



Marine Resources

Minutes

June 7, 2006

4:00 – 6:00 pm, Heller Road Firehall, Oak Harbor

www.islandcountymrc.org

PRESENT: Chair Phyllis Kind, Tom Campbell, Don Meehan, Johnny Palka, Rolf Seitle, Dick Toft, Ken Urstad, Benye Weber, Communications Mgr. Dan Pedersen. **ALTERNATES:** None. **ABSENT:** Hi Bronson, Joe Hillers, Ian Jefferds, Jeff Tate, Executive Director Gary Wood.

VISITORS: Kim Bredensteiner, Coupeville, Island County Salmon Recovery Program; Rex Porter, Whidbey Watershed Project Manager; Mike Kershner, Anthony Boscolo and John Coleman, all from Island County Planning; Nancy Waddell, Clinton, Whidbey Watershed Stewards; Jim Johannessen, Coastal Geologic Services, Bellingham (speaker).

CALL TO ORDER: 4:00 pm. Kind called the meeting to order. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Kind introduced our new board member, Johnny Palka, professor emeritus from the University of Washington, where he was director of the Program on the Environment. Palka fills a science position on our board. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted, with a change in the order of business since the speaker, Jim Johannessen, was delayed until 5 pm.

MINUTES of 5-17-2006: Adopted, motion by Seitle, second by Toft, no objections. **CORRESPONDENCE:** **Port of South Whidbey:** Pedersen read excerpts of a May 23 letter from Ed Field, manager of the Port of South Whidbey, approving \$3,000 to help print Getting to the Water's Edge and commenting that the port strongly believes the MRC's educational efforts are of great value to the entire island, and that they look forward to working with the MRC on interpretive signage for Clinton Beach and other facilities. **Port of Coupeville:** Kind said she had received an inquiry from port manager, Jim Patton, asking whether the MRC had received any response to our letter to Washington State Ferries about the alternatives they are considering for Keystone Harbor work.

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Ruckelshaus visit. Palka announced the Whidbey Institute will host a public lecture and invitational reception for Bill Ruckelshaus on Sept. 28. Ruckelshaus also will participate in an invitational event at the institute for approximately 20-24 people, running from Sept. 28-30 and relating to regional water and climate issues.

DISCUSSION – MRC PROJECTS AND BUDGETS

Shore Stewards. Meehan commented Shore Stewards has gone regional in a significant way. After its launch on Camano and Whidbey, it expanded to Hood Canal. Now, Puget Sound Action Team has made a grant to the Northwest Straits Foundation, which is funding its expansion to Whatcom, Skagit,

Snohomish and Clallam counties. He said the Shore Stewards website will be redesigned as a regional site with links to local content for all the participating counties.

Water's Edge. Pedersen reported that portions of the book now have gone to Stacey Neumiller for graphic design. Schmidt is still checking and verifying some public right-of-way data in the county records, which is time-consuming and tedious work. Considerable editing and revision has occurred since the manuscript was circulated to the MRC several weeks ago. The book continues to grow and improve, but several sections of it have moved into the design phase. Pedersen said he hopes the book will be off the press in September so the MRC can start doing some promotion to generate holiday sales. Meehan shared several trail maps to show what Neumiller is doing on those. Pedersen said he believes the significance of this project is that it will impact an audience far broader than those who are normally touched by Beach Watcher-type outreach. It will reach a broader segment of the population. Meehan predicted this publication is going to help teach our community to value these resources.

Marine stewardship area signage. Pedersen reported that our artist has made considerable progress on the common panel as well as the logo for the stewardship areas. She is currently developing some alternative treatments of the logo. The first site will be Coupeville Wharf. Pedersen has developed wording for the local panels at Coupeville and the artist expects to start on those shortly. Pedersen and Meehan will present our preliminary proposal to the Port of Coupeville at their meeting next week. He said he hopes the port will help the MRC convey the benefit of this signage to the community and to the historic design review board of Coupeville. Weber pointed out there are many stakeholders in projects such as this and we should involve them all, including the museum and Trust Board.

