



Marine Resources

Minutes

February 7, 2007

4:03 – 6:06 pm, Heller Road Firehall
Oak Harbor

www.islandcountymrc.org

PRESENT: Chair **Dick Toft**, **Hi Bronson**, **Tom Campbell**, **Joe Hillers**, **Ian Jefferds**, **Don Meehan**, **Ken Urstad**, Executive Director **Rex Porter**, Communications Mgr. **Dan Pedersen**. **ALTERNATES:** Kim Bredensteiner for Weber; Pedersen for Kind. **ABSENT:** **Phyllis Kind**, **Johnny Palka**, **Rolf Seitle**, **Jeff Tate**, **Benye Weber**. *Toft noted that Seitle, Kind, Weber and Palka had e-mailed they would be unable to attend. Tate e-mailed that the Planning Department has chosen an alternate for him and they would commit to attending Feb. 21.* **VISITORS:** **Linda Lyshall**, Puget Sound Action Team; **Kim Bredensteiner**, Salmon Recovery Program, Coupeville. **CALL TO ORDER:** 4:03 pm. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted. **MINUTES** of 1-17-2007: Adopted. Motion by Campbell, second by Bronson, carried unanimously. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

NFWF grant – Cornet Bay projects. The MRC authorized Porter to proceed with three side-by-side projects at Cornet Bay in partnership with state parks, under our NFWF grant. Motion by Campbell, second by Hillers, carried unanimously.

Strategic planning. The MRC will devote an upcoming regularly-scheduled meeting to a three-hour strategic planning session, from 3-6 pm. **Meehan** will ask Duane Fagergren if he could facilitate. The session will focus on defining our vision and big-picture priorities within the NWSC benchmarks.

Educational speakers for 2007. Porter asks the **MRC members** to recommend speakers to him for our monthly educational programs for the rest of 2007.

Juvenile salmon use reporting. **Porter** will put this topic on the agenda for March 7.

Shoreline signage. **Toft** and **Pedersen** will meet with the manager of the Port of Coupeville to discuss options for physically displaying our signage on Coupeville Wharf.

Financial reporting. **Porter** will give his first financial report at the March 7 meeting.

MRC website. Meehan asks **MRC members** to review our website, www.islandcountymrc.org and provide recommendations for the upcoming overhaul. **The executive committee** will meet in the next month to discuss how to proceed.

Meeting space. **Toft** will explore whether some arrangement can be negotiated with the county and with Weight Watchers to secure the Commissioners' Hearing Room as an MRC meeting location.

Puget Sound – Georgia Basin Conference scholarship. **Toft** will e-mail the MRC members regarding selection of a representative from our MRC to attend this conference with tuition paid by the NWSC.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Executive director contract status. Meehan reported that Porter now has a signed contract.

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF grant). Porter reminded the group that in 2006, former executive director, Gary Wood, applied successfully to NFWF for about \$200,000 to spend on nearshore projects relating to eelgrass, creosote and forage fish. We proposed to NFWF that we would select projects from a long list of opportunities identified by Jim Johannessen during his feeder bluff study. The

MRC identified as its top priorities two side-by-side projects at Cornet Bay in partnership with Deception Pass State Park, focusing on eelgrass and forage fish. The proposed work would replace a creosoted bulkhead with a less-toxic, less-armored shoreline alternative, yet to be determined. The park would replace an adjacent septic system with a tight-line system. Park superintendent, Jack Hartt, also suggested replacing an adjacent creosoted over-water pier with a non-creosoted structure. Parks would provide the labor. We are exploring whether The Department of Natural Resources might join us as a partner to help with creosote removal. Porter suggested we pursue design work for all three projects under the NFWF grant with a goal of completing on-the-ground work for at least one of them. If our NFWF monies fall short of funding all three parts, a completed design would put us in a strong position to pursue other grant sources for the remaining work. Campbell asked whether the park service's goals are the same as the MRC's. Porter replied they may not be identical but all parties want to improve eelgrass and forage fish habitat, and remove creosote from the environment. At this stage we do not know what type of structure might replace the creosoted bulkhead. Several alternatives will be considered. Bredensteiner pointed out the park service probably does not want to lose the uplands behind the current bulkhead, but would be receptive to a more environmentally-desirable alternative. **Motion by Campbell, second by Hillers, carried unanimously, authorizing Porter to partner with state parks and go forward with design of three side-by-side projects at Cornet Bay under our NFWF grant.**

Strategic planning. Toft pointed out we need to finish the strategic planning we started at our December retreat. Jefferds urged the group to think broadly about marine resources. Our responsibility is not just to address recreation but also commercial use. He cited aquaculture and boat-building as examples. Toft pointed out the MRC also has a role to play in the Keystone ferry terminal discussion, which relates to non-recreational use of our waters, and in Oak Harbor's plans for a waterfront park that would include a dock to be served by passenger-carrying vessels that would stop at other island communities, too.

