceum Series. Kind reminded members that the Lyceum series during March and April will include six distinguished speakers on marine topics, including Andrea Copping, Jacques White and Doug Kelly.

Shared Strategy Salmon Recovery Workshop. Kim Bredensteiner reminded members the Shared Strategy Salmon Recovery Workshop will be held Feb. 25. A nearshore workshop for Shared Strategy will occur in early March.

Inland Fishes of Washington. El-Sayed commented he had just received notice of publication of a definitive, profusely illustrated new book on inland fishes of Washington, authored by Richard Wydoski and Richard Whitney and published by the University of Washington Press. Price is \$50. Kind suggested members ask the Sno-Isle Regional Library to purchase the book and make it available.

Next Stewardship Area Subcommittee Meeting. Sherman announced the next meeting of the stewardship area subcommittee will be at 4 pm, Wednesday, March 10, at his home.

Power Point images. Wood appealed to the membership for any great images they might have for inclusion in his stewardship area Power Point.

Adjournment: 6:04 pm. There being no further business, Sherman declared the meeting adjourned.

**Next meeting
4-6 pm, Wednesday, March 3, Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor.**