



Marine Resources

Minutes

August 2, 2006

4:04 – 6:03 pm, Heller Road Firehall
Oak Harbor

www.islandcountymrc.org

PRESENT: Chair **Phyllis Kind, Hi Bronson, Tom Campbell, Ian Jefferds, Don Meehan, Johnny Palka, Rolf Seitle, Benye Weber**, Communications Mgr. **Dan Pedersen**. **ALTERNATES:** None. **ABSENT:** **Joe Hillers, Jeff Tate, Dick Toft, Ken Urstad**, Executive Director **Gary Wood**. **VISITORS:** **Linda Lyshall**, Puget Sound Action Team, **Rex Porter**, Watershed Project Manager, Island County Planning Department. **CALL TO ORDER:** 4:04 pm. Kind called the meeting to order. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted with several additions. **MINUTES** of 7-19-2006: Adopted. Motion by Meehan, second by Bronson, carried unanimously.

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

Executive director. Meehan read an e-mail from Executive Director Gary Wood requesting termination of his contract with the MRC. **Meehan, Bronson** and **Kind** will serve as a committee to develop recommendations about the duties and qualifications of a new executive director.

Tidal power generation. **Seitle** will draft a letter for the county commissioners to sign, requesting that Island County MRC be kept informed of all activities and developments relating to the recent applications to explore the generation of power from tidal currents at Deception Pass and Admiralty Inlet. **Meehan** will ask the county prosecuting attorney whether we should also file a motion to intervene. (Consensus.)

Northwest Straits ecosystem projects. Motion by Campbell, second by Weber, carried unanimously, to prioritize our recommended ecosystem-wide projects for the NWSC as follows: 1) Further investigations of forage fish and their trophic interactions, and 2) Multidisciplinary study on a single drift cell to look at effects of oceanographic processes, freshwater input, sedimentation, and contaminants on habitat processes and biota.

Puget Sound Partnership. **Meehan** will prepare a letter to the Puget Sound Partnership and **Palka** will review/edit it, urging them to replicate the model of the Northwest Straits Commission in south Puget Sound.

MRC poster - NWSC fall conference. A committee of **Kind, Meehan, Toft, Pedersen** and designer **Stacey Neumiller** will develop a new MRC poster for the NWSC fall conference, built around the themes of science, education and stewardship.

Executive director compensation. Motion by Meehan, second by Bronson, carried unanimously to allocate at least \$15,000 annually for an executive director.

CORRESPONDENCE

Gary Wood resignation. Meehan read an e-mail received earlier in the day from Executive Director Wood, "Please accept this as my formal notice requesting termination of the Intertidal Consulting contract to provide executive director services to the Island County Marine Resources Committee. I tried

to further the goals of the MRC since its inception and wish to pursue new opportunities at this time. Please convey my best wishes for continued success in all future MRC efforts. Sincerely, Gary Wood.” In light of this note, Meehan said he asked the Island County Commissioners to set aside the letter the MRC had sent them on this same matter. He suggested the MRC form a small committee to look at the duties of a future executive director. **Meehan, Bronson and Kind** volunteered.

Snohomish County Public Utility District (PUD) tidal current power generation. Kind read a letter she had received in response to her letter to the general manager of Snohomish PUD inquiring about their recent application for preliminary study permits to investigate the environmental impact of generating electrical power with underwater turbines at two sites in Island County waters. He stated they had applied for study permits at seven sites: Deception Pass, Admiralty Inlet, Agate Pass, Rich Passage, Guemes Channel, San Juan Channel southern entrance and Spieden Channel. He said he expects a decision on their applications in August or September, and that Snohomish PUD has made no commitment beyond studying the feasibility of these sites and would move forward only after careful due diligence and public discussion. He also said Snohomish PUD’s application for Deception Pass is competing with an application from an out-of-region entity that has filed dozens of such applications throughout the country with the hope of gaining control of those sites. He said the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) generally favors the first entity that files an application. Upon learning of the Deception Pass filing he said they expedited their efforts to meet FERC’s 60-day deadline for competing applications. Had they not done so he said believes Snohomish PUD would have lost the opportunity for a local entity such as themselves to study the sites from the perspective of Puget Sound’s residents. Kind suggested we either ask Snohomish PUD to speak at a future MRC meeting or, alternatively, that we sponsor a larger public meeting on this subject some evening. Lyshall commented that she, too, is following developments on this topic on behalf of Puget Sound Action Team. She said it’s too soon to know whether this is a good idea or not, environmentally. She said it appears the turbines would turn very slowly and have a large opening in them, minimizing any impact on fish. Seitle said he, also, has been doing some research on it. He pointed out the turbines would have to be anchored to the bottom, which could significantly affect bottom-dwelling marine life. He said it appears there would be peaks and valleys in power generation, with the turbines going quiet during slack water between tides.

