



Marine Resources

Minutes

November 16, 2005

4:00 – 6:02 pm, Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland

www.islandcountymrc.org

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

VISITORS: **Fred Goetz,** US Army Corps of Engineers (speaker), **Kim Bredensteiner,** Island County Public Works, **Richard Turner,** member of the public.

CALL TO ORDER: 4 pm. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted with several additions. **MINUTES** of 10-19-2005: Adopted. Motion by Bronson, second by Urstad, no objections. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

Summary of Decisions

Order of agenda items. Kind requested that in the future, Pedersen and Meehan put the leadership reports next to last on the agenda to allow more input by committee membership during the meetings.

Puget Sound oil tankers. Kind will ask the NWSC to stay involved in the discussion about allowing single-hulled oil tankers in Puget Sound, and we may invite a speaker on this to a future meeting.

Orca speaker. In light of the ESA-listing of orcas, we will invite Susan Berta of Orca Network to speak to a future meeting.

Mapping and data. Wood will assemble our experts in January to begin weighting our data and identifying any gaps.

REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Employee of the month. Toft announced Kim Bredensteiner is Island County employee of the month.

NOAA open house. Urstad reported he and Wood attended a National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) open house at Sand Point. He said the facility is huge – he estimated about 500 cars in the parking lot. He said NOAA wants to be a partner in such efforts as creosote removal, derelict gear, and education and outreach. Urstad thinks Shore Stewards fits well with their interests.

Seining project update. Bredensteiner reported that last week she and Urstad met with Kurt Fresh, Eric Beamer and several others about the Beach Watchers' seining activities. They reviewed the data gathered this year, and NOAA announced next year they will expand the project to Race Lagoon. Seining will take place in both Harrington and Race lagoons on Whidbey, and in Elger Bay on Camano.

Puget Sound oil tankers. Toft commented he had been at the table at the recent Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Conference for the discussion on oil spills. He pointed out that Alaska Senator Ted Stevens has taken another run at the Magnusson Act, which limits the tankers entering Puget Sound to those carrying crude that will be refined and sold within the Pacific Northwest. Toft suggested we need to stay alert and express our concern to our Congressional representatives whenever we get the chance. Kind suggested we ask the NWSC to be involved in this. She suggested we should put an oil spill discussion on the agenda for a future meeting and invite some experts to speak.

PROJECT REPORTS

Shore Stewards. Bronson reported Shore Stewards recently introduced the third revision of its application form--now condensed onto a card--and this looks like the best approach yet to generate

enrollment. When the program was launched two years ago the original application was many pages in length. It soon became apparent the long form was intimidating applicants and discouraging enrollment. The rationale had been to make the application part of the educational process, but very few people were willing to do it. When we shortened the form to two pages, Shore Stewards coordinator Scott Chase reported it became easier to get sign-ups. He now reports even greater success with the card. At community events people fill out the card on the spot and immediately become Shore Stewards. They are issued a copy of the book, *Guide for Shoreline Living*. Later they receive a letter asking them to respond to additional questions. When they reply to the letter, they receive the Shore Stewards sign for their property. Bronson said this series of steps is working very well. The philosophy is that what we really want is the opportunity to provide information and education. By joining the program on the spot, the public gives us that opportunity. Over time, we can deliver our message through the Shore Stewards News, our website, workshops, community events and other activities. Toft, who follows Shore Stewards for the MRC on Whidbey Island, added that he recently met with Chase and was very impressed with him. He said meeting Chase impressed on him the quality of people we have working in these programs and also participating as volunteers.

Water's Edge book. Pedersen said the book project is moving ahead well. Right now he and Sarah Schmidt are evaluating several front-cover designs proposed by Stacey Neumiller, the project's graphic designer. Neumiller has obtained a couple of preliminary printing estimates in the \$12,000 - \$15,000 range for 5,000 copies of a 96-page, full-color, wire-bound book. But these estimates do not include a large Island County map they would like to insert in a pocket in the book. The map will push up the cost.

Water quality. Jefferds said the buoy currently is at the Coupeville gas dock and the computer is stored in the shed. He thinks the buoy will be deployed after the holiday. Hillers said he believes the equipment is in good order and ready to start gathering data. He raised the question, "Down the road, how do we as the MRC have input on *how* this equipment is used, and *who* should have input?" Bredensteiner commented right now we are working opportunistically. The buoy is too big to move frequently. Jefferds said his company is willing to help move it, since they have a crane. Initially it will be sited at Penn Cove Shellfish because they have the necessary permit. Wood said the Puget Sound Ambient Monitoring Program has been engaged for years in water-quality monitoring at various stations around Puget Sound. They are interested in having more stations and could be a source for funding. He said they have many of the answers we need for what to do with the data, and they have the ability under their permit to site our equipment. They are looking for partners.

