



Marine Resources Committee

August 18, 2004

Minutes

4:05 – 5:53 pm, Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor

www.islandcountymrc.org

PRESENT: Chair Roger Sherman, Hi Bronson, Tom Campbell, Sayed El-Sayed, Ian Jefferds, Phyllis Kind, Don Meehan, Rolf Seitle, Dick Toft, Ken Urstad, Benye Weber, Exec. Director Gary Wood, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen. **ALTERNATES:** None. **ABSENT:** Jeff Tate, Bruce Wood. **VISITORS:** Kim Bredensteiner, Island County Public Works.

CALL TO ORDER: 4:05 pm, Sherman called the meeting to order. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted. **MINUTES** of 7-14-2004: Adopted. Motion by Kind, second by Bronson, no objections.

Summary of Decisions

MRC website: Meehan will check the MRC website to see if there is a "contact us" link.

Retreat: Rescheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2 - 8 pm at Kind's home in Greenbank.

Sherman will invite representatives to the retreat from Skagit, Snohomish, San Juan, Jefferson MRCs.

Sept. 15 meeting: Cancelled.

Hotel-motel tax: Motion carried: The MRC authorizes Wood to apply to Island County for hotel-motel tax funds to support tourism.

Cruise association: Motion carried: The MRC supports Wood's application to the offshore cruise associations for grant funding to develop a brochure and other materials about the MRC, NWSC and stewardship areas.

Executive Committee schedule. Meetings will be held on the second Wednesday of each month.

Partnering with Washington Trout. Campbell will request a copy of the proposal on which we have agreed to partner. He will distribute it electronically so the MRC may review it.

WDFW grant – outreach project involving volunteers: Motion carried. The MRC authorizes Wood to apply.

Website link. Jefferds said he recently referred someone to the MRC website and he wonders if there is a "contact us" link on it. Meehan said he isn't sure – he will check on it.

MRC retreat. Our retreat will be from 2-8 pm, Tuesday, Sept. 14, at Kind's home in Greenbank. Urstad said he will bring a salmon for the grill. Campbell will not be able to attend. Neither will Wood (Gary), because of a speaking engagement at the Restore America's Estuaries Conference in Seattle. Sherman hopes to discuss restructuring our benchmarks, combining some and putting a committee in charge of benchmarks to get something accomplished and report back to the group. Wood said that by the time of our retreat he hopes the Northwest Straits Commission will have looked at benchmarks, too, and we will know their thinking. Sherman said the executive committee has discussed several ideas for the retreat, and at its next meeting will finalize what we'd like to discuss. He suggested that we not devote time at the retreat to discussing finances, but concentrate instead on goals and long-range planning. Jefferds agreed, saying we first need to have a set of goals and then later talk about how to fund them.

Replacing MRC members who have resigned. Sherman asked our newest member, Ken Urstad, to introduce himself. Urstad said he is retired from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), after a 28-year career. He has lived on Whidbey Island fulltime for the last two years, but has been visiting here for over 40 years, since his wife's family had a place at North Bluff near Greenbank. At DNR he worked on marine land management, timber sales, fire control, farm forestry and recreation. He was president of Puget Sound Anglers on Fidalgo for two years and has been a board member of Skagit Enhancement for eight years. He has fished this area for over 30 years and still does for silvers, but does his Chinook fishing in Canada. "I'd like to be able to see my grandkids fish like I did 20 years ago."

Executive Director's Report – Wood

Hotel-Motel Tax Fund. Wood said he would like a resolution from the MRC authorizing him to apply to Island County for a grant from the hotel-motel tax fund. He said when he first considered this fund, he thought it might be a source of money to help pay for interpretive signage for the MRC's stewardship areas. He subsequently learned its purpose is strictly to promote tourism, which in turn benefits the hotels, motels and B&Bs that collect this tax. This led him to wonder if there might be away to combine this money with other funds for environmental education -- combine tourism promotion with environmental education. He discovered that this summer 150 cruise ships will sail from Seattle, and that the cruise industry has created programs to award funds for environmental outreach. Some 500,000 cruise ship passengers will pass through the Admiralty Inlet Marine Stewardship Area this year. The most upscale segment of this industry, and of the traveling public, are those who have discovered eco-tourism.

Wood made contact with the cruise associations and learned they are very interested, as are the Coupeville and Oak Harbor chambers of commerce. Wood said to move forward, he needs to provide the county a copy of our minutes showing the MRC passed a resolution authorizing this application, and he will need letters from three businesses endorsing it. Jefferds said he thinks this is a great idea, an opportunity to show the general public the economic benefits of clean waters and clean shorelines: "This is an opportunity to sell the importance of the MRC, Shore Stewards, and quality of life. If it generates visitors, that's a good thing." Meehan said funds from the cruise associations will benefit our stewardship areas because some of the materials that might be sponsored by the industry, such as a brochure, could also be used in other ways. Campbell emphasized that if we promote the Admiralty Inlet Marine Stewardship Area, we should be careful not to do so to the exclusion of other waters. And he also said we should be careful not to get into the business of picking-and-choosing where tourists might stay in Island County.

