



# Marine Resources

Committee

April 20, 2005

Minutes

4:00 – 5:50 pm, Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland

[www.islandcountymrc.org](http://www.islandcountymrc.org)

**PRESENT:** Chair Phyllis Kind, Hi Bronson, Joe Hillers, Ian Jefferds, Don Meehan, Rolf Seitle, Ken Urstad, Benye Weber, Exec. Director Gary Wood, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen. **ALTERNATES:** Pedersen for El Sayed, Bredensteiner for Campbell. **ABSENT:** Tom Campbell, Sayed El-Sayed, Jeff Tate.

## VISITORS:

Tom Cowan, director, Northwest Straits Commission, Bow.

Kim Bredensteiner, Coupeville, Island County Public Works.

Scott Pascoe, Watershed Coordinator, Maxwellton Salmon Adventure.

Frances Wood, Whidbey Audubon.

Reece Rose, Clinton.

Rufus Rose, Clinton.

Lynda Lyshall, Puget Sound Action Team.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 4:00 pm, Kind called the meeting to order. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted, adding time for Cowan to speak following Bredensteiner's presentation. **MINUTES** of 4-06-2005: Adopted, motion by Urstad, second by Meehan, no objections. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

## Summary of Decisions

**MRC May 4 retreat.** In place of the MRC's first meeting of May, the group will hold a spring retreat and dinner from 4-8 pm, Wednesday, May 4, at the Sierra Clubhouse, Partridge Point, northwest of Coupeville. Discussion will focus on potential conservation and restoration projects. Meehan will facilitate and the dinner will be catered.

## Geographical Information System (GIS) Review of the Geospatial Data Collected by the MRC in the last Six Years

Kim Bredensteiner

Bredensteiner distributed a two-page handout of general information about GIS and a map of Island County depicting one of many datasets gathered by the MRC – this being the shoreline hardening data of Coastal Geologic Services. She then took the MRC on a computerized "data tour" of Island County. Using ArcInfo software and a projector, she overlaid multiple datasets gathered by the MRC in the last few years, particularly the location of eelgrass beds, forage fish spawning beaches, feeder bluffs, hardened shorelines and the potential of various sites for conservation or restoration as assessed by Coastal Geologic Services.

Rufus Rose, a member of the audience, asked how the data will be used. Kind pointed out this is the first time the MRC has seen the data. We are just getting acquainted with it and are not yet in a position to attempt to analyze or interpret it. Rose asked whether there will be an opportunity to discuss the accuracy of the data. Wood said Jim Johannessen is still putting together his final report. He expects

Johannessen will give a presentation to the MRC in the next few weeks and this might be a good opportunity to ask questions. Kind said she thinks the MRC, too, will have questions. Jefferds commented that for some time the MRC has been carrying out projects to determine where the marine resources actually are in the county. Now we will be able to take the results of all the studies, put them all together, and attempt to do some analysis and test our assumptions. Jefferds said we should also ask whether, now that we have this information, it spawns ideas for yet more studies that should be done. He characterized the data as a baseline, actual documentation of what exists, rather than an old-timer's memory of what he thinks he remembers from 50 years ago. Once we look at this data we will begin to get a picture of what we don't know.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NWSC letter-of-intent and project funding. NWSC executive director, Tom Cowan, spoke about the recent disagreement / misunderstanding between our MRC and the Northwest Straits Commission over the projects proposed in our original letter-of-intent for Category C funding. He prefaced his remarks by stating that Bredensteiner's GIS presentation was a wonderful demonstration of how much this particular MRC has accomplished. He said Island County MRC has developed much more data than any of the other counties and should be proud of the work accomplished.

Cowan said he took seriously the strongly-worded letter our MRC sent recently to the other MRCs and to the Governor's appointed NWSC members. He said time has been set aside at this Friday's monthly NWSC meeting to hold the open-and-frank discussion our MRC requested. This will be to look at the issue of top-down vs. bottom-up management. Cowan said he agrees strongly that the heart of the NWSC Initiative model is citizens and their empowerment. He pointed out that a majority of the 13 Commission members must come from the MRCs. At present there are seven MRC members and six Governor's appointees. To illustrate how the balance of power is structured, if one of the MRCs were to withdraw from the NWSC, the number of Governor's appointees would be reduced so that majority control would remain with the MRCs. Cowan said the NWSC has always operated by consensus, rather than divided votes.

Cowan acknowledged that the issue that triggered our MRC's letter was the action grant letter-of-intent for Category C funding. The requirement for projects in this category is specific marine resources protection or restoration results. "When we got the letter of intent from Island County," he said, "frankly we were concerned. But it's important for you to understand that we did not reject that letter of intent – that first letter of intent. That did not happen. We expressed some concern – had discussions about it. In fact we offered some suggestions on how some of the projects you proposed could come into conformity with the Category C criteria. It's not that we didn't have concerns but we didn't reject it. The idea expressed in the minutes that we rejected it probably triggered a big part of the consternation on behalf of the MRC and generated at least one of the issues that resulted in the letter."