Mapping and data. Wood said he thinks the best time to assemble our experts is in January, after the holidays. Kind said we should make this a priority for January and put it together with the final feeder bluff report from Jim Johannessen. We have the data and need to get these people together to help us determine how to weight it. Wood said one thing the experts need to do is look at what's there and help us find the data gaps.

Pigeon guillemots. Kind said the project is finished for this year and we have lots of ideas for next year.

Shoreline signage. Jefferds reported that Pannier Graphics had sent him information on the cost of sign hardware and he passed it along to Pedersen. The hardware for three boards, such as the display at Sunnyside Cemetery in Coupeville, would be about \$2,160 (with shipping). Pedersen said he thought we could afford to do about eight three-panel installations – for \$17,280. The actual number might be greater or smaller, depending on whether we find financial partners. By e-mail, Pedersen queried the Education and Outreach Subcommittee for site recommendations and now has a preliminary list. The next step is to hold a sit-down meeting of the signage committee to develop a proposal to bring to the full MRC. Toft said he'd like to join the signage subcommittee and said he could help secure a meeting space for the committee in Coupeville. Wood said he'd like to be included, too, because he has some ideas on funding sources.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Executive Director – Wood.

Wood distributed his written report earlier in the day by e-mail – attached.

Chair – Kind.

NWSC Growth and Development Committee. Kind said Jody Kennedy of San Juan MRC has agreed to chair this committee. Tom Cowan and several others are looking at four candidates as possible paid coordinators for Growth and Development. They would also welcome additional committee members.

NWSC Data Coordination Project. Kind said only one MRC responded to Andrea Copping's request by the October 1 deadline, and it was us.

2006 NWSC Training Conference. Next year's conference will be held Nov. 3-4, 2006.

MRC poster. Kind said she feels we engaged in poster-overkill at the NWSC conference. What we needed, but didn't have, was a single, overall, comprehensive poster about our MRC's work.

Bredensteiner characterized it as "The Five-Year Report on a three-panel display."

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – none.

NEW BUSINESS

Orcas as an endangered species. Jefferds said this week's listing of orcas as endangered species may open new project and funding opportunities. We should consider whether to do research projects in this area. Bredensteiner suggested we invite Susan Berta of Orca Network to speak to us in January.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Kind declared the meeting adjourned at 6:02 pm.

SPEAKER

Tracking Bull Trout with Hydrophones and Sounding Devices

Fred Goetz, fish biologist, US Army Corps of Engineers

Goetz pointed out he works for the US Army Corps of Engineers but wears several hats. By training he is a fish biologist. By experience he has become a habitat restoration practitioner doing restoration impact analyses. He started out working for the forest service, doing graduate research at Oregon State on bull trout, which are better known in Washington as Dolly Varden. Since 1992 he has worked for the corps on projects such as fish-passage studies at the Ballard locks in Seattle. This year he went back to school, studying for a PhD at the University of Washington on the behavior of salmon residing in Puget Sound. Goetz said his "fish side" wants to study the behavior of fish. His "professional, career side" tries to do habitat restoration projects. Apart from his fish biologist work, he works for the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP), where he is the science co-lead. He said PSNERP is doing a comprehensive study of the entire Puget Sound shoreline from the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Olympia, 2,500 miles of shoreline, doing a feasibility study to assess the problems and restoration solutions.

Goetz said for about four years he has been studying bull trout with Ed Connor, the Endangered Species Act steward for Seattle City Light in the Skagit River Basin, who helped him develop a study to tag bull trout from the Skagit River Basin that migrate out into Skagit Bay, Saratoga Passage and Port Susan. Working with the corps and many other cooperating agencies, Goetz is building the Puget Sound Bio-Telemetry Project. They use transmitting tags that contain batteries and electronic memory boards to send pinging signals, which are picked up by many underwater microphones spread throughout Skagit Bay, Possession Sound and Port Susan.

The corps is interested because it carries out navigation projects – dredging – in the river channels. They dredge every two to five years, and the ESA listing of bull trout made the corps much more sensitive about its impact. Bull trout is the least-understood anadromous fish in Puget Sound. Goetz pointed out this genus of fish – called char -- is a bit confusing because of the names used in different areas. Going north, they're called Dolly Varden and are abundant in the coastal waters of British Columbia and southern Alaska. North of that is a separate species of Dolly Varden called Arctic Char. Here at the southern end of their distribution, DNA analysis shows all the char that have been found in Puget Sound are of the bull trout species – they are not Dolly Varden. They do not migrate long distances – they are anadromous only when close to the coast, maybe within 200 miles. Bull trout are more competitive than Dolly Varden, but Dollies are better adapted to colder water.

