



# Marine Resources

Committee

## August 10, 2005

Minutes

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

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

**PRESENT:** Chair Phyllis Kind, Hi Bronson, Tom Campbell, Sayed El-Sayed, Joe Hillers, Don Meehan, Rolf Seitle, Ken Urstad, Exec. Director Gary Wood, Admin. Ass't. Dan Pedersen.

**ALTERNATES:** None. **ABSENT:** Ian Jefferds, Jeff Tate, Benye Weber.

### VISITORS:

**Dick Toft**, Oak Harbor, former MRC member and prospective re-appointee.

**Don Velasquez** (speaker), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Mill Creek.

**Bob Buck**, Beach Watchers.

**Dot Irvin**, Freeland, Beach Watchers.

**Bill and Rosie Niles**, Clinton.

**Jackie and Graham Johnson**, Langley, Beach Watchers.

**Joan Demorest**, Freeland, Beach Watchers.

**Sarah Davenport-Smith**, Bellevue, Department of Ecology.

**Rex Lee Porter**, Coupeville, Island County Public Works, Surface Water Management.

**James and Margery Maconachy**, Coupeville.

**Jack Cartin**, Beverly Beach.

**Randall Swanborg**.

**Joyce Jacobson**, Freeland.

**Sue Kelly**, San Francisco.

**Peggy Urstad**, Greenbank.

**Richard Turner**, Greenbank.

**Doug Gustafson**.

**Bob Kohlwes**, "crab fisherman."

**CALL TO ORDER:** 5:20 pm. Following a presentation about crab by Don Velasquez from 4:00 - 5:20 pm, Kind called the business meeting to order. For a synopsis of the presentation, see page 3.

**QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted. **MINUTES** of 7-13-2005: Adopted, motion by Bronson, second by Meehan, no objections. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

### Summary of Decisions

**MRC action-grant projects.** Wood will e-mail the members a copy of the final grant proposal outlining our MRC's action-grant projects so the members may consider which ones they'd like to adopt, monitor and report on.

**Responsibility for projects.** Responsibility for three NWSC-funded projects was assigned as follows:

*Shore Stewards* – Bronson.

*Shoreline resource book* – Pedersen.

*Water quality* – Hillers (who volunteered by e-mail after the meeting).

Kind asked members to review the remaining projects in our NWSC action grant and volunteer to take responsibility to shepherd them.

**Poster ideas.** The following poster ideas were suggested for the NWSC fall training conference:

*Bluff bird study* – Kind and Frances Wood will prepare something.

*Shoreline mapping* – reflecting the work Doug Kelly has done for us.

*Coastal geology* – Jim Johannessen

*Water quality*

*Forage fish poster* – suggested by Wood

*Shore Stewards display panel* – already prepared by Pedersen

*Crescent Marsh before-and-after* – Toft suggested he could take pictures and do something on this

*Estuary project* – Meehan suggested integrating Crescent Marsh into our estuary project

*Creosote project* – Wood pointed out we have a great many photos of this project.

**Toft reappointment to MRC.** Meehan reminded Toft that he needs to obtain a formal letter of appointment from the county commissioners to officially resume his position on the committee.

## REPORTS

### Executive Director -- Wood

**Reports, bills and deliverables.** Wood said all of the reports, bills and deliverables due through June 30 are complete. At the next meeting he'd like to talk about the component parts of our projects going forward, which he has organized on one spreadsheet.

### County Lead – Meehan

**Wood's contract.** Meehan reported that Wood's contract with the MRC ran out at the end of June and we are waiting for the Department of Ecology to complete its process to continue funding his position. While we await their action, the county commissioners approved a bridge grant to continue Wood's salary. Meehan said he just learned today that we have been awarded about \$40,000 of grant funding from the Direct Implementation Fund to help support Shore Stewards.

### Chair – Kind

**Involving MRC members in projects.** Kind said she would like specific MRC members to volunteer to become informed and to monitor each of the projects we are funding this year with Northwest Straits money. She views this as a way for the members to become more involved and engaged, rather than simply to sit and listen to reports at each meeting from the Executive Director.

**Bronson** volunteered to assume this responsibility for the **Shore Stewards project.**

**Pedersen** will take this responsibility for the **shoreline resource book.**

*Note: After the meeting, Hillers volunteered by e-mail to assume this responsibility for water quality.*

Wood said he will send all the members a copy of our finalized grant proposal so they can refresh their memory about the projects and which ones they might wish to volunteer for. While on the subject of projects, Meehan introduced Bob Buck, the lead Beach Watcher who is working on our water quality monitoring project for Penn Cove and learning to use the data-collecting equipment we recently obtained from the Poulsbo Marine Science Center. Buck said he is studying the manuals and thinking about where to deploy the equipment and how to share the results with the public.

**NWSC Growth and Development Committee.** Kind said Jody Kennedy of San Juan County has agreed to chair the Growth and Development Committee of the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC). Kind has agreed to serve on this committee, which will try to get the Northwest Straits Foundation going.

**Data Coordination Project.** Kind reported that our MRC's recommendation for a regional project, data coordination, has been adopted by the NWSC. She said five of the MRC's are interested and she

expects the other two will join in as well. The first step will be preparation of a questionnaire to determine what kinds of data the various MRCs have.

