



Marine Resources

Committee

July 14, 2004

Minutes

4:10 – 6:00 pm, Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland

www.islandcountymrc.org

PRESENT: Chair Roger Sherman, Phyllis Kind, Don Meehan, Dick Toft, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen. **ALTERNATES:** Pedersen (for El Sayed), Bredensteiner (for Weber), Roberts (for Bronson), Waddell (for Seitle). **ABSENT:** Hi Bronson, Tom Campbell, Sayed El-Sayed, Ian Jefferds, Rolf Seitle, Jeff Tate, Benye Weber, Exec. Director Gary Wood. **VISITORS:** Jessemine Fung and Keeley O'Connell (speakers), People for Puget Sound; Nancy Waddell, Maxwellton Salmon Adventure; Kim Bredensteiner, Island County Public Works; Tony Frantz, Puget Sound Creosote Awareness; Frank Roberts, Lagoon Point; Tom Cahill, Clinton; Barbara Paul.

CALL TO ORDER: 4:10 pm, Sherman called the meeting to order. **QUORUM:** Declared, with alternates. **AGENDA:** Adopted. **MINUTES** of 6-16-2004: Adopted with one typographical correction, deleting the extra word "she." Motion by Toft, second by Kind, no objections.

Summary of Decisions

NWSC grant – part C: Motion carried: The MRC will allocate its \$30,000 Category C grant from the NWSC in equal parts of \$10,000 apiece to three projects: Shore Stewards, Maylor's Marsh and marine stewardship areas.

The Executive Committee will meet at 2 pm, Aug. 10, at Sherman's home.

Trust Lands -- Bredensteiner will draft a letter for Sherman to sign asking the DNR to transfer several trust lands to Island County.

The Bays Blueprint

Jessemine Fung and Keeley O'Connell
People for Puget Sound

Kind introduced Fung and O'Connell of People for Puget Sound, coauthors of The Bays Blueprint. Kind learned about the Bays Blueprint at the recent Northwest Straits conference in Everett, where it was described in a workshop she attended. The analytical model was developed for Skagit MRC but Kind felt it could perhaps be adapted for use in Island County.

Fung explained the goal of the project was to assist the Skagit MRC in identifying nearshore targets for restoration and conservation, specifically in the northern part of Skagit County, from the bottom of Whatcom County through the Anacortes Area – Guemes Channel. The model combines information from existing datasets with new information obtained from the Washington Department of Ecology oblique aerial photographs.

The model looks at sections of beach approximately 800 feet in length. This scale of resolution is between the level of the Department of Natural Resources' Shore Zone Inventory dataset and People for Puget Sound's Rapid Shoreline Inventory (RSI). Shore Zone Inventory is a huge document including eelgrass beds, some shoreline hardening data and other information, but is not detailed enough to reveal

what is the actual makeup of the shoreline. RSI, developed by People for Puget Sound, sends people to survey the beaches at a resolution of about 150-foot increments.

The project involved four basic stages:

1. The **inventory** phase involved studying existing datasets such as the Washington State Shore Zone Inventory, Puget Sound Ambient Monitoring Program, GIS information, the Anchor Report and the oblique shoreline photography of the Department of Ecology (DOE). Photographs were examined for such visible shoreline characteristics as the presence of bluffs, overhanging vegetation, evidence of erosion, adjacent land use, trails, shoreline structures, outfalls and beach features.
2. The **analysis** phase involved applying this information to five distinct models resulting in both a restoration and conservation score. The Skagit Marine Resources Committee provided input based on local knowledge to help characterize specific shoreline conditions. Consideration was given to the presence of aquatic vegetation, feeder bluffs, forage fish spawning beaches, nearshore juvenile salmonids and marine birds.
3. In the **prioritization** phase, People for Puget Sound developed a suite of potential conservation and restoration sites. The MRC assisted in paring down this list to a reasonable number of candidates for conservation and restoration – about 20 sites.
4. In the **feasibility** analysis, People for Puget Sound used the MRC's input to help evaluate these sites for such characteristics as the complexity of ownership and likely willingness of the property owners to participate in conservation and restoration activities.

Numeric scores were assigned to various nearshore attributes such as overhanging vegetation, feeder bluffs, forage fish spawning habitat, etc., and all the scores were totaled to arrive at comparative weighting of sites. Negative habitat impacts also were scored, such as the presence of a shoreline railroad bed or an existing dock, and those scores were subtracted from positive attributes to arrive at a score for restoration potential.

Keeley O'Connell explained that the project considered 343 points of nearshore in Skagit County, each about 800 feet in length. The task was to take those 343 points, assign each a distinct score based on biological assessment, compare the scores, and pare down the potential project list to a manageable number – about 20 sites. In some cases, many points were combined to make up a single large site. Skagit MRC looked at the list and the oblique photographs, and evaluated the feasibility of projects on specific sites from the standpoint of ownership, permit requirements, parcel density, potential project partnership opportunities, permission needed, fundability, cost and parcel value, land cover, damage or risk to owners, probability of success and other factors. In those cases where ownership density made projects less likely to be successful, the MRC determined that stewardship through education would be the most effective strategy for change. "The more parcels you have in a specified area, the better the feasibility for education," O'Connell said. "Everything that brings down the restoration score actually brings up the education score."

O'Connell commented this approach offers several strengths. The scale is not so broad as to miss important sites, but neither is it as specific as the Rapid Shoreline Inventory. It offers broad geographic coverage, cost effectiveness, five discrete conceptual models, spatially explicit results, and is a planning tool that is easy for citizens, managers and agencies to use. The MRC funded People for Puget Sound to do this project. Cost was about \$25,000 to survey 60 miles of shoreline.

