

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Dan Pedersen

Feb. 17, 2009

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' HEARING ROOM B-102, COUNTY ANNEX BLDG., COUPEVILLE

PRESENT: Chair Ian Jefferds, Hi Bronson, Lenny Corin, John Dean, Judy Feldman, Joe Hillers, Phyllis Kind, Matt Kukuk, Dick Toft, Benye Weber, Executive Director Rex Porter, Communications Manager, Dan Pedersen. **ABSENT:** Leal Dickson (in Peru), Lynae Slinden (tending retail shop), Ken Urstad (in Bend, Ore.) **VISITORS:** Scott Chase, Camano Island, Island County Shore Stewards.

CALL TO ORDER: 3:33 pm. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted. Motion by Hillers, second by Toft, adopted by consensus. **MINUTES** of Feb. 3, 2009: Approved. Motion by Hillers, second by Kind, adopted by consensus.

Action Items

Letter to WSU on proposed budget cuts. Motion by Hillers, second by Weber, that the MRC send a letter to WSU President Elson Floyd, WSU Provost Warwick Bayley, Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen, Rep. Norma Smith and Rep. Barbara Bailey in support of the WSU Extension programs. Motion to amend: Motion by Corin, second by Kind, that the letter be addressed to the president and provost, with copies to the three congressional and three state representatives, with a short cover letter expressing our concern. Voting in favor of the amendment: Jefferds, Bronson, Corin, Dean, Feldman, Kind, Kukuk, Toft, Weber. Opposed: Hillers. Motion as amended: Carried unanimously.

MRC Budget for FY 2010 and 2011. Motion by Hillers, second by Kind, amended and carried unanimously, to move forward with the proposed MRC budget as outlined by Executive Director Rex Porter.

CORRESPONDENCE: **Letter to WSU on proposed budget cuts.** Jefferds explained that earlier in the day, Pedersen had drafted an e-mail on behalf of the MRC and forwarded it to the group to consider. It was addressed to WSU President Elson Floyd and Provost Warwick Bayley, urging them not to make deep cuts in the Public Service sector of WSU. The WSU leadership is considering cutting either 49 or 75 percent from this sector, which includes the Extension Service. Jefferds said any cut of this size would "pretty much be the death knell" of the Extension program and our work with WSU Beach Watchers. Pedersen pointed out that after he drafted the e-mail, various individuals had suggested we send copies to a growing list of federal and state legislators. He wondered whether the e-mail's impact would be diluted if it went to a long list of addressees.

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Weber said she understands his reservations about impersonal e-mails that have long lists of addressees. She thinks it's important for members of the MRC to write individually to selected legislators, especially any they know personally. Feldman pointed out WSU's proposal to cut either 49 or 75 percent from Public Service is an internal WSU decision, not one being made by legislators. She said communication needs to be directed to both the university and legislators. Feldman said it is not clear why the university is proposing such deep cuts in this one sector, but it could be because it is so difficult to lay off tenured faculty. She said the university also may be anticipating this proposal will trigger an upwelling of support for public education. She said WSU leadership may be hoping to hear from a great many voices explaining why Extension programs are just as important as campus-based education. "We need to help the public understand that if this cut comes down there will be no county that is safe -- it will be across the state. No one type of public service will be safe. It will be research stations, extension offices, learning centers, small farms teams. And not just state funding will go away. Without the infrastructure we will walk away from all grants and partnerships. We'll be done." Corin suggested we handle this by addressing a letter to the president and provost. "Not an e-mail," he said, "because those go to aides. Actual letters from the MRC should go to those two." He suggested we copy the three state representatives and three federal legislators. He also suggested we put a cover letter on each of the copies going to legislators explaining we are forwarding this because we think they will be interested. **Motion by Hillers, second by Weber, that the MRC send a letter to Elson Floyd, Warwick Bayley, Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen, Rep. Norma Smith and Rep. Barbara Bailey in support of the WSU Extension programs. Motion to amend: Motion by Corin, second by Kind, that the letter be addressed to the president and provost, with copies to the three congressional and three state representatives, with a short cover letter expressing our concern. Voting in favor of the amendment: Jefferds, Bronson, Corin, Dean, Feldman, Kind, Kukuk, Toft, Weber. Opposed: Hillers. Motion as amended: Carried unanimously.**

