

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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# Minutes

Prepared by Dan Pedersen

## Feb. 2, 2010

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

**PRESENT:** Chair **Ian Jefferds** (presiding), **Hi Bronson**, **Lenny Corin**, **Judy Feldman**, **Sarah Haynes**, **Joe Hillers**, **Matt Kukuk**, **Steve Mitchell**, **Linda Rhodes**, **Dick Toft**, **Ken Urstad**, **Frances Wood**, Executive Director **Rex Porter**, Communications Manager **Dan Pedersen**. **ABSENT:** **Leal Dickson** (traveling), **Helen Price-Johnson** (conflicting obligation), **Stan Walsh** (on vacation), **Todd Zackey** (doing field research). **VISITORS:** **Angie Homola**, Oak Harbor, Island County Commissioner; **Sarah Schmidt**, Coupeville, MRC contractor; **Peg Urstad**, Greenbank, WSU Beach Watchers advisory council; **Chris Luerkens**, lead entity coordinator, Island County Environmental Health; **Jill Hein**, Coupeville, WSU Beach Watchers; **Scott Chase**, Camano Island, coordinator, Island County Shore Stewards; **Nancy Waddell**, Clinton, administrator, Whidbey Watershed Stewards; **Caroline Gibson**, Port Townsend, marine program manager, Northwest Straits Commission; **Kyle Murphy**, aquatic reserve program manager, Department of Natural Resources; **Betty Bookheim**, aquatic reserve biologist, Department of Natural Resources; **Michael Grilliot**, aquatic reserve program, on loan to DNR from Sea Grant; **Kevin Ryan**, US Fish & Wildlife Service, project leader, Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge complex; **David Peeler**, director of programs, People for Puget Sound; **Bobak Talibe**, Island Co. Planning Dept.; **Lynette Goodell**, WSU Extension accounting supervisor.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 3:30 pm. **QUORUM:** Declared. **AGENDA:** Approved with the addition of reports by Kyle Murphy, Caroline Gibson and Frances Wood. **MINUTES** of Jan. 19, 2010: Approved with a correction in the spelling of Aundrea McBride's name. Motion by Bronson, second by Urstad, carried unanimously. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

## REPORTS

**Proposed Smith-Minor Islands Aquatic Reserve.** Kyle Murphy of the DNR reported that today was the second meeting of the advisory committee working with DNR to develop a draft management plan for the proposed reserve. MRC members participating are Dick Toft, Ken Urstad and Matt Kukuk. Since the last meeting, DNR has completed drafts of the first two sections of the plan. The introductory section explains what DNR is and describes the aquatic reserve program. It also names the other entities sharing management authority for the area, including Washington State Parks, the US Navy and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The main body of work completed so far has been the site characterization that identifies species, habitats and natural processes. The point of this section is to make the case for this site being designated an aquatic reserve. About a week ago DNR staff distributed to the committee the drafts of the first two sections, and at today's meeting they gathered feedback. At today's meeting the committee started developing goals and objectives for the reserve. Five overarching goals were discussed: 1) Preservation, restoration and enhancement, 2) protection of important species, habitats and processes, 3) inventory and baseline data collection monitoring, 4) environmental education and 5) research. They also discussed specific objectives that might fit into these categories. One of these is to engage volunteers, such as Beach Watchers, in working with scientists on data collection. Another objective is to make sure that any data collected will go into a central data repository and be readily accessible to others, tying in with the MRC's effort to bring

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about creation of such a repository. They talked also of supporting existing environmental education efforts including those of the MRC and Beach Watchers. The next meeting will be held March 16 to finalize goals and objectives and start to discuss management actions to ensure their achievement. Murphy predicted the committee will meet two more times, in March and mid-June. The SEPA process is likely to open in July for a 30-day period, and the proposal should be ready to go to the commissioner for his decision by the end of summer.

**Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC).** Caroline Gibson welcomed the MRC's new members. The commission held its first meeting of the year last Friday and Frances Wood represented our group. Gibson reported that as a result of the sandlance workshop held last fall, the NWSC hired an individual to analyze the beach seine survey data. He is looking for forage fish datasets that include sandlance data. The annual retreat of the commission will be held Feb. 25-26 at the Captain Whidbey Inn in Coupeville. On the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area process, a workshop of scientists was held last Wednesday to identify targets for protection. This is the first step in a sequence of conservation planning for the bay that will involve input from many different stakeholders. Gibson reported that within the next couple months she will be opening an office of the NWSC in Port Townsend, giving easier access to Clallam, Jefferson and Island MRCs. "This means you'll see more of me," she said.

