



Marine Resources

Minutes

March 15, 2006

4:03 – 5:40 pm, Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland

www.islandcountymrc.org

PRESENT: Chair **Phyllis Kind, Hi Bronson, Don Meehan, Rolf Seittle, Ken Urstad**, Executive Director **Gary Wood**, Admin. Ass't. **Dan Pedersen**. **ALTERNATES:** Kim Bredensteiner for Weber; Rex Porter for Toft.

ABSENT: **Tom Campbell, Joe Hillers, Ian Jefferds, Jeff Tate, Dick Toft, Benye Weber**.

VISITORS: **Kim Bredensteiner**, Coupeville, Island County Salmon Recovery Program; **Rex Porter**, Island County Public Works, Whidbey watershed project manager; **Charlie Torres**, Washington State Ferries (WSF), Keystone Project Manager; **Doug Playter**, engineer, CH2M Hill; **Hadley Greene**, WSF Community Relations and Public Outreach Manager; **Michelle Elling**, WSF Environmental Coordinator, Keystone Project; **Bill Bradkin**, Coupeville, Whidbey Audubon; **Gerhard and Linda Matz**, Coupeville; **Roger Sherman**, Coupeville; **A.H. Bowers**, Coupeville.

CALL TO ORDER: 4:03 pm. Kind called the meeting to order. **QUORUM:** Declared, with Bredensteiner as alternate for Weber and Porter as alternate for Toft. **AGENDA:** Adopted, no objections. **MINUTES** of 3-01-2006: Adopted, no objections. **CORRESPONDENCE:** Meehan will discuss a letter from Sharon Riggs during his county lead report.

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

Keystone Ferry project letter. Wood volunteered to draft a letter to Washington State Ferries (WSF) with our input in response to their presentation at today's meeting.

2006 Workplan. The MRC adopted the 2006 Workplan as drafted by Wood on the framework of our five-year plan. **Motion by Meehan, second by Urstad, carried unanimously.**

Wood responsible for grant deadlines, deliverables, semi-annual reports and billings. Wood said he will assume responsibility to monitor grant deadlines and provide deliverables, semi-annual reports and billings.

Wood to develop tickler calendar. Wood said he will work with Jim Clark to develop a tickler calendar to make sure we do not miss future deadlines for deliverables, reports and billings required to be in compliance with our grants.

SPEAKERS

Keystone Ferry Terminal Project Update

Charlie Torres, Hadley Greene, Doug Playter, Michelle Elling

Project manager Torres explained the purpose of today's presentation was to describe the five options currently under consideration for the Keystone Terminal Project and to hear any environmental concerns or information the MRC might wish to present. **Playter emphasized, "We're really interested in what you would like us to study."** Torres stressed all the options have pros and cons—each is more attractive, or less attractive, to some interest groups than to others. The five options:

A. Relocate the jetty 300 feet east. Relocate the dive park and boat launch. Widen the harbor to accommodate a 124-144 vehicle ferry. The jetty would have roughly the same footprint as it currently

does. About 200,000 yards of material would be removed to widen the harbor – this would be the same under either option A or B.

B. Extend the jetty 600 feet out. Widen the harbor to the west to accommodate a 124-144 vehicle ferry. Eliminate all the campsites currently on the outer loop of the state park campground, if not the entire campground. Because of the water depth at this distance from the shore the jetty’s footprint would be quite large – about six acres.

C. Use existing harbor and acquire a new, unique 100-car vessel with a special propulsion system. The WSF would have to ask the legislature for funding to develop this vessel. The harbor would require routine dredging every five years, same as it does now.

D. Use existing harbor and acquire new vessels similar in size to existing steel-electrics. These vessels would have essentially the same footprint as the existing boats and would not require harbor modification.

E. Do nothing. Continue to refurbish and operate the existing vessels. Presumably at some future date the Coast Guard would decline to recertify them and service would be discontinued.

Common elements of all the proposals: All the options include replacing the existing terminal building; replacing the creosoted timbers of the dolphins, the berth, transfer span and towers; and enlarging the holding area. All the options essentially would require vessel acquisition, since Torres says all the vessels in the system are spoken for. The existing steel-electric vessels on the Keystone run were constructed in the late 1920s and have been refurbished. Further refurbishing is not very economical. The existing landing was built in 1979 with creosoted timbers and these have been “propped up” repeatedly over the years. It is time to replace them with new materials. Population growth increasingly taxes the capacity of the Keystone-Port Townsend run.