Seitle pointed out that Friends of San Juan County has filed a motion to intervene, so they will be kept informed of all developments with respect to this application. In their motion, they pointed out that since there were currently no parties to the application other than the applicant, this left public and environmental interests of San Juan County unrepresented. He suggested Island County MRC do likewise. Seitle said in addition to environmental issues this application also raises esthetic issues, in terms of how the support systems are constructed. A substation would need to be located somewhere nearby because the generators operate at a much lower voltage than the transmission lines. So these turbines would need to be accompanied by underwater cables, transmission lines and a substation, which could have a significant esthetic impact. Campbell said he thinks we need to have something in the file so the MRC won’t be ignored. He suggested we ask the county commissioners to ask the applicants to keep the MRC informed. Meehan suggested that Seitle draft a letter for the county commissioners to sign, asking the applicants to do this so that we will receive all current information about activities relating to the Deception Pass and Admiralty Inlet applications. On the side, he suggested we ask the county prosecuting attorney whether we should also file a motion to intervene on behalf of Island County. (Consensus.)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Restoration sites for our new NFWF grant. Starting in October 2006 and continuing through December of 2007, the MRC will receive about \$164,000 for restoration projects and another \$60,000 to manage them. Meehan said Beach Watchers will do some monitoring in connection with this work. Our first step really is to get an executive director hired to help manage these projects. With the assistance of Kim Bredensteiner the MRC already has reviewed the list of potential projects identified by Jim

Johannessen. In addition, Meehan said Ranger Jack Hart of Deception Pass State park has identified a couple of promising projects for us to consider in partnership with State Parks. Seitle reported he has spoken with Lisa Kaufman of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) about creosote piling removal at Langley Marina and the old boat launch. Seitle said the Port of South Whidbey could manage this project on behalf of the MRC if we go forward with it. Rex Porter asked whether the MRC's review of potential projects includes traceability through a filter or set of filters. Meehan said no list has yet been constructed.

Porter suggested it would be a good idea to filter these potential projects through a set of uniform parameters. He said he and Bredensteiner could work on this if the MRC so wishes, which would help establish an audit trail. Palka agreed, pointing out that otherwise the selection of projects comes down to personal judgments based on information that may not be cross-comparable to all sites. Meehan said he likes the idea, especially if the filters take into account the eelgrass and forage fish work we've done. Porter said he and Bredensteiner would try to develop something useful for presentation to the MRC at one of the September meetings.

Signage. Pedersen said he suggested to Meehan and Kind recently that we should develop a timeline to physically install our first signage by year-end. Coupeville Wharf is our first intended site and we are well into the process of developing the art. The next big step is talking to the Design Review Board and making sure they are comfortable with what we want to do. Weber commented that the Design Review Board has rules about signage, including acceptable colors. Pedersen said one unanswered question at this point is whether the Design Review Board might want us to put our signage in custom-built physical hardware that cannot be purchased from an outside supplier. This would add a layer of complication. He said Kris Wiltse, our artist, is working right now on the concepts for the two local panels that will accompany the common panel at Coupeville. In response to feedback given at the July 19 meeting we have added a location map and the MRC logo to the common panel. Kind said that in reviewing the material presented at the last meeting, the words "and feed" should be removed from the text about pigeon guillemots, since many other birds also feed along our shores. Seitle said the space for our display is ready and waiting at Clinton Beach. Seitle asked whether the existing panel could be installed now at Clinton Beach. Pedersen said we might want to create custom art to fill the dimensions, perhaps blending the common panel with some of the information that would otherwise have gone on local panels at Clinton. Palka asked whether the signage study by Katrina Lassiter will feed back into the work we are doing. "Absolutely," Pedersen said. "We are in frequent communication with her and working closely."