**NWSC January meeting.** Wood said she enjoyed filling in for Porter and Corin as our county's representative at the January meeting of the NWSC. The theme that ran through the meeting is that the NWSC is working to find money for the MRCs to do their jobs, and this is very reassuring. She said the organization is striving to go paperless, and in the spirit of this objective she brought her laptop to today's meeting rather than print out various documents. One of the more interesting reports was on the Washington State Mussel Watch program and its findings about the quality of marine waters. Everett is right at the top in the quantity of lead contaminants in the water. Edmonds ranked highest for the entire West Coast in the amount of PBDEs in the water. There was also a report by seabird ecologist, John Piatt, on seabirds and forage fish. He is encouraging us to carry out a spot check of water quality throughout the Northwest Straits region. Piatt has worked primarily in Alaska but lives in Port Townsend, and has carried out regional-scale predator-prey studies focusing on seabirds and forage fish.

## SPEAKER

### Overview of Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) Process

By Chris Luerkens, Island County Lead Entity Coordinator

In 1998 the state adopted the Salmon Recovery Act in response to the decline in salmon stocks. The act recognized that stable funding needed to be available for recovery efforts, particularly for habitat. The act created the SRFB and outlined the lead entity process. The lead entity is a local watershed-based organization that develops and guides implementation of a local salmon recovery plan and salmon recovery strategies. Both the SRFB and lead entity programs are overseen by the state Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). The SRFB is a group of 10 people. Five are appointed by the governor and five other seats are reserved for state agencies including the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Transportation, Department of Ecology and one other. The SRFB's job is to administer grants and the grant cycle, develop procedures and criteria, allocate funds and review proposals. The SRFB strives to make sure proposals are evaluated consistent with local salmon recovery strategies. The state's Water Resources Inventory Area 6 coincides with all of Island County, and the county itself is the lead entity for SRFB applications. In other counties, the lead entity may be a tribe or some other agency. The lead entity grant,

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administered through the RCO, outlines specific tasks and pays the lead entity coordinator to fulfill those tasks. The lead entity requires a technical advisory group, which in this watershed is the Salmon Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and a citizen advisory group, which in Island County is the Water Resource Advisory Committee (WRAC). The TAG is a subcommittee of the WRAC. The WRAC ultimately is charged with overseeing the salmon recovery program and they are the decision-making body for the county's SRFB project list. The TAG reviews and ranks proposals. Luerkens said within the next few months a decision will be made about funds available and there will be verification that there will be another round of SRFB funding. In about early April the county will ask potential project sponsors to announce their interest in applying for funding. In early May, brief project descriptions will be submitted so the TAG and WRAC can begin considering what these proposals will be. In late May or early June, project sponsors will meet with SRFB representatives on site, along with TAG and WRAC members, to look at projects. Later in June the project sponsors will present an overview of their proposals to the TAG and WRAC. Final deadlines for submission of application material will be in about mid-July, followed by review and ranking done by the TAG toward the end of July. The TAG will submit a recommendation to the WRAC for approval, and then the watershed will submit its application to the SRFB.

Proposals are ranked on a variety of criteria. In our watershed some of those criteria are a project's proximity to natal rivers, whether it is for habitat acquisition (preferred) or restoration, and certainty of success. The top-ranked project in the last round was the Skagit Bay Nearshore Acquisition, submitted by Whidbey Camano Land Trust. This was for purchase of 39 acres of nearshore and farmland adjacent to Dugualla Bay, securing property for future restoration. This area is of high importance to Skagit River Chinook. Total project cost is \$700,000, of which \$290,000 of SRFB funds were applied. The third-ranked project, located nearby, also was submitted by Whidbey Camano Land Trust and was for restoration feasibility and design of reconnecting Shorecrest Lagoon at Dugualla Bay. The SRFB is funding \$150,000. Also funded was a Nature Conservancy project to fund acquisition of 43 acres of nearshore on Livingston Bay and restoration of a pocket estuary, saving the area from subdivision and development. Wild Fish Conservancy was awarded \$171,000 to fund assessment of restoration projects in Deer Lagoon. The final project funded for about \$25,000 was assessment of feasibility to reconnect Swan Lake to tidal influence. This project received essentially the leftover SRFB funds.

## NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**Budget review.** Porter explained we are operating with a \$240,000 two-year budget. His report today, through Dec. 31, covers our first six months. If we were expending funds in equal increments for each six months we would have used \$60,000 by now, but to date we have used only \$36,706. Experience has taught us that the spending curve tends to be slower in the first six months, when new contracts are being implemented. He predicted we will spend at a faster rate in later periods of this two-year cycle. Our budget is structured so that our 10 items are grouped into five tasks. This gives us the flexibility to shift funds from one subtask to another, especially in Task 3, nearshore and marine data collection and analysis. Porter said he is confident we will be able to make good use of our funds within the two-year life of the contract. Toft commented that if we find ourselves in a situation with extra funds available, he'd like to make a pitch that we invest in Sarah Woehrman's sandlance project. Woehrman recently recorded the first known video of sandlance breeding.

**Strategic planning.** Prior to today's meeting, Pedersen had circulated by e-mail some proposed revisions to the action plan for Goal D, outreach, in response to the discussion at our Jan. 19 meeting. Jefferds invited members to share any comments they might have about the draft. Once again, there was much discussion of the type of community survey envisioned under Objective 1. Pedersen said

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his intention was simply to establish the need for a survey but not stipulate who would conduct it or how it would be designed. He pointed out we have been engaged in community outreach for years, creating signage, publishing brochures, promoting Sound Waters, establishing stewardship areas and building a Shore Stewards program. But no survey has ever been conducted to establish how much the public knows about the nearshore. We need to establish a baseline so we can re-survey in several years and see if knowledge is changing. Rhodes suggested that rather than call so specifically for “a survey,” our action step should be written more broadly to allow for the use of multiple surveys or tools to assess changes in knowledge. Chris Luerkens pointed out that the Salmon Technical Advisory Group also is considering a survey to assess public knowledge. Pedersen said this might present an opportunity for the two groups to work as partners. Jefferds suggested we table the discussion for now, revise the wording of the action step, and resubmit this for the group’s action at the next meeting.

## LEADERSHIP REPORTS

**County commissioner.** In the absence of Commissioner Price-Johnson, a few remarks were shared by her colleague, Commissioner Angie Homola. She thanked the committee for its work and added, “I’ve been dying to be on this committee but am waiting for my turn, which will be in a year.” She expressed great interest in salmon recovery and the protection of marine resources.

**Executive director.** Porter commented that tomorrow, he, Jefferds and Hillers will present a quarterly update to the county commissioners on the MRC’s work. He added that Jefferson MRC has asked to meet jointly with us on March 2 when Craig Collar of Snohomish PUD presents an update on his agency’s tidal energy project. The plan will be to spend the first hour listening to Collar’s presentation and the second hour holding a joint meeting with Jefferson MRC. He added that March 16 is the tentative date for an orientation session for the new MRC members.

**Chair.** Jefferds reported he was in Washington, D.C., recently and met with some members of the National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) staff. He said NOAA has some very high-tech new data sondes that provide real-time telemetry of water quality conditions and they are interested in deploying some of them in areas of interest to the shellfish industry and the MRCs. A workshop will be held soon in San Diego and he said he knows there will be interest in getting some nearshore placement of buoys.

**County lead.** Feldman pointed out that sometime after March 15 the MRC will get a new representative from WSU Extension as she transitions out. She will be leaving once a new director is hired. She said she is proud of the performance of the extension staff this year as they absorbed three rounds of budget cuts. She also emphasized that there are other, exciting ways the MRC could partner with extension programs and she hopes we will take advantage of them. “You only know about a small portion of our programs,” she said.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Jefferds declared the meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm.

MRC Meetings and Events		
Feb. 16	Tue	3:30 – 5:30 Business meeting
Mar. 2	Tue	3:30 – 5:30 Educational meeting – Craig Collar of Snohomish County PUD: <i>Hydrokinetic Pilot Project for the Admiralty Inlet Pilot Tidal Energy Project</i>
Mar. 16	Tue	3:30 – 5:30 Business meeting