

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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## Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

# March 3, 2020

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

**PRESENT:** Kelly Zupich, Chair, presiding (WebEx), Hannah Liss, Vice Chair (WebEx), Barbara Bennett, Randy Berthold, Scott Chase, Ed Halloran, Gwendolyn Hannam, Kes Tautvydas, Matt Kukuk (WebEx), Elsa Schwartz, Tim Lawrence WSU Extension (non-voting), Lori Clark, IC DNR Manager/Island LIO Coordinator (non-voting), Anna Toledo MRC Coordinator (staff), Ann Prusha (staff) **ABSENT:** Janet St. Clair (notified absence), Michael Bianchi (un-notified absence)

**VISITORS:** Dawn Spilsbury Pucci, Island County Salmon Recovery

**CALL TO ORDER:** Kelly called the meeting to order at 3:02pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were done. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Kes moved to approve the agenda. Elsa seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Kes moved to approve the February 4, 2020 minutes. Scott seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

**RETREAT DEBRIEF (Zupich/Liss):** Kelly updated the group on the retreat. She spoke about the engagement activity, which involved members filling out charts with multiple MRC engagement options. The charts showed that there are no big gaps in MRC activities. Kelly went on to explain that based on the charts, it's important that the MRC stays aware of its capacity and that there is a need ensure member burn-out is prevented. The MRC is doing a lot, and part of what the MRC needs to do is put more money into getting its name out and focusing on outreach. This includes acquiring outreach materials, such as nametags, updated booth materials, tablecloths, and brochures.

There was then discussion about member engagement, which was charted on a handout. It was recommended that anyone who was not at the retreat should give their engagement preferences to Ann. Filling out this sheet does not mean commitment to an activity, and this exercise is not connected to capacity. It was noted that, as project planning is coming up, there is a need to be strategic about capacity moving forward.

**PROJECT PLANNING (Zupich/Toledo):** Anna spoke about how the MRC generates new ideas and energy. New ideas mean that someone will need to take on a leadership role. If a project cannot be done by the MRC, it might be a good opportunity to leverage partnerships.

Anna then spoke about funding from Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC). The application is due April 10, and there is \$10-12,000 available for projects, in addition to funding for staffing, travel, and administration. There will be a call for proposals for the Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Opportunity Fund, which is separate from the annual baseline fund. This funding was used to pay for the Glass Quest, a communications plan (in development), and the "Discover Our

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Island Shores” film, which is being used in the school system. It is smaller than it has been in previous years. A request for proposals is expected in the next couple of weeks. The total amount of funding across all MRCs is \$20,000 total. There is not an obligation to step up if it’s not within capacity, and there isn’t a need to create a project just for this fund. The NWSF still has funding available for other projects, such as for orca recovery outreach. The funding for the communications plan will go through June 2020 and is usually flexible.

Anna then presented a project spreadsheet highlighting current and potential projects:

- **Bull Kelp:** There was discussion about outreach to kayakers. It would be possible to team up with another organization, such as Whidbey Island Kayaking, especially because they can provide insurance for their own participants. Barb and Kelly have contacts with this group. There was discussion about having ecotourism events and hosting a kelp forest ecology overview on the shore. The South Whidbey Yacht Club has regular speakers and an MRC member could talk about kelp. There was discussion about having literature to hand out as well as a display at the beach. Northwest Straits or NOAA might have literature. In the past NWSF has helped with insurance for volunteers.
- **Eelgrass:** Kes then updated the group. Last year it was decided to hold off on underwater videography. Aerial imaging will continue. Nothing has changed regarding eelgrass. There was discussion about developing thank you letters to this team. There was then discussion about the Washington DNR communicating what they have learned, and that they are a couple of years behind on data analysis. This data could potentially be disseminated in a way such as San Juan MRC’s online storytelling tool about orca recovery. If Gregg Ridder gets information from the WA DNR, Kes can share this with the group. There was discussion about uses for data and WA DNR’s role. Kes said that the aerial images will show if there are any changes, and so far it matches the data from underwater videography. Boat damage is apparent in some places. There was then discussion about outreach to boaters and potential preventative measures, such as providing buoys, and the recovery ability of eelgrass beds. This is not something included in the MRC’s grant because there are not costs associated with Gregg’s volunteer work, but this group will stay connected. There was discussion about the value of data gathering. Gregg is committed to volunteering as long as he is able to (thank you!!!). There was then discussion about outreach and its role in all of these projects as well as the importance of volunteers.
- **Forage Fish:** Matt then updated the group about the volunteer teams. They are doing well, but it would be great to have 2-3 more volunteers, which would allow monitoring at another site or two. There was then discussion about MRC’s internal capacity – Sound Water Stewards might be able to help. Kelly will send out a call for volunteers in the next few weeks. The MRC members can help spread the word. There was then discussion about recruiting and keeping volunteers. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is backlogged with data, and it can discourage volunteers if they don’t get to see their results. There was then discussion about having processing performed by a different organization or person, such as Dan Penttila. Barbara asked for a cost statement at the next meeting. Dan Penttila charges \$6.00 per sample. Anna relayed that she received an email from Dana asking if Island MRC needs WDFW training, which includes analysis for winnowing. Gwendolyn offered her equipment and to take on analyzing samples, which is a serious time commitment. There was then discussion about the logistics of sending out samples and having volunteers analyze samples.