Pedersen commented that our 2007 Work Plan describes what we are currently doing. He suggested that before we opportunistically embark on new projects we step back and look at the NWSC benchmarks and do some brainstorming about what we should be doing. We are engaged in a tremendous number of projects that are not necessarily well distributed across the benchmarks. He suggested we define our vision and let it guide which projects we select as priorities, rather than allow our projects to drive us.

Toft suggested we dedicate an upcoming meeting to some big-picture brainstorming, but leave the specifics till later. Jefferds suggested listing the benchmarks on a board and asking the group to engage in a freewheeling discussion about each one. Bredensteiner encouraged the group to use a facilitator to keep the discussion focused. Meehan suggested Duane Fagergren. Toft suggested we use one of our scheduled Wednesday meetings, but start at 3 pm and go for three hours. Meehan will contact Fagergren.

Educational speakers. Porter confirmed that Eric Beamer of Skagit River Systems Cooperative will speak at our Feb. 21 meeting at Trinity Lutheran Church. He will update the MRC on what's been learned about how juvenile salmon use the pocket estuaries of Whidbey Basin. Porter asks MRC members to send him their recommendations on candidates to fill the remaining monthly speaker slots for 2007.

Camano non-point pollution plan. Bronson reported that a citizens' group on Camano has nearly finished work on this plan. MRC member Jeff Tate is now the group's lead at the county, working with the commissioners. Nearly all the group's recommendations have been embraced. Bronson said the goal is to publish the plan in March. He said the project had languished for a time until Lynda Lyshall of Puget Sound Action Team stepped in. She was a great help and is held in high regard by all.

NEW BUSINESS

Juvenile salmon use reporting. Porter reminded the group that at a previous meeting we discussed using some MRC funds to help fund the preparation of reports on salmon usage of the county's pocket estuaries. He said a decision will be easier to make after we hear Eric Beamer's presentation at our Feb.

21 meeting. Bredensteiner said there is a need to conduct community outreach in the neighborhoods where seining studies are under way, and also to integrate the west Whidbey data collected by Washington Trout with the Whidbey Basin data being collected by Beach Watchers and compiled by Beamer. Porter said he'd like to put this item on the agenda for further discussion at the March 7 meeting.

PROJECT REPORTS

Shore Stewards. Bronson reported that Scott Chase enrolled 24 more Shore Stewards at last Saturday's Sound Waters University. Bronson said he observed many individuals studying the Shore Stewards cards in their information packets, and he thinks additional sign-ups may follow. This year Chase has enrolled 30 new Shore Stewards, mostly from Whidbey. Total enrollment is now 352 – of whom 155 are from Whidbey and 197 from Camano. Bronson said Chase has learned his newsletter is being photocopied and distributed further within some organizations and governmental departments, which is terrific.

Water's Edge. Pedersen reported that, since Christmas, it appears the six largest bookstores and shops carrying *Water's Edge* each have been selling about one per day. We have about 30 outlets all together. He estimates we are selling about 10 copies a day and may deplete our remaining 2,000+ books within about 200+ calendar days. So we may need to reprint as early as this summer. Meehan shared a spreadsheet of the book's finances. Total costs were \$56,228 and the revenue from grants and private funding was \$56,299. Pedersen pointed out that when we reprint, we will have almost no development costs except for some small fixes. So our wholesale price of \$9 will become more profitable as we amortize our one-time development costs across a second printing.

Shoreline signage. Toft reported he had met with Pedersen and discussed our signage project. The next step is for Toft and Pedersen to meet with the manager of the Port of Coupeville and discuss how to display our signs the wharf. Meehan said he has heard great feedback on our panel at Clinton Beach.