FUTURE BUDGET: REVIEW, DISCUSSION AND DECISION

Porter reconvened our discussion of the MRC's future budget, which he had introduced two weeks ago. He distributed a slightly updated summary of our proposed projects for fiscal years 2010 and 2011. He has grouped 19 projects into three large categories: 1) Nearshore Research, Data Collection & Analysis Projects, 2) Nearshore Restoration and Protection Projects and 3) Nearshore and Marine Waters Education & Outreach Projects. Porter pointed out he has placed a \$500 item in Part II of the proposed budget for possible fish-use assessment by Whidbey Watershed Stewards, if we receive funding at the \$100,000 level. Under water quality he has included a \$7,000 per year item in Part II for a possible on-the-ground project with Whidbey Island Conservation District. This is on top of \$2,000 per year set aside for water quality in Part I. He said he talked with the mayor of Coupeville about a possible matching pilot project on phytoremediation (using plants to clean up soils), and the mayor's initial reaction was favorable. If our \$9,000 per year were matched by the town of Coupeville, this would be \$18,000 times two years, or \$36,000. He also talked informally with the county's watershed implementation planner and asked whether they might match us 50-cents-on-the-dollar, for up to a \$10,000 total. She seemed favorably inclined. So the possibility exists that, with partners, we might put together approximately a \$50,000 water quality project. **Motion by Hillers, second by Kind, that we move forward with the budget as proposed.** Discussion: Corin expressed concern that when organizational budgets shrink, the cuts fall mostly at the local level. At the headquarters level they tend to stay intact and fixed. Local entities receive whatever remains after headquarters takes care of itself. "I've seen it too many times in my former organization." Corin said he'll vote in favor of the budget but is concerned about the decline. Addressing a different point, Pedersen noted that only \$1,000 is budgeted per year for the community advisor project but more money than necessary, \$2,000 per year, is allocated for additional signage in Part II.

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Jefferds suggested reallocating the \$2,000 from signage to the community advisor project.

Motion by Corin, second by Kind, carried unanimously, to amend the motion, reallocating \$2,000 from signage in Part II to the community advisor project in Part II. Motion, as amended, to move forward with the budget: carried unanimously.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Sound Waters. Jefferds pointed out that Sound Waters was a huge success with strong representation from the government side and also from Dan O’Neal and Mary Ruckelshaus of the Puget Sound Partnership. “I think we may have opened a few eyes,” he said. “Once again this shows how strong Beach Watchers and WSU are.” Pedersen added, “It was an all-time record attendance of 572, with all three county commissioners and all three mayors or their representatives, plus Representative Norma Smith.” Jefferds added that after the keynote address, several Beach Watchers and MRC members gave brief presentations to Ruckelshaus and O’Neal about the work they are doing. He said the education and credentials of the presenters were overwhelming. Weber complimented Jefferds on a superior job of moderating the session and making sure the right points were conveyed.

Puget Sound Georgia Basin Ecosystem Conference. Hillers said the PSGB Conference was a tremendous event with five sessions running concurrently, each of which included at least five presentations, plus a plenary session that attracted an audience of 1,100. “I heard things that knocked my socks off.” Porter added that this year’s conference was particularly strong on trans-boundary thinking. There was also a lot of tribal, first nations perspective integrated into the conference. Jefferds asked whether there was any discussion of Canadian discharge of raw sewage into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Porter replied that this did come up in one of the sessions and he thinks the last two remaining outfalls probably will fade away in the next few years. The official position is that the velocity of the water is so great it doesn’t harm marine life. Since time remaining for the meeting was dwindling fast, Porter recommended the committee chair postpone the remainder of the conference reports until the March MRC meetings. The chair agreed and these remaining reports will be brought up in the near future as unfinished business.