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- Seining: Kes then spoke about restarting seining at Cornet Bay after 4 years. Seining will go on for two years. Jason Morgan (NWSF) is paying for permits now, but next year it will be up to us. Kes will talk to Jason about the cost so we can decide how to move forward.
- Outreach: There was then discussion about tabling and having presence at more events. There was discussion about the difficulty of recruiting volunteers, and the responsibility of members. Anna and Ann will work on putting together a spreadsheet of upcoming opportunities for people to sign up for. If there are gaps, we can ask those members who put one's or two's in Outreach areas. There was then a request for more support for the Communications Committee. The communications plan is to be completed by June 2020.
- Restoration: Continue to stay engaged on projects with partners, primarily NWSF and Island County Salmon Recovery: Sunlight Shores, Seahorse Siesta, Hidden Beach, DIRP, Polnell Point, Hoypus Point, Crescent Harbor Road Armor removal, Seaplane Base Groin Removal Project, Maylor North.
- Planting a tree for each retiring member: There was discussion about contacting the Town of Coupeville to see if there's a place for them, or planting in the forest. It would be a good tribute for members. There is potential partnering for Earth Day. There was then discussion about which tree species to plant, and that this is a potential Opportunity Fund project.

Anna then spoke about the feasibility study for Hoypus Point. It appears that this project has the most potential to move forward. She suggested that the MRC could consider contributing funds for the next stage, which would include design and permitting.

There was then discussion about DIRP (Derelict Infrastructure Removal Program) making it onto the work plan. It's not ready for funding and still needs to be developed further.

**OUTREACH EVENTS – PAST AND UPCOMING:** These outreach events are reminders that the MRC is engaged in the community and is performing a lot of outreach work.

- Sound Waters University (Zupich): It was a good event, with a lot of people at our booth. SWS collected only 6.6 pounds of trash, thanks to WasteWise!
- Glass Quest (Schwartz/Chase): This went very well and was interesting. A lot of people from out of town found balls, and many people were excited. Whether people found balls or not, a lot of people went to the clue areas. There were lessons learned about social media coordination. There is potential to include the Island County Annex Building as a hiding spot next year. It increased traffic to MRC's website. There is potential to utilize the Opportunity Fund. Scott provided excellent clues. For next year, going down to five balls might be better.
- Camano 101 (Chase): Scott did a great job. There were 17 different groups, and about 140 people attended, many of whom recently moved to the area. It will likely occur at the same venue next year.
- WICD tree planting (Zupich): This is an opportunity for Sound Water Stewards (SWS), Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD), and the Town of Coupeville to work

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together at Living Hope Foursquare Church. The Town of Coupeville wants to reforest this area and has asked for help. There will be an event for Earth Day on April 22 at 2 or 3 pm.

- Earth and Ocean Month kick-off (Toledo): Goosefoot Community Fund, a non-profit in South Whidbey, is promoting Earth Day events. They are holding a kick-off for community groups on April 4. Anna might ask for help.
- Whidbey and Camano town halls (Toledo): Commissioner Janet St. Clair asked if we would like to be present on April 22 in Camano and April 23 in north Whidbey. Barb volunteered for the north Whidbey day.
- Stormwater RunOff 5K (Toledo): Mallory Palatucci is organizing a 5k on May 16<sup>th</sup>. It would be great for the MRC to have a booth there.

**COORDINATOR'S UPDATE (Toledo):** Jodi Crimmins has stepped down as a voting member, due to scheduling difficulties. She is still interested in engaging and keeping us connected to the school system, and wants to be a technical advisor.

**Motion:** Kelly then called a motion to add Jodi Crimmins to the advisory role. Barb moved and Elsa seconded. The motion passed.

Ann is working on a newsletter, which will go out soon. It will condense all events and workshops to one location.

## **NWSFC GRANT REPORTS:**

**Kelp Monitoring (Liss/Berthold):** Update at meeting.

Update: None

**Seining (Tautvydas):** Four years after we finished 8 years of beach seining at Cornet Bay, as part of the Cornet Bay Shoreline Restoration Project, we again started a 2 year seining program at Cornet Bay as a follow up to see if there are now significant changes to the juvenile salmon population as well as other fishes that reside in this estuary. This effort was started by Jason Morgan, Marine Projects Manager of the Northwest Straits Foundation and Dawn Spilsbury Pucci on January 24. Jason provided the seining net, the other equipment, and the permit for 2020 which is required for collecting salmonids. Jason is our team lead for this year, but next year we will be on our own and will need to pay for the permit, cost of publishing the results, and miscellaneous expenses. Seining is done at Cornet approximately every two weeks, depending on tides and schedules, from January to June and at the same 10 sites on the beach as in the past. We have also seined on February 7 and 21. The next seining session will be on Monday, March 2. After the first session in January, Dawn was able to retrieve the original net and equipment which were stored in Ken Urstad's (deceased) garage. Now Dawn is the keeper of the net and equipment. In January very few fish were caught; mostly pinks but also some Chinook juveniles. Two weeks later, we caught a few hundred pinks and again several Chinook salmon. On February 21 the catch was lower but still significant. This was expected early in the season since numbers of juvenile salmon usually peak in April. The catches included the usual sculpins