Water quality. Hillers shared some data on average annual water temperature and salinity collected by the Department of Health (DOH) at three locations in Holmes Harbor from 1992-2005. He pointed out the numbers fluctuate within a narrow range and show no particular trend. But he said the information is of limited value because it is based on once-a-month observations made from March through October of each year. Because of the infrequency of the measurements, any large spikes may have gone unrecorded. Campbell commented the danger to marine life from a spike can occur within just a few days. Hillers said our own water quality buoy would provide much more complete information because it gathers data constantly. Jefferds commented that the DOH will often adjust their monitoring schedule and show up early if they think a significant event has occurred – such as a big rise in temperature. Jefferds commented that the data shown in the DOH measurements may reflect the annual averages, but that runoff causes some huge variations day-to-day in salinity, especially in the winter. Jefferds said he'd like compare the DOH data to what we find when we deploy our own buoy, collecting data every day. Members lamented that state agencies don't communicate well with one another and end up commissioning separate studies of the same problem instead of using their money to solve the problem. Bredensteiner suggested the MRC might use its contacts with various agencies to achieve better inter-agency coordination. Porter suggested this might be worth discussing further when we hold our strategic planning session.

Estuary seining. Urstad reported that seining is just about to start again at Race, Harrington, Ala Spit, Elger Bay and English Boom. The volunteers will be testing all the new equipment.

Bluff birds. In Kind's absence there was no report on the bluff bird project, but Jefferds expressed concern about the pressure on harlequin ducks caused by frequent guided waterfowl hunts in Penn Cove. He said scoters are abundant. Hunting has helped suppress the scoters' damage do to his aquaculture operation, but harlequins are rarer and he worries the guided hunts are taking a heavy toll on them.

Holmes Harbor Shellfish Protection District. Porter said this is proceeding on schedule. The public hearing will be at 7 pm, Monday, March 5 in Freeland.

Creosote. Urstad and Bredensteiner reported that the Beach Watchers on Camano had done a great job with their survey. Several interested parties met at Sound Waters and discussed where to focus the clean-up work this year, and agreed on the state park. Bredensteiner said this year's clean-up on Whidbey will again be at Ebey's Landing, Fort Casey and Double Bluff, because of the new material that has floated in.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Executive Director – Porter

Financial reports. Porter said he will give his first financial report at the March 7 meeting.

NWSC request for proposal. Our application is due April 6 for the next two-year funding cycle.

Reporting backlog. Porter said he is working with Sasha Horst to catch up on the deliverables we owe the NWSC from the period when we were without an executive director. Right now we owe them six of seven deliverables. His goal is to make steady progress each month till we are current.

Snohomish – Island MRC cooperation. Porter said his counterpart at Snohomish MRC has expressed an interest in working cooperatively with Island County MRC on several projects, and he will pursue this.

County Lead – Meehan

MRC website. Meehan said Pedersen has begun doing some clean-up of our MRC website, which is quite stale. The executive committee will meet in the next month or so to discuss how to proceed. He asked members to look at the website and provide input on what they'd like changed.

Port of Coupeville Comprehensive Plan. Meehan reported the Port of Coupeville is currently fleshing out its comprehensive plan with the public. The neat thing is that this is a community-based plan written by local citizens that values marine stewardship right alongside economics.

Sound Waters University. It was an absolutely great crowd – about 500. MRC members agreed it was a fabulous day and everyone was impressed with Brad Ack's talk. Meehan said that, on the evening before the event, Ack had dinner with some of the major players in Beach Watchers and learned a great deal about what's happening in Island County.

University Sound Partnership proposal. Meehan said he will talk with the MRC soon about a proposal from the University Sound Partnership to expand Beach Watchers and all the WSU water quality programs throughout Puget Sound. The proposal would also build up Sea Grant and create a role for the UW Fisheries School modeled after the land-grant WSU program that maintains his office. The Partnership would like to create a vehicle to use the resources of the UW School throughout the sound.

Chair – Toft

MRC meeting space. Toft reported that, contrary to what we had thought, the MRC does not have the commissioners' hearing room reserved for March 7. So today he reserved room 116 in the county administration building for this meeting. He also pointed out that on the first and third Wednesdays the county holds staff sessions in the hearing room that occasionally run past 4 pm. Furthermore, every Wednesday at 4:30 the hearing room is used by Weight Watchers. Toft said the hearing room has many points in its favor if we can get it. "Everything is negotiable," he said. He will check further.

Georgia Basin Conference scholarship. Toft said PSAT is offering a scholarship for one member of each MRC to attend the Georgia Basin Conference in Vancouver. He will canvas our group by e-mail.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, Toft declared the meeting adjourned at 6:06 pm.