

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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## Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

# December 1, 2020

ZOOM

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

**VISITORS:** Sasha Host, NWSC, Jill Lipoti, Allie Simpson, NWSC

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

### RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING MEMBERS (Anna)

Anna recognized Matt and Mike, and thanked them. They have both been on the MRC for 3 years, and will be stepping off at the end of the month. We are working on planting a native tree to honor each outgoing member.

Matt has helped with shoreline planning, restoration projects, advice on the Shore Friendly program, and the forage fish program. He plans to stay involved with the forage fish work.

Mike works with the Navy and has provided a lot of connections and support for restoration projects, including Maylor Point. He has promoted our work in the Navy community. He will move into a technical advisor role, which we can approve at the January meeting. Technical advisors are people we have acknowledged that we can rely on for technical advice.

### PROJECT BRAINSTORMING (Anna)

We need to begin planning for our upcoming grant round. We will brainstorm at this meeting, and then in early 2021 we will do some refining. We will submit our official proposal to Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) in May. They will review it and provide feedback. It's a 2 year grant cycle, from October 2021-September 2023. We are able to make adjustments throughout the two years.

### Monitoring

#### Eelgrass

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The underwater boat survey has been discontinued, with 10 years of data. Gregg Ridder is continuing to do aerial work and will continue through next year at least. Kes suggested taking pictures at consistent locations at low tide every year as a way to monitor the beds. We could potentially use the MyCoast app.

There was discussion about what the data is being used for, especially for outreach, and where the data can be showcased. It is important to have all of the eelgrass mapped because when there is an oil spill, there can be a natural resources damage claim to the spiller. There may be gaps in environmental data around Whidbey and Camano Islands, and we could potentially address data gaps as a project. The eelgrass data is shared with Washington Department of Natural Resources. It helps add to and verify the data they gather as well. It has been helpful for us to identify areas like Cornet Bay, where there has been some damage from anchor scouring. An example is expanding voluntary no-anchor zones. It also helps with boating outreach. We have a lot of data on all the eelgrass around Island County. The data is available to view through the [SoundIQ map](#). We could share this to help with oil spill response.

## Seining

This was canceled for 2020 and 2021, and is planned to restart in 2022. There will be conversations with Jason Morgan about available funding, and if we will need a separate funding source.

## **Outreach**

### Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area (MSA)

Snohomish and Island County MRCs collaborated with elected officials to have Port Susan designated as an MSA, which is a voluntary designation. The goal is to encourage protection and restoration, and outreach to homeowners to participate in this. Scott was heavily involved in this entire process.

The idea for this project would be to update the outreach materials. In 2014, Snohomish MRC developed a [report card](#) on the status of the MSA. We would work with Snohomish MRC to update the materials and data points, and move to an online format. The report card would then be interactive and easy to update. This would include working with a consultant and forming a sub-committee. This could be done as a 2-year project. The first year would focus on initial data gathering and stakeholder meetings. The second year would focus on the development of website and outreach materials. There was discussion about meeting our targeted audience. For example, the Shore Friendly video series has been popular and we have a lot of information that we need to share with the public. We should think about how we publicize what we already have. We need to know what we're going to do with the data we develop. During the development of the MSA, they did workshops, and the public was invited. The Snohomish MRC created a [video](#). There was a lot of outreach, and it was well received by the public.

There was news coverage about our kelp forests featuring Dana Oster. The link (which is a segment that does not include Dana) can be found [here](#).

## Strategies regarding COVID-19

There was discussion about COVID-19 creating challenges for showing videos and presentations. Hopefully by 2022 we will be in better shape. COVID-19 has given us

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opportunities to have new and creative ways to do outreach. We should use this time to think about how to reach the right audiences and to use the right tools to reach people. There was a suggestion to present information like this in the newspaper.

## Whidbey Weekly Column

Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD) has a monthly column in *Whidbey Weekly*, and we are rotating writing an article among the MRC, WICD, and Sound Water Stewards (SWS). Anna will reach out to members to put together a schedule for writing an article.

## Demographic Research

There was discussion about the need to understand who our audience is, and if there has been an audience study. The Shore Friendly Program did some extensive social marketing data gathering a few years ago, including in Island County. We will also be able to see the results from the recent survey that ILIO put out. The census data will be available soon.

## **Restoration**

### Current Projects

In our current grant, we have Cornet Bay stewardship listed. We have also partnered with Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) for restoration at Hoypus Point, but we do not need to contribute funding at this time.

### Kelp to Help Reduce Methane

Jill brought up some recent articles she saw about feeding cows kelp to decrease the amount of methane they produce. This has potential to be a huge help for climate change. We can inquire about whether we have the right kind of kelp (*Asparagopsis*), if it can be grown here, and if we could become part of that solution. There was discussion about the benefits of this to cows, and the target farmers. We can contact Tom Mumford with WSU Extension. Dana Oster would also be a good resource for this, as well as the WSU Extension Dean. We can do a literature search, and see if we can have experts speak at a meeting and provide information.

## **COORDINATOR'S UPDATE (Anna)**

We will elect officers in January. The positions are Chair and Vice Chair. Kelly and Hannah are happy to step down if someone else wants to be Chair or Vice Chair. Please nominate yourself or someone else if you are interested.