Water quality. Meehan said the Beach Watcher team went out today with Penn Cove Shellfish to pull our water quality buoy and clean the monitoring system, but discovered the buoy was lying on its side in the water. They are seriously concerned about saltwater damage to the internal electronics, but it is too soon to know. Regarding our survey of existing water quality data, Rex Porter reported that our intern has started work. His goal is to complete a report by the end of the summer. He is sifting through local, state and other marine nearshore water quality data to see what exists and does not exist, identifying any gaps.

Estuary seining. Urstad said the team will be seining next week and definitely will take over Harrington next year. He said he learned that Skagit Fisheries Enhancement has an 80-foot seine that might be available to us, saving us the cost of buying a net. Meehan said Eric Beamer of Skagit Systems Cooperative has issued a report on seining at Elger Bay and Harrington Lagoon that establishes the format for future reports. He will now use this format to report back to us annually. Bob Buck and Jim Somers of our team gave Beamer some feedback, which he incorporated into it. We should receive a finalized version soon. Meehan suggested that once we receive the final version, we should invite Buck, Somers and Urstad to make a presentation about the seining project to the MRC. Meehan said Beamer has produced a larger report on the entire Whidbey Basin. Kind suggested this should be added to our website along with the Beach Watchers' beach monitoring reports. Rex Porter said the core team for Ala Spit is just about ready. These are primarily north-end Beach Watchers. He said they are almost to the point of selecting a contractor to be responsible for the habitat pieces, which includes seining. Meehan said it's impressive that we have so much estuary work under way. Washington Trout is surveying the outside estuaries and we are now working at four estuaries on the inside. These areas are extremely important to salmon. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) now has our team trained and is turning it over to us.

Data mapping. Kind commented that because the county does not yet have ownership parcels digitized, we moved some of those funds into other projects, such as *Getting to the Water's Edge* and a water quality intern. She pointed out that the Northwest Straits Commission did budget considerable funds to work on coordinating all the data from all the counties, and an intern is working on collecting metadata from all the counties and determine who has what and how to access the primary data.

Bluff birds survey. Kind said the group has added seven beaches to those surveyed last year and standardized the time of day for these surveys, consistent with the times when pigeon guillemots are present at their colonies in greatest numbers. Thirty volunteers are active this year and some data already have been collected.

Preliminary indications suggest that more birds are being observed this year. This is the only seabird that consistently feeds and breeds in Island County, unlike other seabirds whose numbers have been declining precipitously, but that breed elsewhere. Significantly, the pigeon guillemot has been proposed by The Puget Sound Partnership as one of the four indicator species of Puget Sound's health—orcas, salmon, forage fish and pigeon guillemots.



Creosote. Urstad said the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had finished its Keystone Spit work and removed many of the large logs from the shore. Seitle said he is waiting to hear from Lisa Kaufman, hoping the DNR will go forward with removing the creosoted pilings of the old Langley Marina.

Budgets. Meehan shared copies of the budget, including a page summarizing the MRC budget, expenditures and remaining balance for Year 6 Administration and Action. He pointed out that the MRC work done by employees of his office typically is billed to Administration, but pieces of it must then be reallocated to the specific projects their work was supporting. The Direct Implementation Fund (DIF) grant, which supports primarily Shore Stewards, was not received until April. That is why his office drew first for Shore Stewards on MRC project funds. It will now back off those funds and use the DIF funds. By year-end the numbers will balance based on the original budget – it is a cash-flow issue. Meehan also pointed out that his office-budget lists Scott Chase under the Beach Watchers section because Meehan thinks of him as the Beach Watcher coordinator on Camano, but Chase works primarily for the Shore Stewards program and spends only a small portion of his time on Beach Watchers. This is part of the reason Beach Watchers has been advertising for a part-time employee to support the Beach Watcher coordinator, Kristen Cooley.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair - Kind

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) director. Kind reported that Lew Moore of Everett will succeed Tom Cowan as executive director of the NWSC. Moore formerly was on the staff of Congressman Jack Metcalf and was involved in developing the original legislation to create the Northwest Straits Commission. She said he brings some new perspectives and is especially interested in involving the business community in our work.

