



Marine Resources

Minutes

October 18, 2006

4:03 – 5:35 pm, Trinity Lutheran Church
Freeland

www.islandcountymrc.org

PRESENT: Chair Phyllis Kind, Hi Bronson, Tom Campbell, Joe Hillers, Don Meehan, Johnny Palka, Dick Toft, Ken Urstad, Communications Mgr. Dan Pedersen. **ALTERNATES:** None. **ABSENT:** Ian Jefferds, Rolf Seitle, Jeff Tate, Benye Weber. **VISITORS:** Scott Harbour, Coupeville, MRC summer intern Water Quality Data Collection Project. **CALL TO ORDER:** 4:03 pm. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted. **MINUTES** of 10-04-2006: Adopted. Motion by Urstad, second by Toft, carried unanimously. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

Annual retreat Dec. 6. The MRC rescheduled the annual retreat for 2-7 pm, Wednesday, Dec. 6, at Tom Campbell's home several miles outside Langley.

Nov. 1 MRC meeting cancelled. Because the date fell so close to the Nov. 3-4 NWSC Conference, the MRC cancelled the regularly scheduled Nov. 1 meeting.

Nov. 15 meeting moved to Oak Harbor. Since the Dec. 6 retreat is to be held on south Whidbey, the MRC moved the location of the Nov. 15 meeting to Heller Road Firehall in Oak Harbor to save Bronson a long drive from Camano. Hillers and Bredensteiner most likely will miss this meeting to attend a water quality Research Needs Conference at the University of Washington.

Water's Edge contracts. Because of a large increase in the scope of work for *Getting to the Water's Edge*, the MRC authorized Meehan to provide additional compensation to the three contractors, within the limit of funds available from book sponsors and pre-sales. **Motion by Palka, second by Campbell, carried unanimously, to authorize Meehan to do his best financially to make the contractors whole, within the limit of the available budget.**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

MRC retreat. Campbell volunteered his residence near Langley for the annual retreat, to be held from 2-7 pm, Wednesday, Dec. 6. Directions will be e-mailed. Space is limited. Kind said she estimates attendance will be 13, comprised of 10 board members, plus Pedersen, Porter and Bredensteiner. The agenda will focus on: 1) Review and analysis of what we have been doing. 2) Our five-year plan, and 3) Evaluation of restoration sites in our NFWF Grant. The meal will be potluck. Urstad volunteered to bring salmon. Meehan said he hopes Jefferds will provide mussels.

NEW BUSINESS

Nov. 1 MRC meeting cancelled. Members agreed to cancel the regularly-scheduled MRC meeting of Wednesday, Nov. 1, since it falls two days before the NWSC Conference at Rosario.

Nov. 15 Research Needs Conference. Kind pointed out that on Nov. 15, the date of our next regularly-scheduled MRC meeting, the Northwest Straits Commission is convening a Research Needs Conference at the University of Washington. The session will run from about 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., focusing on water quality. She said Ginny Broadhurst has invited a few representatives of our MRC to attend. Kind said Kim Bredensteiner would like to attend, and Kind believes Joe Hillers also should go. Now that the MRC has embarked on some water quality research, she said it could be quite valuable for us to participate in this discussion. Palka pointed out that the experts at the conference might help us determine what to do with the data we have assembled.

Nov. 15 MRC meeting moved to Oak Harbor. Meanwhile, the Nov. 15 MRC meeting will go ahead as planned, minus the individuals who are attending that day's Research Needs Conference. At the request of Hi Bronson the Nov. 15 meeting will be moved to Heller Road Firehall in Oak Harbor.