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and a few smelt. One unusual catch was a hooded nudibranch which had ingested a juvenile pink, most likely accidentally while in the net. The weather wasn't bad, although we got a bit wet on the first two mornings and some of us got a bit wet even without rain. The turnout of volunteers was excellent on all three sessions, mostly from returning seiners, although on the first day we had an additional half dozen newcomers. Each day we had more than the minimum 7-8 volunteers.

Update: None

**Hoypus Point and Possession Point Feasibility (Toledo/Hannam):** Blue Coast Engineering was the consultant selected to work on this feasibility project. A meeting was held with representatives from Blue Coast, Northwest Straits Foundation, State Parks, and MRC to review the two sites and project timeline. Lisa Kaufman (NWSF) has submitted a proposal to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for permitting and design at Hoypus Point to help move that project to the next step pending information from the feasibility study. The proposal can also be withdrawn if the results from the feasibility study suggest a different timing or approach to the project.

## OTHER REPORTS:

**Shoreline Restoration and Armor Removal (Toledo):** Island County is developing the details of a Shore Friendly mini-grant program which will provide mini-grants to shoreline homeowners to take actions to remove hard armoring or prevent the installation of new hard armoring (including native vegetation, drainage improvements, soft shore protection, and moving/raising houses). Mini-grant amounts will range from \$500-\$5,000, and are not designed to cover the entire cost of a project, but to provide some financial incentive to help a shoreline homeowner take actions that benefit habitat as well as protect the property.

Island County is also partnering with Northwest Straits Foundation on complementary Shore Friendly work. One element of that work is organizing a Shore Friendly workshop for County Planners.

Update: None

**Sound Water Stewards (Chase):** Whidbey – Sound Waters University was a success with around 700 people attending and only 3 kg (6.6 pounds) of trash generated. The rest was all recyclable or compostable. Thanks to WasteWise for making this possible! SWS will have a display/booth at MusselFest next month. They plan to have the live tanks at the booth so people can see mussels feeding. Allie will be meeting with State Parks this week to work with the new Interpretive Specialist to get the SWS programs launched for the year.

Camano – Snow Goose festival was great and attracted lots of out of towners which is its purpose. The SWS booth had 132 contacts over 2 days. We have 17 signed up for Camano training and 25 for Whidbey. The spring schedule is set with 2 field trips (plus intertidal monitoring) to be 4/23 at Cama Beach; training starts 3/12. The Camano 101 event, which attracted about 130+ attendees, brought a lot of attention to the SWS booth, with a lot of interest in their activities and training.

The January speaker at the Camano Library was Loren Brokaw, WDFW, who is in charge of the Leque Island restoration project. After 95 people filled the room, with over half standing, we



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started turning people away. Loren agreed to come back in April, this time at the Camano Center, which should draw many more people. For the February talk, Scott Chase spoke about Landscaping Over Your Drainfield, which drew about 35-40 attendees. (He will also be giving that talk at the Whidbey Gardening Workshop.)

Update: None

**WSU Extension:** Update at meeting.

Update: There was discussion about volunteers finding a lot of plastic rifle shell casings (shot wads) at the beach, and outreach to prevent duck hunters especially from using plastic casings.

## LEADERSHIP REPORTS:

**Chair:** None

**County Lead:** None

**County Commissioners:** None

**COMMUNITY COMMENT FORUM AND Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC:** Dawn spoke about SRTCC site visits coming up this Thursday. She asked that if anyone is coming with the group to Polnell Point to please let her know so she can arrange Navy escorts.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS:

- Tuesday Mar 3, 3:00p – 5:00p, MRC Meeting – Commissioners' Hearing Room, Coupeville
- Friday Apr 3, 9:00a – 4:30p, MRC Symposium (MRC members only)
- Friday Apr 3, 12:20p – 4:25p, Rain Garden Tour
- Saturday, Apr 4, 11:00a – 2:00p, Earth and Ocean Month kick-off – Bayview Hall
- Tuesday, Apr 7, 3:00p – 5:00p, MRC Meeting – Commissioners' Hearing Room, Coupeville
- Tuesday, May 4, 3:00p – 5:00p, MRC Meeting – Camano Island Library
- Saturday, May 16, 9:00a – 12:00p Stormwater RunOff – Coupeville

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:02pm.