Next steps: One thing the Skagit MRC can do on its own is update its oblique photos, which are taken every five years. Structures on the nearshore are changing. Toff interjected that a frequent problem with photographs used in the media and by government agencies is that they don't have dates printed on them, and it isn't clear how old they are. He'd like to see dates printed on all photos that are not current. Fung commented all photos used in the Bays Blueprint project were taken in the summer of 2000, and that the DOE is going to re-fly its oblique photos next year.

Sherman asked whether this model is available to other MRCs if they should wish to use it. Fung said interest has been expressed by several groups. People for Puget Sound is looking for funding to expand

the program, and it appears the Russell Family Foundation might provide it to enable the project to be applied Puget Sound-wide.

MRC Business Meeting

County lead's report – Meehan

Meehan reported three individuals have responded to the press release Pedersen sent the newspapers regarding vacancies on the MRC. Meehan responded to each, asking them to write to the county commissioners about their interest. He asked the commissioners to wait for input from the MRC before making any appointments. The three who have expressed interest are Bruce Wood of Oak Harbor, Ken Erstad (who has attended many Sound Waters programs) and Kathy Lester of Oak Harbor, who operates Earthworks, a private geological consulting firm. Sherman said he would like to meet with the candidates before any of them are appointed, to make sure they know it's an active committee and find out what they can contribute.

Meehan distributed sample copies of an Intertidal Field Guide produced by the Beachwatchers. The pair of guides is for sale for \$11 to help raise funds for Beachwatchers.

Chair's report – Sherman

Category C Northwest Straits grant. Sherman reported the Executive Committee met June 30 and developed recommendations for the MRC on how to allocate this year's Northwest Straits grant. The committee recommends dividing the \$30,000 in Category C funds equally across three areas -- \$10,000 for Maylor's Marsh (combined with \$20,000 from DNR), \$10,000 for Shore Stewards (combined with another grant for which Wood has applied) and \$10,000 to help establish the marine stewardship areas (in combination with Wood's application for funding through the county's 2% hotel/motel tax). **MOTION: Meehan moved we allocate \$10,000 apiece of our Category C grant to each of the three projects: Shore Stewards, stewardship areas and Maylor's Marsh. SECONDED: Toft. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Category B Northwest Straits grant. Sherman explained our category B funds can be used for administrative purposes. Last year this \$20,000 went to Wood to reimburse him for some of the many hours he invests in MRC work. Sherman explained the Executive Committee's intention is to become more knowledgeable and involved in the MRC's finances, and to report back to the full committee so that the entire group is more informed and accountable. He mentioned that Wood's current contract is expiring this summer and the MRC needs to enter into a new contract with him. The new contract will be one of the topics of the next Executive Committee meeting.

Category A Northwest Straits grant. Sherman said this \$10,000 automatically goes to the county lead for administrative expenses.

NWSC retreat. Sherman said he and Wood will attend an NWSC retreat at the end of July and he needs the group's input on several questions on the retreat's agenda. 1) *Does your MRC have a multi-year plan and, if not, what would it need to develop one?* Sherman said he can't find any evidence that we have a multi-year plan. Members felt this would be an excellent topic to discuss at our own MRC's retreat next month. 2) *What structure has caused projects to be opportunistically designed and what can the commission do, and what does the MRC need, to make its projects more strategic?* Kind said it is unrealistic to tackle multi-year projects when we can only get funding for one year. Some projects require assurance of funding for two or three years -- we need more secure funding. 3) *What are the MRC's two most pressing needs?* Money. 4) *Is your MRC interested in multi-MRC projects?* Yes. Meehan said he thinks this is a role the NWSC should be filling -- they have the regional perspective to do it, and to request funding for multi-MRC projects. 5) *What would we like to see the NWSC work on?* Meehan said he'd like to see them engage in a statistical analysis of the forage fish data in relationship to habitat -- to get an environmental statistician looking at the data to see whether some inferences can be made. He'd also like to know whether bulkheads really affect forage fish and, if so, in what way?

NWSC annual retreat. Sherman reported the NWSC annual retreat will be Oct. 30 at Swinomish Casino.

Public input.

WRAC brochure. Bredensteiner reported the Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) has completed a draft of a four-fold WRAC brochure that includes a paragraph describing the MRC.

Salmon Recovery Strategy. Bredensteiner reported a draft has been completed of the Island County Salmon Recovery Strategy and that it was forwarded to Shared Strategy by their June 30 deadline. It has not yet been through full review at the WRAC but highlights have been discussed with the Island County Commissioners in staff session. The Salmon Technical Advisory Group (TAG) will spend the next three months gathering feedback from regional scientists and policy groups and then spend about six meetings working through the draft to produce the final document.

Rex Porter. Bredensteiner reported Rex Porter has joined Island County Public Works as watershed project manager. He will work 30 hours a week on non-point pollution prevention for Whidbey Island.

Other business

MRC retreat. Sherman mentioned the MRC retreat is in the planning stages and Meehan said Wood has arranged for Duane Fagergren to be the facilitator. Sherman asked Kind to consider holding the retreat at her home, which has space large enough to accommodate our group.

Trust Lands Transfer letter. Nancy Waddell asked whether the MRC followed through on its discussion about writing a letter to the DNR supporting the trust lands transfer proposal for 14 properties in Island County. Toft said he thought the transfer was a done deal because the county commissioners had agreed to accept the lands. Bredensteiner said letters are still needed to help convince the DNR to transfer the lands. Toft asked Bredensteiner whether she would be willing draft a letter for Sherman to sign and send, and she said she would do so.

Adjourn: There being no further business, Sherman declared the meeting adjourned at 6:00.

Coming Events

Aug. 10, Tues., 2 pm: Executive Committee meeting at Sherman's home.

Aug. 18, Wed., 4-6 pm: MRC meeting, Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor.