



Marine Resources

Minutes

January 17, 2007

4:07 – 5:47 pm, Trinity Lutheran Church
Freeland

www.islandcountymrc.org

PRESENT: Chair **Dick Toft**, **Hi Bronson**, **Tom Campbell**, **Joe Hillers**, **Don Meehan**, **Rolf Seitle**, **Ken Urstad**, Executive Director **Rex Porter**, Communications Mgr. **Dan Pedersen**. **ALTERNATES:** Kim Bredensteiner for Weber; Pedersen for Kind. **ABSENT:** **Phyllis Kind**, **Ian Jefferds**, **Johnny Palka**, **Jeff Tate**, **Benye Weber**. **VISITORS:** **Nancy Waddell**, Whidbey Watershed Stewards; **Kim Bredensteiner**, Salmon Recovery Program, Coupeville. **CALL TO ORDER:** 4:07 pm. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted. **MINUTES** of 1-03-2007: Adopted. Motion by Bronson, second by Urstad, carried unanimously. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

Water's Edge financial accounting. **Meehan** will present a financial report at the Feb. 7 meeting on *Water's Edge* sales, income and expenditures.

Meeting locations. **Meehan** will submit a request to reserve the commissioners' hearing room for bi-weekly MRC meetings for the duration of 2007. The MRC will decide at the Feb. 7 meeting whether to adopt this change.

Educational speakers. **Porter** will revive our practice of inviting an educational speaker to one meeting a month, starting with an invitation to Eric Beamer of Skagit River Systems Cooperative to speak at the Feb. 21 meeting.

Shoreline signage. **Toft** will convene a subcommittee with Jefferds and Weber to advance the process of installing our signage at Coupeville Wharf.

Strategic planning. **Toft** will lead a discussion of MRC strategic planning at our Feb. 7 meeting.

Attendance and absences. **Toft** requests that MRC members e-mail him and cc Pedersen any time they will be unable to attend a meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Executive director contract status. Meehan reported that he expects the county commissioners will sign Porter's contract when they meet Monday, Jan. 22.

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF grant). Porter reported that he and Bredensteiner had met with Jack Hartt, manager of Deception Pass State Park. Our two highest priority sites for the NFWF restoration grant are side-by-side locations under Hartt's jurisdiction at Cornet Bay. Porter said Hartt is excited and committed to these nearshore projects. Our grant is for work relating to eelgrass, forage fish and creosote. The two projects we originally envisioned at Cornet Bay addressed eelgrass and forage fish. Hartt is proposing a third component that would expand this to creosote, as well, by replacing the high-use pier and floats. Porter will outline the proposal in greater detail at the MRC's Feb. 7 meeting.

Sound Waters University. Meehan reported that as of yesterday 450 students and instructors were registered for Sound Waters. He said attendance will be capped when it hits 550 – the maximum the

facility can accommodate. Surprisingly, the first class to fill was not the seafood demonstration but shoreline processes. Brad Ack of Puget Sound Action Team will deliver the keynote.

Getting to the Water's Edge. Meehan said it was with great joy that he shared *Water's Edge* at the Northwest Straits retreat today. He told the NWSC that in just the first two months we sold or distributed 2,700 of the 5,000 copies printed, and the book continues to sell briskly after Christmas. Meehan said he also shared a story with the NWSC that was passed along by Melissa Russell, who works in his office. Russell's husband gave copies to the members of his team at Whidbey Telecom and also to Marian Henny, whose family owns the company. Henny wrote back that she had read the entire book, and that even though she has lived on Whidbey for many years, she learned a great deal from it. Meehan pointed out that this falls right into the pattern of remarks we receive again and again – that people are reading and learning from the stewardship messages we included throughout the book. “People are getting it – that’s what they are commenting on,” he said. Urstad asked at what point we will print more books. Meehan said we probably would not simply reorder but would do some revising, and that he thought it might come in about two years. Pedersen said rather than simply print additional copies of the same book, we might want to change the book enough to cause those who already own it to want the new edition.

Exclusive commercial sponsorships. Campbell asked again why we are wholesaling the book to one real estate brokerage and allowing them a “real estate exclusive” to distribute it. He said he does not feel the MRC name should be associated with commercial competition. He said he became even more concerned when heard we are actually losing money on every copy we sell. “If that’s the case, let’s not wholesale any more books.” Toft said he understood Campbell’s point about commercial exclusivity and agrees we should be sensitive in the future. Meehan pointed out we turned to the business community when we saw we did not have enough grant funding to print it. Over the course of a year the project had grown larger and more expensive. The NWSC had declined our request for additional grant funds. No one was available to go door-to-door to solicit sponsors, so with the limited time and resources we had, we engaged those sponsors we could find. Windermere gave us an outright contribution in return for being the exclusive real-estate sponsor. Pedersen pointed out we went back later and asked Windermere if they would increase their contribution in return for some books to distribute to their customers, and they agreed. This solved two problems – providing money to print the book as well as opening a distribution channel to new home-buyers, an audience we wanted to reach. That’s how it came about.

Wholesale price. Commenting on Campbell’s observation that our \$9 wholesale price is below cost, Meehan pointed out that making money is not the book’s purpose – its mission is influence the attitudes and behaviors of the widest possible audience. Our goal is to get the book into the hands of the community. Pedersen pointed out the book is primarily grant-funded. The wholesale income from its sale flows into a dedicated account and replaces most of the grant money. Meehan pointed out that our \$15 cover price helps us achieve the broad distribution we wanted. Pedersen said many discussions took place during the book’s development about what price to charge. The whole time we were having these discussions there was no physical book to evaluate – only the promise that we intended to publish a book, that we thought it would be good, and we hoped people would buy it. Some people wanted to keep the price under \$10. Most seemed to feel \$15 was the high end of what we should ask. Pedersen argued for the \$15 figure. Originally we had expected to wholesale it for \$7.50, or 50 percent of retail, which is fairly standard in the book business. Shortly before we printed the book we raised the wholesale price to \$9, or 60 percent of retail, which was about the maximum we felt bookstores would accept. Meehan stressed we are keeping a complete accounting of all sales activity and that at the next MRC meeting he will provide a financial breakout of development and printing costs, and how the money is flowing into the wholesale account. Campbell said he feels that even though we are not in the money-making business, we should be in the break-even business.

Keystone Ferry Terminal project. Urstad said he received a call from Paul Whitman of the state ferry system. He understands the Keystone Ferry Terminal project is essentially on hold and the ferry system

would like to schedule more public meetings. He understands the city of Port Townsend strongly favors two boats, rather than one, because of the traffic congestion a larger boat would create. Toft pointed out that as an MRC we need to be careful about letting the proponents of any particular position use our name without some careful thought and discussion. Seitle pointed out we have already expressed our position pretty clearly in the letter we sent WSF last year about environmental concerns. Members should review that letter to refresh their memory of the MRC's position as accepted by the county commissioners.

NEW BUSINESS

Holmes Harbor Shellfish Protection District. Seitle said that, on behalf of the Port of South Whidbey, he attended a meeting yesterday on creation of the Holmes Harbor Shellfish Protection District. He said he wondered why the MRC was not formally involved. Porter replied the MRC is involved – that Kind had received an invitation and referred it to Hillers, our board member in charge of water quality. Several of our members, including Porter, are participating while wearing two hats. Urstad said he attended on behalf of the North Bluff Association. Seitle expressed worries that the district will spend money and produce talk but no action, correction or enforcement. Meehan said he understood the district would primarily use education as the way to get people to change their behaviors, but that monitoring would take place, and the monitoring would work its way upstream in an effort to identify the source of the fecal material flowing into Holmes Harbor. He said it's all about getting the local citizens of Holmes Harbor to accept responsibility. Seitle said he thinks it's fairly clear the source is septic tanks and this kind of approach has no teeth. Porter said creation of the shellfish district does not involve creating any new laws, but that the county can use its existing laws to get property owners to correct the problem. Bronson pointed out that septic regulations will change soon at the local level because of changes that are occurring July 1 at the state level. Seitle mentioned that in his previous experience in California, if people did not correct the problem their water was turned off. Bredensteiner pointed out that on Whidbey Island many people get their water from wells, and the county has no ability to turn it off. At this point the biggest problem is source identification.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

County Lead – Meehan

Bredensteiner role with MRC. Given Bredensteiner's great value to the MRC, the infrequency of Tate's attendance and the loss of Joe Burcar's services as Tate's permanent alternate, Meehan said he has been exploring whether the Planning Department might agree to Bredensteiner serving as Tate's permanent alternate. But he said he has been unable to put this together. Bredensteiner suggested Meehan explore the possibility of appointing the new shoreline planner, Matt Kukuk, or the water quality manager, Chris Wilson.

Lyceum series. Meehan said his office is now a partner in the Lyceum Series with Whidbey Institute, Whidbey Watershed Stewards and Whidbey Audubon. Nancy Waddell said this year's Lyceum, on climate change, will be held at 7:30 pm every Tuesday in April and the first two Tuesdays in May. Speakers will explore such subjects as the impact on orcas, the economics of climate change, weather, birds, and what people can do to help.

Executive Director – Porter

University of Washington project proposal. Porter said he has drafted a project proposal in response to an opportunity from the University of Washington. The proposal is for a team of environmental sciences students to draft an adaptive management plan that could be adopted as an active annex to the salmon recovery plan. He will circulate this draft to MRC members for comments.

Educational speakers. Porter said he'd like to revive the practice of having educational speakers at every other MRC meeting, starting Feb. 21 with Eric Beamer of Skagit River System Cooperative. He feels it

may be timely to hear from Beamer in light of our discussion at the last meeting about possibly earmarking some funding in our next work plan for Beamer to analyze and report on data collected during seining activities in Island County estuaries.

Meeting locations. Meehan said he wanted to revisit the Jan. 3 discussion about MRC meeting locations, which he had missed. At the Jan. 3 meeting, the group had considered changing the regular meeting location to Coupeville from Oak Harbor and Freeland. Weber had said she felt it was important to continue reaching out to north Whidbey people by meeting in Oak Harbor, even though the public rarely attends. Nancy Waddell said she would love to see the MRC switch to the commissioners' hearing room in Coupeville because it would be much easier for her to get there from South Whidbey by taking the bus. Porter said he had checked and found the hearing room is available at our normal times. Bredensteiner commented that a Coupeville meeting location would be more convenient for county employees and probably would attract better attendance by them. Meehan pointed out the commissioners' hearing room would offer video conferencing capabilities, enabling Camano people to participate without making the long drive. An added benefit is that the room is always set up for PowerPoint and other visual presentations so speakers would not need to bring their own equipment. Toft suggested we make a decision at our Feb. 7 meeting. To make sure we don't lose the room between now and then, Toft asked Meehan, as a county department head, to reserve the room for the first and third Wednesdays for the entire year, from 4-6 pm.

Skagit County Report to the Community. Meehan said Skagit County MRC has compiled a report to the community modeled along the lines of the one we published several years ago.

Chair -- Toft

Shoreline signage. Toft reported he had met with Pedersen and discussed the signage project. He said he will meet with Jefferds and Weber, and work out a strategy to take some of the load. Pedersen will continue to own the wordsmithing, but Toft will form a subcommittee to work on the implementation starting with Coupeville, then finishing Clinton, then Oak Harbor and ultimately over to Camano Island. Nancy Waddell commented she has been elected president of the Maxwellton Community Club. Her organization is interested in signage and might bring some funds to it as a partner.

Strategic planning. Toft said strategic planning was a main topic of the NWSC retreat and he would like the MRC to spend some time at the Feb. 7 meeting talking about where we are and where we want to go. We need to focus, and whatever we do, we should strive to do it well.

Meeting attendance / excused absences. Toft requested that, as a courtesy, MRC members e-mail him and cc Pedersen if they will have to miss a meeting, so we will know not to expect them.

PUBLIC INPUT

Whidbey Watershed Stewards. Waddell commented that Whidbey Watershed Stewards recently received a grant for culvert replacement on Lower Quade Creek, and that they are actively looking for other planting and culvert replacement projects on Whidbey Island. "We have a good volunteer base."

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, Toft declared the meeting adjourned at 5:47 pm.

MRC Calendar

- Feb. 21** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at Trinity Lutheran Church, **Freeland.**
Speaker Eric Beamer, Skagit River Systems Cooperative.
- Mar. 7** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets in Room 116, County Admin. Building, **Coupeville.**
- Mar. 21** Wednesday, 4-6 pm, MRC meets at location To Be Determined.