Motion by Campbell: That the MRC authorize Wood to prepare a proposal to submit to the county for hotel-motel tax funds to promote tourism. Wood will e-mail a copy of the proposal to the MRC membership. Second: Weber. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Motion by Jefferds: That the MRC support Wood's application to the offshore cruise associations seeking grant money for the development of a brochure and other informational material about the Marine Resources Committee, the Northwest Straits Committee and the work being done here in the Admiralty Inlet and Saratoga Passage marine stewardship areas. Second: Weber. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Final report on assessment of shoreline spawning habitat in the Northwest Straits. Wood said his other recent focus has been to write this document, which is the final report to the forage fish project. This report goes to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) for three grants, to SeaDoc Society and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, dealing with the work in Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish and Island Counties from 2001-2003, together with a CD Rom with all the GIS mapping data for those four counties. A final rollout of the report and debriefing from all the participants will occur Oct. 2, hosted by the NWSC. Wood said Doug Kelly is taking the data for each resource and making a tool that will allow analysis of 100-foot segments of the shoreline of both islands to correlate forage fish runs, eelgrass, and the impact of man-made structures and bulkheads.

Final version of the People for Puget Sound contract for \$6,000 worth of spartina remediation. Wood will deliver this to Meehan's office tomorrow.

Partnering with Washington Trout. Sherman said the MRC needs to address the lingering question of Washington Trout's request for a letter from the MRC confirming that we are partnering with them – we need to decide what to do. On March 3, the MRC passed a motion to partner with Washington Trout in their SRFB proposal to study how salmon use the nearshore of west Whidbey Island. Sherman said he had interpreted this to mean only that we would write a letter of support, but that Wood had pointed out the word "partner" carries financial significance. Bredensteiner said Washington Trout's proposal did not indicate any expectation of the MRC providing money. She said they had hoped the MRC would be available to help formulate the education and outreach part of their project, given the MRC's local knowledge. Campbell read from a Washington Trout letter confirming this and that also expressing the wish that the MRC would share data it has collected. Kind asked, how can we partner when we haven't seen a copy of their proposal? Shouldn't we review it first? Campbell pointed out that Washington Trout did brief us on it at a later meeting. Campbell said he would contact Washington Trout and request a copy of the proposal, and will e-mail it to the membership for review.

County lead's report – Meehan

Doug Kelly project. Meehan provided additional detail about the project Wood was describing that involves developing a protocol to provide information on shoreline segments similar to Bays Blueprint (described in the July 14 minutes). One problem we have is that we do not currently have all of our datasets. The eelgrass dataset from Jim Norris is being completed at this time. We will have everything we've ever collected included in this system. We are trying to develop a protocol to enable the computer to do this – it's pretty complex. Island County does not have its ownership parcels digitized.

MRC appointment procedure. Meehan said he talked with the county commissioners today and reached agreement on a procedure for appointing future members to the MRC. In the past, the commissioners sometimes have appointed people who have been recommended, only to find they didn't work out very well. In the future, vacancies will be advertised much as we did this time. The commissioners will decide who they'd like to appoint. Then the commissioner from that district will sit down with that person, together with Meehan or the MRC chair, or both, so the prospective member can hear what's involved and be sure they want in.

Chair's report -- Sherman

Meeting schedule. Sherman announced the regular meeting schedule of the executive committee will be the second Wednesday of each month. This committee consists of the past and current chairs, the vice-chair, the county lead, the executive director and the administrative assistant.

Northwest Straits Conference. The NWSC's fall conference is scheduled Oct. 29-30 at Skagit Casino, off I-5 near Bow. The NWSC will pay for meals. Sherman said he understands the MRC will have money in its budget for accommodations.

Meeting places. Sherman asked whether the membership was satisfied with current meeting locations. No objections were raised. Bronson said he'd like to see a meeting on Camano Island at least once a year and everyone agreed.

LaConner retreat – end of June. Sherman said he and Wood learned a great deal at the NWSC's LaConner retreat. He will share some of this with the MRC at our September retreat. Wood added that since it appears the NWSC initiative will extend into the future, it's time for a strategic look by each MRC at what they'd like to see done in the next several years.

Estuary restoration conference. Campbell commented that a national Restore America's Estuaries Conference is to be held in Seattle in September. It promises to be outstanding. Wood commented that he will be one of the presenters.

Unfinished business

Subcontractor. Meehan said he is talking with Pedersen about changing to a subcontractor arrangement for his employment. He would continue to perform all his normal duties, plus specific additional tasks.
WDFW outreach grant. Wood said a window will be opening briefly this month for a WDFW grant to fund outreach activities involving volunteers. He prepared a proposal for this some time back but WDFW withdrew the program. Now they are reopening it and he'd like to reapply as insurance in case some of our other grants don't come through. It's a \$40,000 project.

Motion by Kind, second by Weber, carried unanimously, to authorize Wood to proceed with the application.

Restoration projects on private property. Wood reported he recently had a discussion with Jeff Hall, watershed person on Camano, about the feasibility of doing restoration projects on private property, perhaps helping remove manmade structures. Perhaps someday we could use our database of derelict manmade structures to do mailings to landowners, asking if they'd like assistance with removal. He wonders if such a project might be funded by the Community Restoration Project program, and whether teams from the public works or transportation departments might be trained to do the work. The question in his mind is whether public employees could be used to do work on private property.

Adjourn: There being no further business, Sherman declared the meeting adjourned at 5:53 pm.

Coming Events

Sept. 1, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meeting at Heller Road Firehall in Oak Harbor.

Sept. 8, Wednesday, 2 pm, Executive Committee meeting at Meehan's office.

Sept. 14, Tuesday, 2-8 pm, MRC retreat at Kind's home.

Sept. 15, Wednesday, normal MEETING CANCELLED.

Oct. 29-30, Friday-Saturday, NWSC conference at Skagit Casino, Bow exit from I-5.