The Chair will make recommendations for appointment to the Executive Committee. This includes the Chair and Vice Chair, and can include the NWSC representative, Past Chair, and members-at-large. Kelly, Hannah, Elsa, and Randy are on the Executive Committee. Elsa has offered to step down if someone else would like to be on this committee. It is not a high commitment role; they usually meet every other month, and discuss preparations for upcoming meetings and administrative items. Please let Kelly or Anna know if you are interested.

For the January meeting, we can talk about having discussions around diversity, equity, and inclusion. We would like to start an ongoing conversation about how to be inclusive in an intentional way.

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Sound Waters University is coming up on February 6. It will be entirely virtual, and is an opportunity to have an exhibit. We will have more details in the coming weeks.

Moving into 2021, we will be continuing with virtual meetings. Anna will send out Zoom meeting invites for the upcoming year. If we begin meeting in person, she will add that information.

State Parks are looking at updating their signage at Ebey's Landing. We have had a sign at Admiralty Inlet for over 10 years. They are wondering if it is ok to remove this sign and make it consistent with their updated look. They can return the sign to us. There was discussion about our involvement in the process, if we want to update this sign, and if that is an option. Hannah offered to work with them if there is room for partnership on this. Anna will work with Kelly to get more information from State Parks to see if we can be involved in the development of a new sign, or if this sign will be permanently removed and replaced with a sign that does not highlight the MRC. There was a suggestion to ask if a smaller sign, potentially with a QR code for our website, can be put up along the Park's replacement sign (if replacing our entire sign is not an option). Scott commented that he has gone around and taken photos and checked on the status of several of our signs. The signs were expensive to install. WSU Extension was involved with the signage, and Tim is fine to have the sign removed or updated. The process involved with changing State Park signage can be long and bureaucratic.

## NWSC GRANT REPORTS

### **Kelp Monitoring (Hannah/Randy)**

No updates.

### **Hoypus Point (Gwendolyn)**

The Northwest Straits Foundation has signed an agreement with the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) for final design for restoration at Hoypus Point. They have contracted with Blue Coast Engineering to complete the design. A kick-off meeting will be scheduled in December.

Update: The scope of work is completed and everything is moving forward.

### **Seining/Eelgrass (Kes)**

Seining at Cornet Bay has been canceled for 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but is expected to begin in January 2022. Ann Prusha is working with the eelgrass team to develop the eelgrass storymap.

Update: Hannah commented that, if we decide to take yearly photos at low tide, it might be good to add the animals that are seen.

## OTHER REPORTS

### **Shoreline Restoration and Armor Removal (Anna)**

Restoration work is underway at Seahorse Siesta. Dawn Spilsbury Pucci took some [drone footage](#) of the project so far. The Northwest Straits Foundation is requesting a cost increase from RCO due to an increased amount of material with potential creosote contamination than



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originally estimated. Lisa Kaufman has been working hard to ensure this project can continue through to completion despite this hiccup.



*Seahorse Siesta Restoration: Left: Material from old barge. Credit: Lisa Kaufman. Right: Material being removed. Credit: Anna Toledo.*

Update: None

## **Sound Water Stewards (Scott)**

- 1) The Sound Water Stewards class of 2020 “graduated” on October 29th.
- 2) The Education Committee is up and running; their primary purpose is to develop and vet new programming. At this time, they are launching a couple of projects and have completed a couple as well.
- 3) SWS are planning to offer at least one First Day (of the year) Hike for the Parks. These guided hikes are very popular at Whidbey State Park on January 1 annually. This year, each hike will be limited to 5 guests and 2 guides.
- 4) The Art and Biology Program went so well that some of the kids told their teacher about it, and the South Whidbey Schools reached out to see if SWS would do a distance learning video for them. SWS will be reaching out to schools on Camano, Coupeville, and North Whidbey as well to see if they would like to use the videos, after some work is done on them.
- 5) SWS are launching a new Stewardship Committee to round out the Education and Citizen Science Committees, and are looking for committee members from both islands. The Stewardship Committee will be responsible for creating, vetting, researching, and maintaining Stewardship programs, partner programs, events, and projects. It is also responsible for finding, staffing, and managing volunteers for the programs and making sure reports and paperwork are completed to demonstrate our programs' impacts. The Stewardship Committee will work alongside the Education and Citizen Science Committees to make this happen. The goal is to have four new Stewardship programs/projects for volunteers to participate in by the end of the first year. They are halfway there with a new Beach Clean-Up program and the Monofilament Line Collection program already in place.
- 6) At their annual meeting on Nov. 17th, SWS elected four new Board members: Kris Holley, Scott Chase, Paul Belanger, and Joe Cunningham.
- 7) At the annual meeting, it was reported that over 2,100 copies of Getting to the Water’s Edge have been sold. 10,994 volunteer hours have been reported, at a value of \$297,677.

Update: Congratulations to Scott for being elected to the Board!

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## **WSU Extension (Lawrence/Ritzman)**

Update at meeting.

Update: The Master Naturalist Program modules have been completed. The faculty is all on board for moving everything online. They are offering credit for students to do an independent study to help them develop the online portion. The goal is to complete it by June. It is not a volunteer program.

## **LEADERSHIP REPORTS**

**Chair:** None

**County Lead:** The survey is almost final. The ILIO technical group will be making a recommendation to its Executive Committee next week to finalize the information. It will be provided to the MRC for review as well. They will share demographic information.

**County Commissioners:** None

**COMMUNITY COMMENT FORUM AND Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC:** None

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 4:16pm.