Jefferds commented one of the issues we looked at when we discussed Category C funding was the requirement that projects must be restorative. He said conservation is a lot less expensive than restoration. Jefferds said if a project includes an educative device such as the Water's Edge booklet or signage, this amounts to educating people in a conservative manner to be proactive in avoiding the need for restoration later. He said he feels this is money well spent.

Cowan agreed and responded that projects do not have to be restoration – they can be protection. "In fact we have proposals for that. In the San Juan MRC all of their proposal is for protection. Just like Island County they adopted a marine stewardship area. What we have tried to say at this point in time – subject to change next year – is that we want to get out on the ground, in the water, and do protection or restoration. Education is important and we recognize that with the MRC and NWSC being non-regulative bodies, education and changing behavior is the strongest thing we have going for us. Education and outreach are one of our benchmarks, in fact. But we felt it is also easier to do education and we wanted to have demonstrable results whether they're protection or conservation. That's what led to the difference between Category B, which emphasizes long-term education, and Category C. We didn't want MRCs putting all of their effort into outreach and education. We wanted on-the-ground results."

Jefferds commented he doesn't believe funds should be thrown at projects without a clear path as to where an MRC wants to go. Our MRC has completed a great deal of research. Before we tackle restoration projects, we need to look at the data and analyze it so we can make informed decisions on restorative projects. He said black-and-white guidelines don't really fit where we are as an MRC.

Cowan said he thinks the NWSC is listening and showing flexibility, as evidenced by the way it responded to the revised letter-of-intent, which added one project and dropped another. "We essentially said, with some minor changes, please proceed. We are trying to recognize exactly what you said."

He asked our MRC to understand that the NWSC deals with seven MRCs and needs to interact in a spirit of consistency, which is why written criteria are applied. Cowan again emphasized, "We did not reject your original letter of intent. There was some misunderstanding or whatever. What we asked for was some additional information and clarification."

Cowan said the NWSC needs to review the grant policy and criteria while these issues are still fresh in everyone's mind, and he hopes to get started at this week's meeting.

Meehan said he has never felt as strongly as he does today about the togetherness of the Island County MRC. "We are a more wired-together group than we have ever been." The MRC has gathered a great deal of data, has created stewardship areas, and is a very mature body. He said he felt the next steps as put forth in our proposal were very mature projects in concert with what the MRC is doing in our community. "For this to be questioned as not fitting the mold really gritted on me." He said he feels it's the NWSC's job to enable the MRCs and that our MRC did not feel enabled.

Jefferds suggested that in the future when these disagreements or misunderstandings come up, it might be easier to resolve them face-to-face rather than by e-mail. Cowan said that after a couple of preliminary e-mails, he and Ginny Broadhurst held a 1-1/2 hour conversation about Island County's proposals with Gary Wood.

#### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT -- Wood**

Wood forfeited his time on the agenda to Cowan.

#### **COUNTY LEAD'S REPORT -- Meehan**

Beach Watcher coordinators. Meehan said he spent almost an entire day this week training new Beach Watcher coordinators in the other counties. Whatcom does not yet have a coordinator, but the others have hired good people and he emphasized to them the importance of working closely with their MRCs.

Wood's contract. Meehan said he is working on amending Wood's contract to satisfy Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. He said if WDFW's issues cannot be resolved, we may have to look for a different way of funding Shore Stewards to make the program work the way it needs to work.

County hearing on rural lands. Meehan said the county will hold a rural lands hearing Monday. Proposed changes in the critical areas ordinance may, in the future, require a 50-foot buffer on Class IV and V modified streams. In addition, farm wetlands may no longer be available for agricultural use. These changes are coming about as a result of legal challenges to Island County's critical areas ordinance by Whidbey Environmental Action Network (WEAN). Rufus Rose, a member of the planning commission, pointed out that the critical areas ordinance must be reviewed every seven years. He said this would have a huge impact on the current farming and gardening patterns in Island County.

#### **CHAIR'S REPORT – Kind**

Review of potential shoreline restoration and conservation projects. Kind suggested we table this discussion until we can devote a full meeting to it. She said Bredensteiner's presentation illustrated that we do have the data and are getting to a point where we can sit down and hold a good discussion.

MRC May 4 retreat. Kind said she and Meehan have not yet met to plan this event. Weber said she favors having it catered rather than potluck, and the group agreed. The retreat will be from 4-8 pm, Wednesday, May 4, at Sierra Clubhouse, Partridge Point. Meehan said he'd like to focus on potential restoration projects and begin to set some priorities. Kind asked Meehan to serve as facilitator.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Kind declared the meeting adjourned at 5:50 pm.

## Coming Events

**May 4, Wednesday, 4-8 pm, MRC spring retreat at Sierra Clubhouse, Partridge Point.**

**May 18, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland.**

**Nov. 4-5, Friday-Saturday: NWSC fall conference at Skagit Casino, Bow.**