Derelict gear removal. The NWSC has about \$500-700,000 of funds available for derelict gear removal. Jeff June is organizing this work. About \$100,000 of this will be available for outreach.

Creosote. \$111,000 is available from NOAA for marine debris removal. These funds will be funneled through the nonprofit Northwest Straits Foundation.

Tunicate removal. Kind said some funds for tunicate removal also are coming from marinas where this species has invaded, and this also will be managed by Jeff June.

Genetic testing to identify derelict gear species. Kind said Joan Drinkwin of the Northwest Straits Foundation has developed a pre-proposal to do genetic testing to identify the species of bones found under some derelict gear nets that have been killing marine life for many years.

NWSC fall conference. The fall conference will be Nov. 3-4 at Rosario. It will be scheduled to fit with the ferry schedule and transportation will be provided so the members will not have to bring a car.

Kind elected vice-chair of NWSC. Kind reported she has been elected vice-chair of the NWSC, effective now.

NWSC communication audit. Kind asked Pedersen to comment on the NWSC’s recent communication audit. Pedersen reported he had participated in a telephone interview with Robin Freedman of Resource Media, providing feedback in response to questions about the MRC’s outreach priorities and how the NWSC could better support them.

SPEAKER

Feeder Bluff Survey – An Overview Designed for Data-Set Users

Jim Johannessen

Coastal Geologic Services

Johannessen said the final report is now complete for his feeder bluff survey of Island County. The data are much the same as outlined at his MRC presentation a year ago at Trinity Lutheran Church. His project was to map the sediment sources--feeder bluffs and “feeder bluffs exceptional”--as well as the transport zones and the accretion shoreforms. He also reviewed historic data, some of which was useful especially in areas that have been heavily modified. But he also found some disagreement between historic and current data, and much of the historic data was mapped on a very different scale. Johannessen shared a ranking scheme he had developed for segment-ranking of feeder bluffs and feeder bluffs exceptional, assigning weighted point values for characteristics observed in the field. These characteristics include wave action, bluff height, recent landslides, toe erosion and distance from the divergent zone, among others. Johannessen suggested that one potential use of his data might be to prioritize future restoration and conservation opportunities according to how high they score in point values. The higher-scored feeder bluff segments would present greater or more important opportunities than lower-scored segments, for example. Palka asked whether it’s possible to take these data and make projections of what would happen to shoreline habitat over a period of years under different policy scenarios. Johannessen said it would be difficult to quantify because we have a number of segments in any one drift cell and most of these drift cells are quite long – maybe 15 miles. It would be difficult to predict what would happen on any one beach. Palka said it might be worthwhile from a planning perspective to try to frame questions around a cumulative effect. Johannessen said that’s a crucial point. What happens is the result of a combination of factors. Bulkheading, water quality and all the other issues tend to be cumulative. Johannessen said one way his data could be used would be to help determine whether to let an individual who lives at one location within a certain drift cell build a bulkhead, as opposed to an individual who lives at a different location. Johannessen cautioned that the point scheme he assigned to bluff attributes is somewhat arbitrary. He commented that another way to use this information might be to link it more closely to habitat, although these are big and complicated issues. Meehan said this had always been our intention, so we could better understand how feeder bluffs affect forage fish habitat, for example.

ADJOURNMENT: 6:00 pm

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

Coming Events

June-July-August (Summer Schedule) – Only One Meeting Per Month

- July 13** Thursday. **Tom Cowan** retirement party, late afternoon at **NWSC, Padilla Bay**
- July 19** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, **Freeland**
- Aug. 2** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, **Oak Harbor.**
- Sept. 6** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, **Oak Harbor**
- Sept. 20** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, **Freeland**
- Sep. 28** Thursday **Bill Ruckelshaus** lecture at Whidbey Institute, **Clinton.**
- Nov. 3-4** Friday-Saturday, NWSC fall conference at Rosario Resort, **Orcas Island.**