Seabirds and kayakers. Kind pointed out she attended a workshop last Saturday on the status of seabirds, led by John Bower, a professor at Western Washington University. She believes Bower may help us find an intern to work on next year's pigeon guillemot survey. She said she was interested to learn that kayakers are one of the greater threats to seabirds. This came as a revelation to those who have always felt kayaking was one of the more environmentally sensitive ways to be on the water. Kind said a graduate student recently completed a master's thesis on this subject and found that kayakers sometimes approach too close to nesting seabirds. The student observed one kayaker paddle toward an oystercatcher's nest, causing the adult oystercatcher to fly away, which created an opportunity for a bald eagle to move in and grab the eggs. She said she wished, in hindsight, we had known this in time to include a warning to kayakers in *Getting to the Water's Edge*. Pedersen commented that the book does, in fact, caution kayakers to keep a respectful distance from birds and marine mammals. Meehan urged Kind to request a copy of the thesis, suggesting we could then work with Beach Watchers and Pedersen to disseminate this information more widely.

PROJECT UPDATES

***Water's Edge* – reaching a wider audience.** Pedersen reported we have already seen a proof of the book from the printer. We expect delivery of our 5,000 copies just before or after the Northwest Straits' Rosario Conference. Pedersen said he and Meehan met last week with the Coupeville agents of Windermere Realty. We had hoped they might order 100 books as part of their corporate sponsorship, but instead they ordered 325 at \$10 apiece (\$1 above wholesale). Next Tuesday Meehan will talk to Windermere's Oak Harbor agents. The Oak Harbor office is three times as large as Coupeville, so we anticipate another large order. This means our distribution strategy is working. We had hoped that having a real estate partner would help us broaden our stewardship outreach beyond the usual Beach Watcher audience, providing access to newcomers who are just moving to Whidbey and Camano islands. With Windermere's help we are actually doing this. At this point, before we have sold a single copy, 700 books already are spoken for – 325 to Windermere, 225 to Island County Tourism and 150 to Island County Parks. Palka asked whether we will clear enough income from our print run of 5,000 copies to put the job back on the press if we need more. Pedersen said yes, our wholesale account should be in good shape to cover the cost of printing more.

Increase in *Water's Edge* project scope. Meehan pointed out that by the time *Water's Edge* was completed, it had grown far beyond the scope envisioned by the three contractors who produced it – Sarah Schmidt, Dan Pedersen and Stacey Neumiller. They set out initially to revise a 52-page book, which they expected might grow to 100 pages. Instead, it grew to 180 pages and much higher quality, with a solid stewardship message. He said each contractor invested probably \$2,000 more of time than their contracts anticipated. Meehan said he has conveyed this to the county commissioners and the MRC executive committee, all of whom support amending their contracts if funds can be found to compensate them for

some of the shortfall. He said he is assessing the funds available from sponsors and pre-sales before determining how much additional compensation he can offer the three contractors. **Motion by Palka, second by Campbell, carried unanimously, to give Meehan the authority to do his best financially to make the contractors whole, within the limit of the available budget.**

Signage. Pedersen reported that Ed Field, manager of the Port of South Whidbey, is eager to have the common panel completed for display in the port's glass case by Nov. 15 so he can include it when he presents the completed Clinton Beach project to the Inter-Agency Committee. Pedersen said artist, Kris Wiltse, is confident she can meet this schedule. Pedersen is starting to draft the message for four local panels to go in display bases on the picnic deck and pier at Clinton Beach. We will need to draft a new contract with Wiltse for these because her contract applies only to the three Coupeville panels. Pedersen said that before we apply to the Design Review Board for permission to install panels at Coupeville, we need to think about how we will dress them up to match the old, historic, wooden character of the wharf.

MRC tabletop display for Rosario. Kind asked about the status of the MRC's three-panel tabletop display for the NWSC's Rosario conference. Pedersen said Neumiller is starting on it – she called him about it today, and she knows what the deadline is.

