

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Dan Pedersen

Feb. 3, 2009

CONFERENCE ROOM 131, LAW & JUSTICE BUILDING, COUPEVILLE

PRESENT: Chair **Ian Jefferds**, **Hi Bronson**, **Lenny Corin**, **John Dean**, **Joe Hillers**, **Dick Toft**, **Ken Urstad**, Executive Director **Rex Porter**, Communications Manager, **Dan Pedersen**.

ABSENT: **Leal Dickson** (in Peru), **Judy Feldman** (county budget hearing), **Phyllis Kind** (in Costa Rica), **Matt Kukuk** (unknown), **Lynae Slinden** (tending retail shop), **Benye Weber** (family medical situation).

VISITORS

Sarah Schmidt, Coupeville, MRC contractor for Cornet Bay and signage projects.

Scott Chase, Camano Island, Island County Shore Stewards.

Bob Buck, WSU Beach Watchers

Jim Somers, Oak Harbor, WSU Beach Watchers

Peg Urstad, Greenbank, WSU Beach Watchers

Todd Zackey, Marysville, Tulalip Tribes

Lynette Goodell, Accounting Supervisor, WSU Extension

Scott Ashworth, Service Education Adventure

Tom Albrecht, Greenbank, WSU Beach Watchers

Nancy Waddell, Clinton, Whidbey Watershed Stewards

Karen Bishop, Coupeville, Manager, Whidbey Island Conservation District

Stacey Smith, Natural Resource Planner, Whidbey Island Conservation District

CALL TO ORDER: 3:30 pm. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted.

MINUTES of Jan. 20, 2009: Approved. Motion by Hillers, second by Urstad, adopted by consensus.

CORRESPONDENCE: **MRC website domain name.** Following up on an item from the last meeting, Jefferds asked Pedersen to let him know when Feldman has completed the registration of www.islandcountymrc.com.

Action Items

LID tour – Whidbey Island Conservation District. Motion by Hillers, second by Urstad, carried unanimously, to support a request from Whidbey Island Conservation District for \$3,000 from the MRC to help sponsor a bus tour of low impact development sites on Whidbey Island.

WSU Beach Watchers' Juvenile Salmon Habitat Assessment Project

Bob Buck and Jim Somers

*Note: Jim Somers and Bob Buck are joint winners of the 2008 **Environmental Hero Award**, given by the National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Ten such awards are given nationally each year.*

Somers pointed out that WSU Beach Watchers have been seining since 2004. While the project is usually referred to as “the seining project,” or sometimes “the insane project,” the full name is the WSU Beach Watchers' Juvenile Salmon Habitat Assessment Project. Porter commented that although the team was working with NOAA until this year, that agency has suspended seining for now and the team's future work may shift to the MRC's Cornet Bay restoration project or a project in support of Tulalip salmon research. “There are a lot of reasons why we value this work,” Porter said.

Somers and Buck presented a short video produced by Don Meehan that showed the team working at Harrington Lagoon, to give a feel for what they do. Four to six team members wearing waders deploy an 80- by 6-foot net in water at least waist high. One end is held to the shore and the other is deployed in a large semi-circle from a floating tub. The net is weighted at the bottom. While deploying the net, the team also gathers water quality data including salinity and dissolved oxygen. Buck commented that at each location, multiple sub-sites are sampled. In the case of Harrington, the net is deployed at 10 different locations inside and outside the lagoon, pre-determined by specific global positioning coordinates. In addition to counting and identifying the fish they catch, team members measure the first 20 of each species at each site.

Somers said he and Buck were in the Beach Watchers graduating class of 2004. They decided to embark on this project to study estuaries on the island. Other team members developed a section of the Beach Watchers' website explaining the history, location and significance of the estuaries. Somers said Beach Watchers became involved because NOAA was doing some seining at Harrington and inquired whether Beach Watchers might like to assist. Anna Kagley, a NOAA fisheries biologist, had worked with Beach Watcher Harry Moore on salinity studies in Penn Cove when she was in graduate school. Kagley made the contact with Beach Watchers to bring them into this research.

Since then the Beach Watchers have done seining at Ala Spit, Race Lagoon, Harrington Lagoon, Elger Bay and English Boom. They have also partnered with Washington Fish Conservancy to study fish use at several sites on the west side of Whidbey – Deception Pass, Swan Lake, Useless Bay, Keystone and Possession Point, as well as Clinton ferry dock. Somers said the team took fin clips from wild Chinook salmon and sent them to NOAA for DNA analysis to determine the population of origin. Buck said protocols for the research came from Eric Beamer of Skagit River Systems Cooperative. NOAA adopted Beamer's protocols for collection of fish data and habitat assessment. Using funding from the MRC, the team purchased an 80 x 6' beach seine, YSI 8 water quality meter, tub for the net, and Cabellas waders and gloves for the “reliable volunteers.”

Somers pointed out the seining team operates with a take permit provided through NOAA Fisheries. A small number of fish must be sacrificed so NOAA may analyze their stomach

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contents. The team also removes the heads of any fish with clipped adipose fins and sends them to NOAA, since these heads contain a coded wire tag that identifies their hatchery of origin.

