

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Dan Pedersen

Jan. 20, 2009

COMMISSIONERS' HEARING ROOM B-102, ISLAND COUNTY ANNEX, COUPEVILLE

PRESENT: Chair **Ian Jefferds**, **Hi Bronson**, **Lenny Corin**, **John Dean**, **Judy Feldman**, **Joe Hillers**, **Phyllis Kind**, **Dick Toft**, **Ken Urstad**, Communications Manager **Dan Pedersen**.

ABSENT: **Leal Dickson** (traveling in Peru), **Matt Kukuk** (work conflict), **Lynae Slinden** (tending retail shop), **Benye Weber** (family medical situation), Executive Director **Rex Porter** (teaching, Washington, DC).

VISITORS

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

Scott Chase, Camano Island, Island County Shore Stewards.

Jill Hein, Coupeville, WSU Beach Watchers

CALL TO ORDER: 3:33 pm. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Adopted. **MINUTES** of Jan. 6, 2009: Adopted. Motion by Kind, second by Toft, adopted by consensus. Jefferds welcomed John Dean. As chair of the Island County Commissioners, he is automatically a member of the MRC.

CORRESPONDENCE

MRC website domain name. Jefferds reported he had received an e-mail from a website domain name re-seller asking whether we wanted to purchase *www.islandcountymrc.com*. In an exchange of e-mails with Pedersen before today's meeting, Pedersen told Jefferds we had published this website address in *Getting to the Water's Edge* and he thought Meehan had purchased it so we could forward feedback about the book from the *.com* address to the MRC's correct address, with has the suffix *.org*. Pedersen is in the process of checking with Meehan to determine whether we own the domain name.

Shore Stewards website. While on this subject, Scott Chase asked if he had the MRC's blessing to activate a re-direct from *shorestewards.org* to a mirror-image website hosted on the WSU server. No objections were voiced.

Action Items

MRC website domain name. Pedersen will check with Meehan to determine whether we own the domain, www.islandcountymrc.com.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Sound Waters, Feb. 7 and Puget Sound / Georgia Basin Ecosystem Conference, Feb. 9-11. Jefferds reminded members these two major events are coming up in February. Attending the Puget Sound / Georgia Basin conference from our MRC will be Hillers and Porter, together with

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contractor Sarah Schmidt and Frances Wood of Audubon, who will present a poster on our Pigeon Guillemot project. Hillers said he is looking forward to several water quality presentations that will tie in with his interests in the Coupeville Reclaimed Water Project.

NWSC GRANT REPORTS

Seining. Urstad said the seining team does not yet know whether they'll be asked to seine any sites this year. He said Cornet Bay remains a possibility, tying in with the MRC project there.

Pigeon Guillemot Survey. Kind shared a copy of the survey poster Frances Wood will present at the Puget Sound / Georgia Bay Ecosystem Conference. Kind said the poster also will be available at Sound Waters University.

Cornet Bay. Contractor Sarah Schmidt shared several maps of the project area. Last year we completed the watershed characterization and eelgrass studies, thanks to some last-minute funds that became available. Friday Harbor Labs completed the eelgrass survey in June, and later, WSU Beach Watchers conducted additional eelgrass surveys and collected sediment samples. One task still remaining is to find funding to conduct the data analysis from these surveys. Schmidt pointed out the MRC is partnering at Cornet Bay with Washington State Parks. The agreement for this work has been signed by the county and forwarded to Olympia. Within about a week there should be a signed agreement with Herrera Environmental, the company that was selected through a competitive process to conduct the feasibility assessment of the shoreline. She said Parks is holding a contract for them that includes Parks system money for upland work and MRC money for shoreline work, plus a little for preliminary study of the over-water pier. By spring or early summer Herrera should present initial design concepts and a range of options for on-the-ground work. At that point, one of the options will be selected to develop to 30 percent design. This should be available by the end of the calendar year. Current priority is to look for funding for on-the-ground restoration. One source may be the Northwest Straits Foundation. Schmidt says she is also proceeding with a work plan for all of Cornet Bay, viewing it as an estuary. She has been looking at all the parcels around the bay, determining the ownership and developing a proposal to go forward with habitat preservation and restoration. This will be finished by April 30.

Shoreline Signage. Pedersen distributed a status report listing 17 sites in the county where the MRC is installing interpretive signage. At 15 of these our marine stewardship area common panel already has been installed, and at several sites we are in the process of installing additional local panels alongside the common panels.

* **Background.** Pedersen pointed out that several years ago the county commissioners created two large marine stewardship areas encompassing all the waters of Island County. The MRC embarked on an interpretive signage project as part of our outreach to inform the public about these areas. All the sites include a common panel, which explains the marine stewardship area and provides basic information about shoreline processes, forage fish and eelgrass. In addition, many of the sites eventually will receive one or two local panels explaining the unique attributes of that site. Pedersen, artist Kris Wiltse and project manager Sarah Schmidt have been working for several years now to populate the sites with panels. They have received excellent cooperation from parks, port districts and municipalities.

* **Current status.** As of last summer local panels had been installed at **Coupeville Wharf**, **Clinton Beach**, **Dave Mackie County Park** and **Freund Marsh** in the City of Oak Harbor. Right now we are preparing to place a manufacturing order for the next six local panels to be

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installed this spring at Oak Harbor's **Flintstone Park**, Camano Island's **English Boom**, the City of **Langley** and at **Keystone Jetty**.