Water quality. Hillers introduced Scott Harbour, a Pacific Lutheran University student from Coupeville who served as our intern last summer, compiling existing historical data about water quality in Island County marine waters. Harbour gave members an on-screen tour of the types of data he collected, saying he had pulled together just about everything he felt he could. Among the files in his report to the MRC were:

- **Contact log.** Harbour's contact log identifies the approximately 50 sources he consulted, when he talked to them, what he talked to them about, phone numbers and department or agency, color-coded by how useful they were, with the yellow section being the most useful.
- **Historical data.** Harbour said he talked to an individual named Lincoln Lore (sp?), who worked for the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration years ago. Lore's information concerned deep-water studies conducted at six locations in Saratoga Passage, Holmes Harbor and the Puget Sound Basin in the 1950s and 1960s. Harbour said the data measured dissolved oxygen and is especially interesting because Holmes Harbor has a sill at its entrance and actually becomes deeper as you enter it.
- **Maps file.** To visually represent the sites for which Harbour found water quality data he developed an interactive map of the county. By clicking on the map, it is possible to see all the sites in a given area for which he found data. In Penn Cove, for example, 18 Department of Health sites are shown.
- **Data.** There was no easy way to put the actual data on the map, so Harbour included data files that itemize all the findings. Among these are files from the Island County Health Department "Swim Program," Washington Department of Health "Beach Program" and Skagit River Systems Cooperative. Harbour said the Department of Health data dates from the present back to the late 1970s. Department of Ecology data goes from the present back to the early 70s.
- **Inaccessible data.** Harbour said he also included a section in his report about data he knows exists, but that he was not able to obtain. In some cases these were sources that collect data only sporadically and may not conduct monitoring consistently enough to add much value to the report. He said in the 1960s there was a proposal to put a nuclear power station on Kicket Island and that there may be water quality studies available on this, also. He said any such data would not be in digital format. Jan Newton, a University of Washington scientist, has this information and plans to undertake a historical data reclamation project in the next year or so to digitize all the available data at the University of Washington.

Hillers concluded the water quality presentation by giving an illustration of standard deviation of water temperatures collected hourly at a depth of 30 feet at Coffin Rock in Deception Pass, using data collected every hour of every day for a 365-day period.

Hillers said the challenge now is to interpret all this information gathered from so many collection points in such a way as to know what to say about a given area such as Penn Cove. Palka suggested we should ask the experts at the Nov. 15 Research Needs Conference to help us think about the best way to use this resource.

Meehan said that we, as a committee, need to decide what we mean by water quality. He said one person might define it as a healthy environment for fish; another might define it as a great view from their property. He thinks that for us an MRC, water quality should be a measure of how well the water supports life systems.

Hillers said he wanted to thank Scott Harbour publicly for his diligence in working so hard on this. The MRC gave Harbour a round of applause. Hillers said he also thinks the NWSC should consider a regional data project along these lines. Palka said we should explore whether this data could be used as part of the Puget Sound model proposed by Lew Moore.

Water quality buoy. Meehan reported that our water quality buoy is undergoing repairs for saltwater damage that occurred when it was deployed improperly. These repairs probably will cost about \$1,000. We paid \$5,000 for the buoy when we bought it used. Meehan said he has also located a high-gain antenna that would extend the buoy's transmitting range to the base station.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

County Lead -- Meehan

Executive director contract. Meehan said he hopes that by our next meeting, Nov. 15, Bronson and Toft will have had a chance to review the duties and job description for our new executive director, Rex Porter.

State investment in NWSC. Meehan said Lew Moore is working hard to secure some funding from the state for the NWSC. Moore is concerned that federal support may erode if Congress does not see state participation. Meehan said he has encouraged William Ruckelshaus to replicate the model in the south sound. Meehan said the south sound is a separate bioregion from the north sound and needs its own organization.

ADJOURNMENT: 5:35 pm

There being no further business, Kind declared the meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm.

MRC Calendar

- Nov. 1** Cancelled 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** Relocated. Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meeting moved to Heller Road Firehall, **Oak Harbor**
- Dec. 6** Wednesday, 2-7 pm, **MRC retreat**, Tom Campbell residence, **Langley**
- Dec. 20** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, **Freeland**