Buck said the team's plans for 2009 are up in the air. They've been talking with Todd Zackey of Tulalip Tribes about possibly doing some small-stream surveys. NOAA and the Skagit River Systems Cooperative feel they currently have as much data as they can use at this point, and lack the time and funding to analyze additional data. So the Beach Watchers team will not be seining at Harrington Lagoon. They hope to conduct a fish assessment at Cornet Bay.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Low Impact Development project recommendation. Porter introduced Karen Bishop and Stacey Smith of Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD). He pointed out that for the last two years the MRC has partnered with WICD. Last year the MRC helped sponsor a WICD workshop to certify contractors to lay pervious surfaces. Bishop and Smith are here today to recommend a project for the \$3,000 of MRC funds remaining for LID in the second year of our two-year NWSC grant. The will return two weeks from now to discuss LID ideas for our next two-year grant. Smith said originally they had expected to recommend the MRC contribute to a stormwater improvement project in Freeland Park, but that project currently is well funded. The project at Freeland Park involves re-paving, and rerouting stormwater through an engineered filtration system so it will be filtered by a rain garden. **LID tour proposal.** Instead, they are recommending the MRC help sponsor an educational tour of Whidbey Island LID sites for city and county planners, contractors, news media and the public. Smith said this is a logical next step in spreading awareness, understanding and adoption of LID strategies. "Most people at this point have heard of LID but haven't seen it, and therefore can't recommend it." She said she thinks they can fill at least one charter bus, possibly two, with 90 – 100 people. Many good rain gardens and demonstration sites now exist on Whidbey, including Harbor Station in Oak Harbor, the Walgreen's Pharmacy in Oak Harbor, Fort Nugent Park, Coupeville High School, Island County Annex, Freeland Park, Bayview Corner, The Highlands at Langley and Langley Fire Station. Smith shared a cost estimate of \$3,000, of which \$2,000 was designated for bus rental. She said she has been in touch with Whidbey Sea-Tac Shuttle but has not yet heard back from Island Transit. Several members encouraged her to explore the possibility of Island Transit donating a bus, since they are involved in LID projects of their own that could be highlighted on the tour. Corin pointed out that Island Transit park-and-rides are a good place to carry out public LID education. Toft commented, "They should be supporting this." He said there might be better ideas than a bus ride, but that if we get some coverage in the press this could be valuable. "This is another chance to reach out and get more bang for our buck." Corin admitted that until he heard today's presentation he could not have named most of the locations where LID projects have been implemented. **Motion by Hillers, second by Urstad, carried unanimously, to support a request from Whidbey Island Conservation District for \$3,000 from the MRC to help sponsor a bus tour of low impact development sites on Whidbey Island.**

Discussion of MRC-NWSC grant projects. Porter opened a discussion of the MRC's budget for the next two fiscal years. He explained the executive committee has met twice to discuss the budget, most recently with Ginny and Simon of the Northwest Straits Commission. One of their suggestions was to bundle our smaller projects into fewer, larger projects. One advantage is that this will allow us to shift up to 10 percent of funds internally within these groupings without having to amend our contracts. Porter organized 19 tasks into three large projects: 1) Nearshore Education & Outreach, 2) Nearshore Research, Data Collection and Analysis, and 3) Nearshore Restoration and Protection. He pointed out, "If you think about it, this is really who we are."

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Relative to the nearshore, for example, we are the center of excellence for education and outreach. We educate, we collect data and we do restoration.” Pedersen commented that Ginny and Simon had encouraged the MRC to take ownership of some signature projects. Looking at 19 separate projects individually, many of them appear relatively small, just a few thousand dollars apiece. But when we think of them together as a larger project called nearshore education, for example, it becomes obvious we are the major player in this work. Porter explained that for the last two fiscal years the MRC’s budget has been about \$100,000 per year. At this point no one knows how much funding the NWSC will receive from Congress. The NWSC has suggested that for the next two years we plan for an annual budget of about \$77,000 on the low end but make it scalable up to \$100,000 on the high end. Porter has done this in his preliminary projection. We’ll talk about this in more detail at our next meeting. If we end up having to operate at the \$77,000-per-year level for the next two years, the biggest change in Porter’s preliminary draft is to reduce Shore Stewards to \$21,000 per year from the current \$33,000. But if our budget remains at the \$100,000 level, he would propose funding Shore Stewards at \$32,000.

Porter pointed out that in the past we have received website maintenance essentially free from WSU Extension, but that this will no longer be the case and we will need to budget for it. He also said we need to start building a percentage of cost into each of our projects for bookkeeping support from the WSU Extension accounting supervisor.

ADJOURNMENT: Because of the hour and to accommodate another group waiting outside to use the conference room, no further business was considered. The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.

MRC Meetings and Events		
3:30 – 5:30 pm, first and third Tuesdays, Commissioners’ Hearing Room B-102 in Coupeville		
Feb 17	Tue	Business meeting. Discussion of 2010 – 2011 MRC work plan
Mar 3	Tue	Educational meeting. SEA – Service Education Adventure – the non-profit presentation on programs and potential partnerships
Mar 17	Tue	Business meeting
Apr 7	Tue	Educational meeting. Northwest Straits presentation on forage fish and related nearshore data integration results for Island County and Puget Sound
Apr 14	Tue	Business meeting
May 12	Tue	Educational meeting. To be determined
May 26		Business meeting