

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Dan Pedersen

Jan. 19, 2010

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

PRESENT: Vice-chair **Joe Hillers** (presiding), **Hi Bronson**, **Lenny Corin**, **Leal Dickson**, **Judy Feldman**, **Sarah Haynes**, **Steve Mitchell**, **Helen Price-Johnson**, **Linda Rhodes**, **Dick Toft**, **Ken Urstad**, **Stan Walsh**, **Frances Wood**, Communications Manager **Dan Pedersen**.

ABSENT: **Ian Jefferds** (on business), **Matt Kukuk** (family medical), **Todd Zackey** (unknown), Executive Director **Rex Porter** (on business).

VISITORS

Sarah Woehrman, Coupeville, coordinator, WSU Beach Watchers

Nancy Waddell, Clinton, administrator, Whidbey Watershed Stewards

Robin Clark, Clinton, Watershed Program manager, Whidbey Watershed Stewards

Bobak Talibe, Island County Planning Department

Scott Chase, Camano Island, coordinator, Island County Shore Stewards

Peg Urstad, Greenbank, WSU Beach Watchers

CALL TO ORDER: 3:30 pm. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Approved with the addition of a report by Nancy Waddell on the Maxwelton / Quade Creek spawning survey. **MINUTES** of Jan. 5, 2010: Approved. Motion by Bronson, second by Urstad, carried unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE: Pedersen reported that the North Whidbey Fire & Rescue Department had written to inform us they now must charge for their use of their meeting space. We formerly met at their Heller Road Firehall. If we were still meeting there we'd have to pay \$25 per meeting.

NWSC Grant Reports

Pigeon Guillemot Survey. Since several MRC members are new, Wood provided some background on our guillemot project. Pigeon Guillemots are the only seabirds to actively breed in any numbers in Puget Sound. They depend completely on the bottomfish to feed their young, so they are an important indicator species of nearshore health. She pointed out that one of our board members, Corin, has served as a project volunteer at Crescent Harbor so he is quite familiar with the program. So is MRC contractor Sarah Schmidt, a long-time volunteer, as well as Toft, who has been following this project closely. Wood distributed copies of the guillemot brochure the MRC financed a few years ago, which was written by Pedersen and photographed/designed by Craig Johnson. Project volunteers distribute it at meetings and at public locations such as Coupeville Wharf, and give it to people they meet on the beach while carrying out their observations. The survey was started in 2004 and has grown to involve 50 volunteers last year. Volunteers monitor about 1,000 guillemots that visit the bluffs of Whidbey Island every summer to breed, focusing on about 23 breeding colonies. The project is jointly sponsored by Whidbey Audubon Society and the MRC. For the last couple of years the project has sought to identify the fish prey that the adult guillemots deliver to the young in the burrows. For the last three years the

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MRC has contributed funding for the project to hire a summer intern. These interns have concentrated on doing extended observations at specific colonies, putting in about five hours a day on the beach. Wood commented that the first World Seabird Conference will be held this September in Victoria, B.C. She and Phyllis Kind have submitted an abstract to this conference. More information about the guillemot project is available at its website, www.pigeonguillemot.org.

Shore Stewards. Chase reported that in early February he'll present a three-hour Shore Stewards class at Sound Waters. Later in February he'll present two classes at 4-H Super Saturday at Coupeville Middle School, and on March 20 he'll do three classes at the Whidbey Gardening Workshop. On, April 13 he'll present a class in Oak Harbor on rain barrel construction, with Maribeth Crandell and Stacy Smith.

Shoreline signage. Pedersen reported the MRC is creating two interpretive signage panels this year, one for Cama Beach State Park and another for Camano Island State Park. He circulated photocopies of a pencil sketch by MRC artist, Kris Wiltse, of the proposed panel for Camano Island State Park, entitled "A Salmon Nursery Once Again?" The topic of this sign is the possibility of reconnecting a pocket estuary at Camano Island State Park. The idea was suggested by park ranger, Jeff Wheeler, who became excited after discussing the possibility with Aundrea McBride of Skagit River System Cooperative. By way of background for the new MRC members, Pedersen explained we have signs installed currently at about 17 shoreline locations on Whidbey and Camano. Every location has a generic panel that describes either the Saratoga Passage or Admiralty Inlet Marine Stewardship Area. In addition, the MRC is creating local panels for many of these same sites that provide additional information about the unique characteristics and attributes of each location. The two panels currently under development for Camano Island are local panels. Pedersen pointed out signage is one element of a larger, integrated campaign to educate the public about the nearshore. The education is being done under the umbrella of the two marine stewardship areas created several years ago by the Island County Commissioners. Other elements of the educational effort include: 1) Our book on shoreline access and stewardship, *Getting to the Water's Edge*, 2) a section of the MRC website devoted to the marine stewardship areas, and 3) the Shore Stewards program, our frontline program to educate the owners of shoreline property about best practices for nearshore health.