NEW BUSINESS

Northwest Straits Ecosystem Projects. Kind introduced a discussion of four potential multi-MRC projects recommended by the NWSC Science Committee, plus a fifth idea suggested by Lew Moore. The NWSC has set aside about \$82,000 for a project that would be ecosystem-wide in nature. One of our concerns is that \$82,000 is far too modest to successfully complete some of the proposed projects, especially the suggestion by Lew Moore that NWSC participate in development of a numerical, computer-based model of the Northwest Straits waters and shorelines. Members felt this was essentially similar to the University of Washington's huge PRISM project and could consume millions of dollars.

Motion by Campbell, second by Weber, carried unanimously, to recommend as our first and second choices: 1) Further investigations of forage fish and their trophic interactions, and 2) Multidisciplinary study on a single drift cell to look at effects of oceanographic processes, freshwater input, sedimentation, and contaminants on habitat processes and biota.

Puget Sound Partnership. Meehan suggested we write the Puget Sound Partnership and urge them to replicate the model of the NWSC in the south sound. Palka said he would help edit a letter. Gov. Gregoire has set aside \$42 million, and (Jefferds says) recently added \$45 million more to accelerate a turnaround in the health of Puget Sound by the year 2020. Meehan says the governor will be asking the legislature for

additional money in the next session. He commented that the University of Washington and WSU have formed The University Sound Partnership to tie in with this effort. Meehan said he would prepare a letter and have Palka review it.

NWSC fall conference. The fall conference will be Friday and Saturday, Nov. 3-4, at Rosario Resort on Orcas Island. Kind reported that Eugene Kozloff, professor emeritus from the University of Washington, will be the Friday evening speaker, on symbiosis, mutualism, parasitism and other interactions among animals. He is a widely published author on Northwest seashore life, animals and plants. Kind said she would like to have a new MRC poster for this conference, possibly built around the three words in our tagline – science, education and stewardship. Meehan suggested we form a small committee and use the talents of designer Stacey Neumiller. The committee will include Kind, Meehan, Pedersen, Toft and Neumiller.



NWSC 2006-7 grant. Meehan reported that our 2006-7 grant is being held up because we did not fulfill all the reporting requirements of our previous grant, arising from the unsettled situation surrounding our executive director contract. Meehan's office stepped in and prepared the report at the last moment, and is now in the process of making requested corrections and revisions. This situation should rapidly improve once we have a new executive director in place. Meehan pointed out that for our previous executive director contract we had allocated \$15,000. He urged we continue to use \$15,000 as the base of a new executive director contract and supplement it as we are able with additional funds as we define additional roles and duties for the executive director related to various projects and grants. **Motion by Meehan, second by Bronson, carried unanimously to allocate at least \$15,000 annually for an executive director.**

Water quality data compilation project. Rex Porter reported the project is going well. Our intern, Scott Harbour, is a good independent worker and his finished product shows promise of being a good investment of our money. Porter said Harbour plans to work into the school year and will have deliberables for us by September or early October.

Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

ADJOURNMENT: 6:03 pm

There being no further business, Kind declared the meeting adjourned at 6:03 pm.

Coming Events

- 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**
- Sept. 28** Thursday 7:30 pm, **Bill Ruckelshaus** lecture at Thomas Berry Hall, Whidbey Institute, **Clinton**, on Climate Change, Water and the Choices Ahead.
- Oct. 4** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, **Oak Harbor**
- Oct. 18** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, **Freeland**
- Nov. 1** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, **Oak Harbor**
- Nov. 3-4** Friday-Saturday, NWSC fall conference, Rosario Resort, **Orcas Island**
- Nov. 15** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, **Freeland**
- Dec. 6** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Heller Road Firehall, **Oak Harbor**
- Dec. 20** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, **Freeland**