To tag bull trout they must catch and anesthetize them, implant the tag surgically, then suture the incision and release the fish. To date they have done this to 230 fish and, so far as they know, have not killed any. Depending on how frequently a tag transmits its ping, the batteries will last from six months to three years. Goetz said this telemetry system is remarkable in how it differs from typical sampling methods, which provide a picture of where a fish was situated at a specific point in time. With telemetry, a fish can be tracked as it moves across distances over a period of months or years.

Goetz said an entire array of receivers is deployed far out on the Continental Shelf, called the Pacific Ocean Shelf Tracking System. This is part of a very major 10-year study to identify every species in the ocean, to track the migration of marine mammals and fish. Another 23 receivers are spread across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and many others are situated in Puget Sound, around Camano and Whidbey islands, Port Susan, Skagit Bay and elsewhere. Most of the bull trout studies have occurred in Whidbey Basin, from Everett to Deception Pass. He said one value of the tracking study is to do mortality research. Another is to help pinpoint where mortality occurs, if there appears to be a problem in a certain phase of the life cycle. He said they're tagging fish in many different basins. In addition to bull trout, they are also tagging many other fish to better understand how they use Puget Sound. He shared several case histories showing how bull trout might typically linger in one specific saltwater area for a period of weeks, then suddenly begin a lengthy migration around Camano Island and enter the Skagit River. He said in some cases the tagged bull trout will form a group and migrate together. In other cases they behave individually. He said bull trout show a territorial behavior – they occupy and return to the same shoreline areas, year after year. They occupy saltwater for about a month to four months. Water temperature appears to determine this. About July 1, when it becomes above 64 degrees F. they move upriver. In diet they are opportunists, eating juvenile salmon but also forage fish and any other small fish they can find.

Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership (PSNP). Goetz also mentioned he is part of the Puget Sound Nearshore Partnership, formerly called the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP), a large study looking for ways to protect and restore functions and natural processes of the entire Puget Sound nearshore. This is a six-year study, started at the end of 2001, sponsored at the federal level by the Corps of Engineers and locally by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Cost of the study is estimated at \$12 million, though Goetz said to date it is only about ¼ funded. Website: <http://www.pugetsoundnearshore.org>. Goetz said PSNP's goal is not to take away anyone's rights or property, but to find ways to make sure people can continue to use the shore in the future for fishing and the other kinds of activities they enjoy.

Coming Events

Dec. 21, Canceled, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland.

Jan. 4, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor. **Speaker Rex Porter, Whidbey Watershed Project Manager: Water quality issues and progress in 2005.**

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

Feb. 1, Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor.

Executive Director's Written Report

7th Annual MRC Conference

Island County had a strong turnout at the Nov. 4–5 Bow conference, and a wealth of displays touting our programs. This level of interest reflects well on our MRC, and the conference programs demonstrated the growing sophistication of Initiative participants and their projects-oriented focus. It is always useful to cross-pollinate with the other six counties as well, as our ability to collaborate matures.

SCIENCE COMMITTEE/NEW FUNDING PROPOSALS

The Science Committee met 11/2. Phyllis's notes summarize:

Science Projects Completed

- Forage Fish
- Shoreline Hardening Mapping
- Eelgrass Mapping
- Feeder Bluff Mapping
- Pigeon Guillemot Monitoring

Science Projects in Progress

- Water Quality Monitoring
- Pocket Estuary Monitoring
- Data Management

Future Science Projects

- Map Kelp Beds
- Map Other Algae – perhaps using Beach Watcher data
- Map Nesting Sites of Eagles, Osprey and Great Blue Herons – partner with Whidbey Audubon on this project.
- Assess Sport Fishing Sites

The MRC submitted a pre-proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's "**Puget Sound Marine Conservation Fund**" on November 10th, circulated in advance to the Science Committee, and today to the MRC via email. The MRC is a partner in a second PSMCF proposal as well. Additional applications are in process for the **Puget Sound Action Team's PIE** round and **NFWF's Statewide Salmon Fund** to support restoration and water quality projects. Foundation sources are under investigation for opportunities re the other prioritized issues. On December 14th, Meehan & Wood are scheduled to meet with **Paladin Data's** representatives re their interest in collaborating with Island County MRC on new projects they are funding in the area of data management.

Gary Wood
Executive Director