Shear wall. A member of the audience said he recalled WSF had discussed at an earlier meeting the possibility of constructing a shear wall to help retain more of the state park campsites. Playter said ferry skippers did not favor this option because of safety concerns in the event they had to beach the ferry to avoid a collision with the landing. They must approach the harbor with speed to maintain control in the current. They might hit a shear wall quite hard and actually bounce off it, coming to rest on the opposite shore.

How we got here. Roger Sherman asked Torres to recap how the decision process reached today’s stage. Torres explained that in 1979 the terminal was constructed and in the early 1980s a feasibility study was conducted to anticipate what would happen to this ferry run in the future. Seven or eight options were considered, some of them situated inside the harbor and some outside it. Following a period of public comment, the legislature called for a pause to re-think the options. A Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) was formed and funded by the legislature. The legislature asked the ferry system, with the help of CAG, to study only options inside the harbor. So prior to CAG, some consideration was given to options outside the harbor, but currently all the options are within the harbor. In January of 2005 the CAG recommended to the legislature the four scenarios outlined today.

Economics of vessel size. Torres explained that the size of vessel used on the run affects costs in several ways. If smaller vessels are used, WSF would require more vessels and more crews, running more often, than if larger vessels were used. But even if the run could be served today by one large vessel rather than two smaller ones, the anticipated increase in vehicle traffic by 2030 might require a second large vessel to be added. He said no matter which size vessel is used, it really won’t affect what needs to be done to the holding area. It will need to be increased to reflect the amount of traffic using the run. The Puget Sound Regional Council is furnishing the traffic projections.

Port Townsend impact. Torres explained that the city of Port Townsend is waiting to hear which option is adopted at Keystone. WSF will work with Port Townsend to find a solution to their traffic and dredging issues no matter which size boat is used on the run.

Juvenile salmonid and forage fish use of Keystone Harbor. Bredensteiner said she wanted to make the ferry system aware that Keystone Harbor is used heavily by juvenile salmonids and forage fish. She pointed out Washington Trout is doing surveys on the west side of Whidbey Island to identify locations where these fish are present in large numbers. Torres commented that one of the WSF options helps out in that regard. He said the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) asked WSF to construct

a notch in the jetty to allow fish passage close to shore for juvenile fish. He said WSF realizes that if the fish were forced to go around the end of the jetty in deeper water they would be vulnerable to octopi and lingcod that would prey on them.

Underwater dive park. Bredensteiner also commented that the MRC has devoted considerable discussion to the underwater dive park, and is very concerned about work that would damage it. She also wondered what effect moving the jetty would have on fish communities along that stretch of shoreline. Torres commented that the WSF has received presentations by divers showing the incredible richness of marine life along the jetty. He said they would work with the dive community to make sure any project was done in the least-disruptive way possible to the interests of divers. He said that if marine life along the jetty were impacted by a project, the prevailing direction of the current would help recolonize it in a period of years.

Environmental tradeoffs. Seitle said he recognizes that WSF would like to unify its fleet around one type of vessel. He said if decisions about Keystone were based strictly on environmental impact, cost and risks, it seems obvious that the least risky solution would be constructing new boats that could operate in the existing harbor.

Marine conservation area. Wood pointed out that just a few years ago the WDFW established a marine conservation area that is within the footprint of the area where WSF is considering moving or lengthening the jetty. Moving the jetty cannot help but shrink the conservation area. He wondered whether WSF has consulted with WDFW about this.

Environmental impact statement process. Seitle expressed confusion about the process. If WSF is conducting environmental impact studies on all four options at this time, what happens after they select one of the options? Will there be a supplemental EIS? Is the EIS already finished? Will they throw away three unused EISs? Elling said WSF is starting with four proposals. During the process they will narrow the options. After the draft EIS's are completed they will select a preferred alternative. Seitle said an EIS is not the proper vehicle on which to base the selection of an option that considers engineering and economic issues.