OTHER REPORTS

Maxwelton and Quade Creek spawning survey. Nancy Waddell reported this is the second year the MRC has given Whidbey Watershed Stewards (WWS) \$500 to help with the cost of conducting a spawning survey in the Maxwelton Watershed. The survey is for returning coho salmon and sea-run cutthroat trout that use Maxwelton and Quade creeks. Surveying was started four years ago after replacement of a tide gate at Maxwelton Beach by the conservation district, working with Diking District 2. The conservation district had, as part of its contract, an agreement with Wild Fish Conservancy to carry out a spawning survey for one year. But since that really isn't a long enough period to determine if a tide gate is working properly, WWS funded the survey for a second year and, in the third year, approached the MRC for \$500 to fund surveying by the Wild Fish Conservancy and to pay a portion of Waddell's costs. The good news is that fish are returning. "The coho return in this area is small," Waddell pointed out, "but at least we have been seeing fish come back and are finding the redds, the spawning nests the fish make." She said in the past the redds were found mostly on Maxwelton Creek, but this year the fish have come back to Quade Creek. So far this year they have not noticed any on Maxwelton Creek. The coho came back early this year. Usually they return at the end of November or early December, but this year the first salmon carcasses were reported on Quade Creek on Halloween weekend. To

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stretch the MRC's dollars, Waddell said Whidbey Watershed Stewards has started training volunteers to conduct surveys between times when Wild Fish Conservancy is available, since it is expensive to bring them out to walk the creek. Some of the volunteers are the actual landowners, which is a wonderful way to engage them in the project. Waddell said the fact that redds have been found this year in Quade Creek has implications for the next project, which is the smolt count of fish outbound from watershed. In the past only Maxwellton Creek has been surveyed for smolt, but Waddell thinks now her organization should gear up to survey smolt on Quade Creek. Their permit for the smolt count allows fish to be trapped and counted for 30 days starting May 1.

Derelict gear removal. Urstad reported the Northwest Straits Commission is still using four boats to remove derelict gear, with funding provided by the Congressional stimulus bill. He said Ginny Broadhurst believes they'll recover 90 percent of the known nets by the end of 2010. Urstad said the divers can work only to a depth of 105 feet. He said the project at this point is focusing only on nets, not the many crab pots that also need removal. They hope to obtain funding in the future to address those.

MRC website. Pedersen reported that our MRC webmaster for some time has been Stacey Neumiller of WSU Extension. But Neumiller resigned from Extension effective today to focus on her freelance business. Porter and Pedersen are working to set up an arrangement for Neumiller to continue providing this service as an independent contractor. Until this is implemented, we will not be able to post additional updates to our website. On a separate issue, Pedersen reminded the new members that he needs a biographical blurb and portrait of each of them for the website. Rhodes and Haynes have provided bios already. Pedersen said he would draft bios of the other members and circulate them soon for approval, unless they wish to write their own. He is also prepared to take photographs of the new members if they do not have portraits they wish to submit for the website. Pedersen said our MRC domain registration is going to expire this month and that he, Feldman and Porter are collaborating about renewing it.

Water's Edge book. Pedersen reported we continue to supply copies of our stewardship and shoreline-access guide to bookstores. The MRC and WSU Beach Watchers collaborated on this project in 2006 and printed 5,000 copies. The book was funded by grants and private sponsors, including our own Ian Jefferds' Penn Cove Shellfish, and quickly became the best-selling book in the county as near as Pedersen can determine. It retails for \$15 and wholesales for \$9, which means it is generating a fund for its own revision and reprinting. The original printing of 5,000 sold out last year and we printed 2,500 more.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Strategic planning. Pedersen explained that for discussion at today's meeting he drafted and circulated by e-mail a proposed action plan for Goal D, outreach.

Objective 1: Survey. One of the proposed tasks is to fund a survey or partner with a county department or other organization conducting a survey, to assess public understanding and implementation of stewardship practices. He suggested this survey be repeated perhaps every five years to see if we are gaining ground at getting our message across to the general public. There was much spontaneous brainstorming of how to conduct a survey. Pedersen reminded members we do not need to design a survey at today's meeting, only to agree that a survey should be an action item in our strategic plan.

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Objective 2: State-of-the-shoreline report. Another proposed action step under the outreach goal would be to present a *State of the Shoreline* report to the county commissioners once a year. Pedersen said he visualizes a report in which we would describe what is getting better and what is getting worse on the county's nearshore, rather than simply talk about our projects. Not only is the MRC carrying out projects, but so are other groups such as Whidbey Camano Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy. We should include the impact of their work in our report about what is changing. Corin said he felt we should also include our projects. Price-Johnson pointed out the commissioners have a feel for our projects as a result of their representation at our meetings and it would be helpful to know our assessment of how things are changing for the better or worse. She suggested we might also create a document that describes our own work. *Pedersen note: The MRC Nearshore Report.*

Objective 3: County database. Pedersen suggested we include as an action item the pursuit of funding or some other solution to the longstanding need of establishing a database that would make our shoreline information widely accessible and usable to the public and planners at all levels of government.

