

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Anna Toledo

January 17, 2017

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

PRESENT: Elsa Schwartz, Chair, presiding, Ed Adams, Barbara Bennett, Lois Farrington (WebEx), David Thomson (WebEx), Florian Graner (non-voting technical advisor), Todd Zackey (non-voting technical advisor), Lori Clark County Lead – Island County Department of Natural Resources Manager (non-voting), Jill Johnson Island County Commissioner (non-voting), Tim Lawrence WSU Extension Island County (non-voting), Anna Toledo MRC Coordinator (staff) **ABSENT:** Ed Halloran, Linda Rhodes, Ruth Richards, Kestutis Tautvydas, Anthony Turpin, Frances Wood

VISITORS: Erica Blakey (WA DNR Aquatic Reserve Program), Jennifer Riedmayer (Island County DNR Water Quality), Caitlin Budd (Island County DNR), Dawn Pucci (Island County DNR Salmon Recovery)

CALL TO ORDER: Schwartz called the meeting to order at 3:32 pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were done. **QUORUM:** A quorum was not declared. **AGENDA, MINUTES:** The agenda and minutes were not approved as a quorum was not declared. **CORRESPONDENCE:** No correspondence.

BUSINESS ITEMS

2016-2017 project status (Toledo): Toledo reviewed the projects and obligations included in the 2016-2017 MRC grant.

Discussion points included:

- Forage fish: the team anticipates continuing with existing restoration and index sites.
- Eelgrass: with the recent report that Puget Sound is showing relatively stable levels of eelgrass, is it important to continue studying? Yes, because specific areas vary in their growth or decline. It would be good to check with WA DNR on their goals and recommendations for monitoring.
- It would be good to re-evaluate each project to ensure project design is attempting to answer an important scientific question.

2017-2018 project ideas (Toledo): Project ideas for the 2017-2018 workplan were discussed.

Discussion points included:

Develop a monitoring plan:

- The MRC can serve as the central point for tracking and communicating monitoring efforts in Island County. This could be done in conjunction with the Lead Entity and the Island Local Integrating Organization (ILIO), and also make sure monitoring carried out by other groups is shared and communicated to ensure effective project integration and avoid overlap.

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- The MRC holds a strategic position as communicators to the public as well as advisors to the Commissioners.

Zooplankton:

- Julie Keister with UW is involved in a regional zooplankton monitoring effort, and could provide insight on project design and research needs.

Outreach – feedback from Barb’s initial interviews with County staff:

- MRC should continue monitoring, especially related to pre- and post-implementation data for larger projects.
- MRC should make visible the work we’re doing and the importance of that work.
- MRC should expand educational outreach and find ways outside of meeting times to engage in educating the public.
- MRC should develop white papers. It is important to ensure papers are well-researched and vetted through experts. These papers could be presented to Commissioners and available for the public.
- Monitoring types and locations may change over time, and should be considered during project planning.
- When there is a relevant topic, the MRC should ask for time on the Commissioners’ work session. MRC should be proactive in engaging the Commissioners on important topics. MRC should be attuned to issues important to the County.

Phytoremediation:

- MRC could develop demonstration sites.

Measuring “no net loss”:

- Develop a framework for measuring no net loss – can we start gathering baseline data so we can measure progress towards no net loss? Another volunteer group in the region (on Mercer or Bainbridge Island) is initiating a no net loss monitoring plan.

Project Design:

- Important to recognize when a project has been completed.
- Important to balance monitoring, outreach, and restoration.
- Projects should be designed carefully, starting with conducting a literature search, and including experts.
- Projects can be phased over multiple years. The MRC does not have to be constrained by the annual grant year.
- The end data synthesis at the completion of a project needs to be included in the project planning.

Letter of support – NWSF (Toledo): Since there was not a quorum, the MRC did not vote to approve a letter to the Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) in support of their seeking funding for two community armor removal projects on Whidbey. A similar letter including support of the same projects was sent to NWSF in July when they were applying to a different funding source. Toledo will remind NWSF of this letter.