* What's next? Now we must decide how many sites, and which ones, for which to create local panels in the fiscal year that starts July 1, 2009. Pedersen said he met last week with MRC executive director, Porter, and recommended we cut back the production of MRC local panels to just two sites next year. This is partly because MRC funding is tight, but also because it appears the City of Oak Harbor wants to order three additional panels for a kiosk at **Scenic Heights**. In addition, an Oak Harbor civic group called Harbor Pride is considering as many as six signs for an urban **Heritage Trail** within the city. The City of Oak Harbor will contract directly with Pedersen and the artist, Kris Wiltse, to create these signs, but in any case the city workload will consume much of the artist's time.

* Ideas / suggestions for MRC signs. Bronson commented **Cama Beach** is receiving heavy use and he'd love to see our signage installed there. Pedersen said we furnished the common panel to the park ranger some time ago but he has not yet installed it. Chase pointed out that because a Salish village previously occupied the site, any installation that requires digging is very complex. Kind suggested we take into consideration the amount of traffic various sites receive and give priority to the more heavily-visited ones. Pedersen said if we decide based solely on traffic, **Deception Pass** probably belongs at the top of the list. But he suggested we also consider some other variables including the availability of local sponsors and the quality of the stories we can tell at each site. In the case of Deception Pass, one story we could tell is the tremendous winter population of Red-throated Loons. Corin suggested we consider putting signage at **Sunset Beach**, pointing out there are always cars parked at the spot. Pedersen commented that Porter had suggested a west-side local panel perhaps at **Fort Ebey** in light of the proposed DNR Smith Island aquatic reserve, the large kelp bed, marine birds and marine mammals. Corin commented that a tremendous marine resource also exists at **Keystone Jetty**. Pedersen pointed out that our Keystone Spit Guillemot sign will be installed next spring in the parking lot next to the dive park. Pedersen said eventually we will also install the common panel and probably at least one local panel at **Cornet Bay**, when we are further along with the restoration project. Jefferds invited members of the MRC to send Pedersen their suggestions. Pedersen said he especially welcomes any help from members finding local sponsors. He cited the example of Toft, who lined up \$1,500 from Oak Harbor Rotary to help sponsor our Flintstone Park sign.

OTHER REPORTS

Derelict Gear. Urstad said he has no new information at this time, but will get an opportunity to receive an update at Sound Waters in early February. He said the Northwest Straits Commission expects 80 percent removal of derelict gear within three or four years.

MRC Website. Pedersen reported that as of March 1, our webmaster, Stacey Neumiller, will be cut back as an employee of WSU Extension to a part-time role solely as coordinator of Master Gardeners. At that time we hope to begin working with her directly as a private contractor to continue doing our website technical work from home.

Water Quality and Coupeville Reclaimed Water Project. Hillers reported that a meeting about the Coupeville Reclaimed Water Project was held this past weekend with the farmers of central Whidbey. The project is just in the early exploratory stages, and any reclamation of sewer water or storm water must work its way through many hoops. Both sources are potentially available, but are obviously very different. Speaking as a farmer, Hillers said it appears we may

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have as much as 4,000 acre inches available, referring to an inch of water on one acre, which is 43,300 square feet. Ebey's Prairie by itself is something less than 2,000 acres, meaning potentially two inches of water are available per acre of farmland. Quite a bit of the cropping on Ebey's Prairie would not use water, such as wheat and barley. In June, July, August and September the prairie receives less than four inches of water, so this could potentially double the amount of natural moisture. Hillers said that for a farmer, the ability to choose when to receive an inch of water would have huge impact. Jefferds said that speaking as a water farmer, he welcomes the reclaimed water proposal as a way of preventing incidents such as the recent one in which heavy rains overwhelmed the Coupeville sewage treatment plant, resulting the closure of Penn Cove to shellfish harvesting and the necessity of his company recalling shellfish products it had shipped. "This is not an unusual thing," Hillers said. "Most every town will get flooded out."

Jefferds said a representative attended the meeting from a company called Ecolotree, www.ecolotree.com. This was particularly exciting because this company has designed a system based on the concept of a bioswale. The roots of willows or poplars can create a biologically active zone extending to a depth of eight or 10 feet to filter water. Effluent can be drip-lined on top of this area, and by the time water percolates to an eight-foot depth there are no more fecal coliforms, bacteria or viruses. Water can then be recovered from the aquifer after it has gone through this natural treatment.

Hillers said it might be possible to obtain even more water for central Whidbey agriculture if it were piped about six miles down Saratoga Passage from Oak Harbor. Oak Harbor puts more than 10 times as much water into Puget Sound as does Coupeville – about 1.2 million gallons a day. This might provide water for Smith and Crockett prairies, in addition to Ebey's Prairie.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

County Lead. Feldman reminded the group that Sound Waters University is coming up February 7 and a big crowd is expected. She said she believes Don Meehan is hoping we can both provide comments to, and ask questions of, Mary Ruckelshaus about how citizen science can play an effective role in the health of Puget Sound. Feldman said she, Porter, Pedersen and accounting supervisor Lynette Goodell are working on writing contracts as tightly and clearly as possible.

Chair's Report. Jefferds pointed out that Porter and the Executive Committee are drafting our next request to the Northwest Straits Commission for action grant funding. He invited members to think about whether any additional projects should be considered and let him know.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 pm.

MRC Meetings and Events		
3:30 – 5:30 pm, first and third Tuesdays, Commissioners' Hearing Room B-102 in Coupeville		
Feb 3	Tue	Educational meeting. Beach Watcher presentation on MRC seining task results for 2008 and plans for 2009
Feb 17	Tue	Business meeting. Discussion of 2010 – 2011 MRC work plan
Mar 3	Tue	Educational meeting. To be determined
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