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Retreat. Porter shared a copy of Sen. Murray’s bill to authorize \$1.5 million for the NWSC, as part of the budget of the National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). “We will no longer be an earmark,” he said. The bill also will give NOAA a non-voting, liaison seat on the NWSC. Jefferds asked whether there has been any more consideration of the NWSC having a seat on the Puget Sound Partnership. Jefferds said he is concerned the PSP produces a lot of talk but not much on-the-ground work. He’d like to see them appreciate the work already in progress by the NWSC and MRCs. Porter said the NWSC director does have an offer to be a non-voting member of the PSP’s Ecosystem Coordination Board. Corin said maybe it’s not a big disadvantage to have a non-voting seat at the PSP if they, like this group, operate by consensus. “If they’re not operating by consensus, then they’re dysfunctional.” He suggested it is better to have a voice participating in the process, even if it’s a non-voting voice. Porter explained the reason why a \$1.5 million Senate bill ends up delivering \$100,000 to each of seven counties. It’s because the NWSC has 4.5 FTEs. “Four of those are live bodies. The .5 position represents rent the NWSC pays for space at Padilla Bay. The NWSC also holds back \$200- to \$250,000 -- for ecosystem-wide projects. “Also, the Department of Ecology charges over 30 percent per year as a function of all of the salaries in order to keep our contract between us and the state entity, and the feds,” Porter said. Kind suggested that if the NWSC budget really gets cut hard, she thinks we might ask that the ecosystem funds to be allocated to the counties. Otherwise, ecosystem funds are valuable because they reach across county boundaries. The remaining discussion items from the retreat – regional, cooperative MRC work - - was postponed until March due to lack of time.

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NWSC GRANT REPORTS

Shore Stewards. Scott Chase presented an overview of the Shore Stewards program, since there has been much turnover in the MRC since the last presentation by his predecessor, Brittany Stromberg, in 2003. Shore Stewards started as a pilot project on Camano. The original application was eight pages and required photographs and drawings. “It was harder to become a Shore Steward than anything,” he said, “so it got off to a real slow start.” Over the years Chase has shortened and simplified the application. In January of 2005 the program came to Whidbey and also expanded to three Hood Canal counties with a full-time coordinator to oversee them. In 2006 the Puget Sound Action Team (PSAT) funded expansion to Whatcom, Clallam, Skagit and Snohomish counties, run mostly by Beach Watchers coordinators. At that time the regional program became known as Washington Shore Stewards and PSAT funded construction of its regional website. In 2007 and 2008, Shore Stewards presented two shoreline workshops on Whidbey and Camano each year, funded by the MRC, PSAT and Island County. Membership on Whidbey and Camano currently is about 560, and region-wide about 1,300. Chase briefly summarized the 10 guidelines for shoreline living and explained how the program encourages people to adopt better practices for their properties. “What people really want to know about is how to develop on bluffs,” he said. “They want to know what they have to do to keep their bluffs from sliding into the sea.” Chase explained that he is holding a series of Sound Gardening Workshops, which convey insights about non-point pollution but are given a title that attracts wider interest than something narrowly focused on a technical topic. Chase showed off a “Bluff Property Owner’s Toolkit” he is developing for use at workshops – a box containing an assortment of helpful brochures, handouts and other resources.

Other Reports. Deferred to a future meeting, since time is tight.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

County Lead’s report. Feldman pointed out these are tough times for every level of government. She said she is encouraging her staff not to take a competitive view of “Save us; cut someone else.” She said it’s important to give credit to all our community partners, small organizations that are doing important work. “I appreciate the support of the MRC. I don’t know what we are going to look like in the future,” she said. Jefferds thanked her, adding that he encourages all the members of the MRC to send letters to WSU in support of the extension programs.

Executive Director’s report. Porter pointed out we have a reservation for 10 right after this meeting at Christopher’s Restaurant, to celebrate the leadership Phyllis Kind has provided to our committee and to the Northwest Straits Commission.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, 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 <u>Coupeville</u>		
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