Net pen management recommendations (Toledo): Toledo shared the announcement from Department of Ecology (DOE) that they are updating their management recommendations regarding commercial finfish net pens and there is the opportunity to comment on a draft writing outline and an early scoping decisions document by March 4, 2017. Further information and documents available online:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/aquaculture/recommendations.html>

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Discussion points included:

- It is important to be involved in the early stages.
- DOE put this use ahead of other water-dependent uses without an explanation of why.
- The documents do not address the effect of net pen siting on other nearby water-dependent uses.
- The MRC would like to know what other MRCs and the NWSC are doing in response.
- There are alternate practices to raise fish, such as land-based fish farming, that could eliminate the need of net pens. Alternate practices are not mentioned in the documents.
- There is abundant science from other countries regarding net pens and the dangers of spreading disease and parasites.

ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **Toledo and Clark** will bring the notification of opportunity to comment on DOE's documents regarding their project scoping to update the recommendations for commercial finfish aquaculture to the attention of the Board of Island County Commissioners (BICC) at their next available work session.

Coordinator's Update (Toledo):

- Sound Waters: The MRC will have a display at Sound Waters on Saturday, February 4 at South Whidbey High School. Bennett will assist in staffing the table. Other members are welcome to assist.

NWSC GRANT REPORTS:

Eelgrass Monitoring (Tautvydas): Data analysis from 2016 work has been completed. The team will meet at Gregg Ridder's house Jan. 25th at 1 pm to review the data, including Albert Foster's sonar data, assess the status of the project, and decide what we want to accomplish in 2017.

Seining (Tautvydas): Dawn Pucci has identified an intern, Barney Boyer, at NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center, that is interested in conducting the data analysis of the 2009-2016 seining data from Cornet Bay.

Dawn Pucci, Jim Somers and Kes Tautvydas met on January 3rd to discuss seining at the recently created pocket estuary at Dugualla. After consulting with several regional salmon science players, we have come up with an initial plan for this site. We will use a combination of typical beach seining in a few places inside and outside the estuary and a fyke net in the channel opening leading into the estuary. This will necessitate two teams – one at high tide to deploy the fyke net and complete the standard beach at high tide and the second smaller group to retrieve the fyke net and analyze the catch at low tide. The proposed dates are: Feb. 17 at 9am and again at 4pm; March 3rd at 10am seine only; March 17th at 9am seine and fyke.

Bull Kelp Monitoring (Rhodes): No update.

Outreach (Bennett): Barbara will interview department heads and elected officials this month to include with the outreach needs analysis.

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Topics will include:

- MRC role in support of County Departments and Elected Officials
- Current and future scope of work
- Strategies/needs to communicate re: MRC within County
- Strategies/needs to communicate with the broader community

OTHER REPORTS:

Smith and Minor Islands Aquatic Reserve – SMIAR (Rhodes): No update.

Storm Surge Monitoring (Tautvydas): No update.

Island Local Integrating Organization (Bennett): The next ILIO meeting will be held in February. At the last meeting the ILIO discussed engaging the MRC and WRAC as a public forum to vet the Ecosystem Recovery Plan.

Sound Water Stewards (Farrington): No update.

WSU Extension (Lawrence): Lawrence participated in an academic exercise organized by UW on resilient communities.

The WSU Extension office is in their new location on Main St, and are working on getting a Polycom unit to be able to offer access to conferences, seminars, and classes.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair: Schwartz reminded all that meetings will go to once a month while Toledo is on leave, starting in February.

County Lead: No report.

County Commissioners: Commissioner Johnson shared that the BICC decided to take the settlement offer regarding access at Wonn Road. The offer guarantees the County beach access, and comes with some restrictions standard to Parks.

COMMUNITY COMMENT FORUM AND Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC:

Dawn Pucci shared that Whidbey Camano Land Trust was awarded a one million dollar grant through the Federal Coastal Wetland Grant program for the Barnum Point property.

Pucci has been assisting the Port of South Whidbey in a project to permit a removable wheelchair accessible mat to create an ADA trail along the beach at Clinton Beach Park. The mat can be placed down during the summer and removed during the winter.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:09 pm.