Objective 4: Workshops, educational events. Currently, Objective 4 of Goal D calls for the MRC to support the adoption of environmentally friendly actions by county citizens, to include recycling, composting, rain gardens and low-impact development. In support of this objective, Pedersen proposed an action item in which the MRC would partner with Whidbey Island Conservation District, Shore Stewards, Beach Watchers, Waste Wise and other groups. Wood suggested we extend this objective to include seasonal residents and visitors. Pedersen said he would modify the wording to do that. Haynes pointed out that in the urban areas, large numbers of people with discretionary income are looking for places to go and things to do in Island County. We might reach these people if we target them properly. Price-Johnson pointed out the Whidbey Camano Islands website, www.whidbeycamanoislands.com, is an excellent resource for visitors. Waddell suggested we add NGOs and other community groups to this task, since the MRC also partners with such organizations as Whidbey Watershed Stewards and supports events such as the Whidbey Lyceum.

Objective 5: Sound Waters University. Rhodes commented she is struck by the preponderance of older people attending Sound Waters University and said she would like to see more effective outreach to younger people. She asked if there is a specific effort to reach schools and younger people. Feldman said she believes the 4-H program is underused for this component. Corin suggested we identify an objective under which to place a youth outreach task. Toft said he thinks it belongs under objective 6 and Corin agreed.

Objective 6: Achieve an increase in community understanding. Toft suggested we include a task to create a packaged presentation we can take to the schools. Urstad pointed out, "Don't forget you do have the SEA program (Service, Education, Adventure) too – that's basically what they're doing. Maybe we should package up with them." Peg Urstad pointed out that the SEA Program is very familiar with the schools' requirements. "When you work with the schools, one of the things to keep in mind is that there are certain benchmarks that have to be met with respect to what the curriculum is." Price-Johnson pointed out that youth outreach is a broader opportunity than just designing programs for the elementary schools. "Skagit Valley College has a great population of energetic people who are poised and ready to go out into the world, and they're right at our doorstep." Mitchell asked if a task could be as simple as funding a program that already exists. Pedersen replied, "Yes, I think it can." Mitchell said the Adventure Education at the Middle School had been particularly valuable for his kids. Susie Richards was part of that. "They got a

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lot of kids out on boats; they learned more about the natural world on one trip to the San Juans than they ever did anywhere else.”

Pedersen said he would clean up the proposed action plan and bring it to a future meeting for further consideration.

Sound Waters. Woehrman commented that 455 people are signed up at this point. Attendance will be capped at 550. Feldman commented that in light of the earlier conversation about youth outreach, it is worth pointing out that Sound Waters University is based on a very successful 4-H education-and-outreach model from years ago. Urstad said there will be about 45 displays.

A Sea Change. Corin commented that the MRC is sponsoring a showing of the award-winning documentary, A Sea Change, at 7 pm the evening of Sound Waters at the Methodist Church in Coupeville. Dr. Richard Feely will introduce the movie and answer questions.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

County commissioner. Price-Johnson said she recently had the opportunity to give some feedback to the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) in defining the criteria for a Puget Sound “partner.” Eight county commissioners from northern Puget Sound participated. They suggested the PSP use a list of criteria and rank them to determine who is a partner. The higher the number of points, the greater the demonstration of one’s willingness to take care of Puget Sound. In an unrelated item, Price-Johnson pointed out that Island County offices are now closed on Fridays except for the Law & Justice Building. So if a subcommittee of the MRC needs space to meet on a Friday, they need to do it in the Law & Justice Building.

County lead. Feldman reminded members that the county 4-H program is not just agriculturally focused but is designed to teach young people critical thinking skills and how to apply them. She said 4-H has become very progressive with its environmental program. So it is a resource the MRC should consider using as opportunities arise. Master Gardeners and Livestock Advisors were originally conceived to address water quality, so we have a suite of programs available to us if we choose to use them. She said WSU Extension is working with the county on a Glendale Creek series, talking about all the different components of the Glendale stream shed as the county considers what to do with the road that was washed out. Extension also is participating in a county grant coordination committee to share information on available grants.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, Hillers declared the meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm.

MRC Meetings and Events		
Feb. 2	Tue	3:30 – 5:30 Educational meeting – Island County Salmon Recovery Lead Entity presentation on: <i>2010 WRIA 6 Salmon Recovery projects</i> – Chris Luerkens
Feb. 16	Tue	3:30 – 5:30 Business meeting
Mar. 2	Tue	3:30 – 5:30 Educational meeting – Snohomish County PUD presentation on: <i>Hydrokinetic Pilot Project for the Admiralty Inlet Pilot Tidal Energy Project</i> – Craig Collar
Mar. 16	Tue	3:30 – 5:30 Business meeting