**NWSC fall training conference.** The fall conference will be held Nov. 4-5 at Skagit Casino (Bow exit). Kind said we should be thinking about posters to show at the conference, including the following:

Bluff bird study – Kind and Frances Wood will prepare something.  
 Shoreline mapping – reflecting the work Doug Kelly has done for us.  
 Coastal geology – Jim Johannessen  
 Water quality  
 Forage fish poster – suggested by Wood  
 Shore Stewards display panel – already prepared by Pedersen  
 Crescent Marsh before-and-after – Toft suggested he could take pictures and do something on this  
 Estuary project – Meehan suggested integrating Crescent Marsh into our estuary project  
 Creosote project – Wood pointed out we have a great many photos of this project.

### OLD BUSINESS.

**Toft reappointment to MRC.** Meehan reminded Toft that he needs to obtain a formal letter of appointment from the county commissioners to officially resume his position on the committee.

### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Kind declared the meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.

### SPEAKER

## **Dungeness Crab Biology, Life History and Habitat Requirements** **Don Velasquez, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife**

Velasquez explained he would confine his remarks to the biology of Dungeness crab in Puget Sound, not addressing the coastal fishery, which is a separate concern managed in cooperation with the states of Oregon and California. He will talk tonight about biology, historical management and history of the Puget Sound fishery, how it has changed, the current activities, and the constraints of managing the fishery today.

Dungeness crab range from the Pribilof Islands of Alaska to the Santa Barbara area of California. Maximum age is about eight or nine years. Crab prefer sandy bottom habitat and are predominantly found at depths to about 350 feet. They feed primarily on clams and crustaceans, including each other. Adult crab are prey to octopi, wolf eels, man and sea otters, among other creatures. Mating occurs between hard-shell males and soft-shell females in late spring and early summer. Sexual maturity is about age two years. Males may be recognized by their narrow abdomen, females by a wider abdomen. In addition to Dungeness crab, other common crab in Puget Sound include Red Rock Crab, Graceful Crab, Tanner Crab and Brown Box Crab. A typical 8-1/2 inch Dungeness crab weighs about 4 pounds. The history of crabbing in Puget Sound can be summarized by these key dates:

- 1850s – Territorial governor signs the Stevens treaties with local Indian tribes.
- 1885 – Non-tribal crab fishing begins in earnest on west coast.
- 1974 – Boldt Decision reaffirms the right of treaty tribes to 50 percent of the salmon resource.
- 1980 – State commercial crab fleet reduced from 400 boats to about 250.
- 1985 – State treaty tribes begin discussing reaffirming treaty shellfish rights.
- 1989 – Tribes file suit to reaffirm their shellfish rights.
- 1994 – Judge Edward Rafeedie rules in favor of treaty tribes.
- 2000 – Puget Sound crab fisheries operate on quotas divided 50/50 between tribes and state.

For years the management strategy has been the Three-S strategy based on size, sex and seasons. Since the Rafeedie decision in 1994, management decisions have been reached by agreement between the state and tribes. There are no more fixed seasons – allocation closures are implemented to comply with the 50/50 sharing formula mandated by the federal court.

Today there are about 175 state commercial crab boats. Recreational crabbers number an estimated 150,000 – 250,000 based on license sales, and there are about 500 tribal commercial crabbers. The challenge for future management is to obtain timely and accurate data on the harvest, especially the recreational portion. It is not sufficient to count buoys in the water, since the numbers vary throughout the day as crabbers deploy and retrieve their gear. Even counting at a peak time only reveals about half the gear fished in a day. A more accurate system is to count pieces of gear fished in a given day from a given boat ramp. Catch record cards are useful but are not turned in until the end of the season, which is no help in monitoring the unfolding progress toward harvest targets. Adequate enforcement is difficult because of the lack of funding. Education of the public is an ongoing need. Protection of critical habitat is very important, as is the funding of research, for which there is almost no revenue.

This is where Beach Watchers and the MRC come in – they can help with the research. In Snohomish County a cooperative study is under way on Juvenile Crab and Associated Habitats. Participants include Snohomish County MRC, Tulalip Tribes, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife and Beach Watchers of Snohomish County. The study seeks to identify where the habitat is in Snohomish County and which habitat the crab prefer. How far into the lower rivers does it extend? When do they settle into the habitat? Is it comparable to the areas of north Puget Sound in terms of density timing? When do most juveniles move to the adult habitat? On August 18, volunteers on the Mukilteo side will do a standard beach shore-side sampling, and right afterwards divers will come in on the next high tide and do a sample in the same area, and they will compare the results of the two methods. Wood commented that the Snohomish MRC has invited us to join them next year in surveying crab on our side of the water and this would be a project for us to consider, once they've had a chance to develop their protocols.

## Coming Events

**Sept. 7, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor.**

**Sept. 21, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland.** Speaker (not yet confirmed) may be Jim Johannessen, Coastal Geologic Services.

**Oct. 5, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor.**

**Oct. 19, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland.**

**Nov. 2, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor.**

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

**Nov. 16, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland.** Speaker: Fred Goetz, fish biologist, US Army Corps of Engineers, on tracking bull trout with sounding devices and hydrophones.