Dive site survey website. Wood said the WSF will find fish survey data collected by divers at Keystone and other sites at www.reef.org.

Jetty options. A member of the audience pointed out that one of the WSF options is to move the jetty 300 feet east. He wondered aloud whether the same benefit could be achieved by angling the jetty, perhaps from 500 feet down to 300 feet.

Safety. Roger Sherman commented this run is the most hazardous in the state and he thinks some attention should be paid to human safety as well as protecting marine life. He wonders if there is still any talk of moving the terminal to a more favorable location. Torres said some of the sites considered did not pan out because of the distance they would add to the crossing. But prior to the time WSF was restricted to considering only within-harbor options, they did look at some out-of-harbor options and he would like to revisit some of them.

MRC input. Kind told the WSF representatives the MRC would forward its input in a letter after this meeting. Wood volunteered to write it.

2006 WORKPLAN

Kind commented she just became aware that the MRC has missed some deadlines and been late to the Department of Ecology with a number of deliverables. She said she finds this embarrassing because we think of ourselves as a model MRC and then this happens. She urged all members who are husbanding projects to be aware of the deliverables and deadlines for their projects. Our 2006 Workplan was due in January. Kind shared printed copies of our five-year plan, which Wood has updated to serve as our Workplan, adding all of our proposed projects for 2006. Wood said he will have everything turned in by Tuesday. He will also complete the billings by the same time. **Motion to adopt the 2006 Workplan as written by Wood. Motion by Meehan, second by Urstad, carried unanimously.**

CORRESPONDENCE

Meehan read an e-mail from Sharon Riggs of the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC). Riggs said her review of Grant 000666 shows we are not in compliance with the terms of the grant and she calls upon us to review our schedule of deliverables and billings, and submit all items that are due. Meehan said we should have submitted billings and a required semi-annual progress report in January, but we missed that deadline. The important issue is to decide who is responsible to make sure we meet these deadlines? Wood said it should be his responsibility, since he is doing the billings. He will, in turn, remind Meehan's office to supply any needed financial information. Wood said he would sit down with Jim Clark and develop a tickler calendar to make sure these deadlines are met. Kind suggested that a copy of the tickler calendar be furnished to every member of the Executive Committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Holmes Harbor shellfish closure. Rex Porter reported that the southern portion of Holmes Harbor has been closed to shellfish harvesting as a result of high levels of fecal contamination found when the Department of Health surveyed six locations. Porter said Public Works will be applying for a Centennial Grant this year to address the sources of this contamination, which currently are unknown.

Island County Water Resource Management Plan. Meehan shared a copy of this report, which deals with all manner of water issues. The Water Resources Advisory Committee and Salmon Technical Advisory Group both played a role in developing this information.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Shoreline signage. Pedersen reported he has now spoken with three highly-qualified graphic designers on Whidbey Island who are candidates to provide the art and design for our shoreline signage. He expects to receive project bids from each of them by the end of March, at which time it should be possible to select one to carry the project forward.

Getting to the Water's Edge. Pedersen said the manuscript now is available for review and right now is the time for MRC members to come forward with ideas and corrections. He said the entire Education and Outreach Subcommittee now has copies. The editorial committee would like lots of eyes looking at the manuscript, and would like to know if something is glaringly missing or seems wrong or inaccurate.

Filling vacancies. Wood asked whether anyone has applied to fill our two board vacancies. Kind said Johnny Palka had planned to attend today but was called out of town. He appears to be quite interested.

NEW BUSINESS

Whidbey lyceum series. Kind provided an update on this year's lyceum series, which will be about forests and how they change. Lectures will be on Tuesday nights starting April 4 at the Bayview Cash Shore. The series is sponsored by Whidbey Institute, Whidbey Audubon and Maxwellton Salmon Adventure. Admission is \$5 per lecture or \$25 for the entire series.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Kind declared the meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm.

Coming Events

- Apr. 4** Tuesday, 7:30 pm, Whidbey Lyceum Series starts at Bayview Cash Store.
- Apr. 5** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor
- Apr. 19** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland
- May 3** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor. Speaker: Tom Cowan, NWSC.
- May 17** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland
- June 7** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor
- June 21** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeland