

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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## Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

# February 2, 2021

ZOOM

**PRESENT:** Kelly Zupich, Chair, presiding, Hannah Liss, Vice Chair, Barbara Bennett, Randy Berthold, Scott Chase, Ed Halloran, Gwendolyn Hannam, Andi Kopit, Elsa Schwartz, Kes Tautvydas, Commissioner Janet St. Clair, Board of County Commissioners (non-voting), Jerilyn Ritzman, WSU Extension (non-voting), Anna Toledo, MRC Coordinator (staff), Ann Prusha, IC DNR (staff) **ABSENT:** Lori Clark, IC DNR Manager/ILIO Coordinator (non-voting) (notified absence),

**VISITORS:** Sasha Horst, NWSC, Jonathan Lange, IC Planning, Jill Lipoti, John Lovie, SRTCC, ILIO, Meredith Penny, IC Planning (presenting), Alexandra Plumb, Hiller West, Nolan Simmons, IC Planning, Dawn Spilsbury Pucci, IC Salmon Recovery

**CALL TO ORDER:** Kelly called the meeting to order at 3:02pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Barbara moved to approve the agenda. Elsa seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Kes moved to approve the January 5, 2021 minutes. Ed seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

### **PRESENTATION: FEMA DOOR 2 DECISION (Meredith Penny, Island County Planning and Community Development)**

Meridith presented about Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Door 2, 2019 – Updated Regulations for Development in the Floodplain. She went over the background and options FEMA provides as alternatives to violating the Endangered Species Act. This includes 3 “Doors” or options: 1) Prohibit development, 2) Follow regulations, and 3) Demonstrate compliance on a permit-by-permit basis. Island County (IC) has implemented a new set of voluntary development standards for the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). It is a hybrid of Doors 2 and 3. She reviewed the voluntary standards for Door 2, including implementation issues, such as limited use by individuals. One known limitation is the cost of low-impact development techniques, which is where the MRC might be able to help them.

The group then asked questions and made comments.

- Has any jurisdiction chosen to utilize Door 1?
  - She is not sure, but it would be difficult.
- How is this information made available to the public?
  - Community meetings, and an email subscription list that informs subscribers when codes are updated and up for review. There are also public Board of Island County Commissioner (BICC) meetings.
- It appears that there is a lot of material available and intelligence about the process available to the public. Has there been consideration of statistical data? Such data might

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include monitoring who is taking advantage of Door 2 versus 3 and what those outcomes are.

- Meridith will look into this, and it may be in permit tracking software already.
- Is there a GIS layer of SFHZs?
  - IC GeoMap has this information. She showed the group how to access this on the IC Planning website.
- Where can data about specific sea level rise (SLR) considerations be found?
  - The floodplain is determined by FEMA and does not take into account SLR or future projections; it is historical information.
  - Washington Sea Grant and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have been working on a mapping project with different SLR scenarios. There was a comment that the IC DNR website could have a link to the SLR projection mapping from Washington Sea Grant.
- How do you use the Habitat Assessment data? Is it useful for delineating environmentally sensitive areas for Island County?
  - The analysis can summarize whether the proposal is likely to have impacts to ESA listed species or not. In the floodplain, you cannot impact an endangered species and then mitigate – you have to come up with a determination that ends with “not likely to significantly impact” endangered species.
- Is there any requirement to remove invasive species?
  - Not currently. Some noxious weeds are required to be removed from private property, but enforcement is challenging. More information can be found [here](#), and specific laws governing noxious weeds and the requirements of private property owners can be found [here](#).
- Are there development incentives to make Door 2 more intriguing financially, such as waiving fees or expediting permitting?
  - There might be an opportunity to share messaging with Shore Friendly regarding soft shore protection.
- Why is there a desire to persuade people to build in a floodplain, especially considering SLR?
  - It is not desirable; it is a matter of the historic development. Building and rebuilding often occurs in the floodplain. We want to encourage people to comply with higher standards and less environmental impact where we can.
- If someone is willing and able to meet requirements, and avoids having a need for habitat assessment, does that bypass the requirement for forage fish and hydrologic assessment?
  - No. Other state and federal requirements still apply.
- There was a comment that the ILIO should be aware of this.
- Are there examples of low impact development success for those contemplating building? Maybe we could publicize some of these success stories.
  - Meridith would need to check with Public Works or building staff to see if there are recent projects that could incorporate low impact development. This could be outside of the floodplain; there are impervious surface limits, for example.
- Jerilyn commented that she is the Shore Stewards coordinator for Washington State University (WSU) Extension. Her members are shoreline landowners, HOAs, port districts, etc. If there is anything she can send out to their members, let her know: [jerilyn.ritzman@wsu.edu](mailto:jerilyn.ritzman@wsu.edu).

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We welcome ideas about how the MRC can be engaged on this topic. Meridith commented that there is the Shoreline Master Plan (SMP) update will be due by June 30. As they get into the public participation portion, they will reach out to us. Additionally, Barbara sits as a representative of the MRC on the SMP Update Technical Advisory Group.

## PARTNERSHIP AND OUTREACH DURING COVID-19 (Anna)

There was discussion about partnerships and outreach, particularly during COVID:

- We can invite Seth Luginbill to present on noxious weeds as well as native vegetation (especially its functions in the shoreline environment).
- The needs assessment will help inform outreach; interviews are bringing great information about how to engage with partners.
  - We need to think about our core mission of advising the county. Current interviews are giving us a lot of good ideas, and we need to be mindful of staying true to our mission and avoiding burnout.
- Current outreach projects include Crabber outreach, the Eelgrass Storymap, the MyCoast app presentation, and the *Whidbey Weekly* quarterly article.
- Organizations have different COVID safety protocols for volunteer work (an example is the Cornet Bay restoration project), and this can bring challenges in coordination.
- In the past, there was more coordination among groups in government. There were cooperative groups, such as the Snohomish-Camano Nearshore Cooperative and Whidbey Island ECONet. These have dissolved. Local Integrating Organizations (LIOs) do have an option to reinitiate an eco-network. There was a suggestion that instead of re-creating these, we could bring county organizations together.
  - We could compile a list of all of our partners, and those we should be inviting to partner with us. This includes Snohomish Conservation District. Please send partnership suggestions to Anna.
  - There was a suggestion to reach out to the Northwest Planners Group.
  - We can make something like an organization chart similar to an ecosystem map. We can map out formal and informal relationships. Northwest Straits (NWS) is working on organization charts. Dawn will send a graphic she created to Anna.
- We need to be mindful of becoming more inclusive.
  - The MRC by-laws include tribal participation as an important element of MRC membership. We have had tribal representatives in a voting capacity in the past, and currently there is a tribal representative in a technical advisor, non-voting position, due to their limited capacity for participation. We welcome tribal participation as their availability allows.
  - We need to reach out to the communities who cannot easily participate, and meet these communities where they are.
  - Scott is looking into the languages of our beach users. It was suggested that he speak with Tina Dinzl-Pederson with the State Parks on Camano. The research done for distributing COVID materials revealed that Spanish and Tagalog were the two languages that should be focused on in IC, after English.
  - IC is working on a larger concept about diversity and inclusion, and will include training from outside sources.

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- We want our name out there – on swag and at different events once it is safe to do so. In the meantime:
  - We can work on education, and make some short videos.
  - San Juan MRC did a video profile on their members – maybe we can do something similar.
  - We can make a video for local television stations to air. Barbara has a contact if we want to make films (this could apply to member profiles as well).
  - We could partner with libraries to do a *Hidden Expert*-style virtual event or trivia. Hannah volunteered to help with a trivia event. There was a comment that trivia has not always been successful for other organizations, but maybe we can include more partners. Anna and Andi have a contact at the library that they can reach out to. WSU Extension could potentially help also. Trivia for kids was also suggested.
- We can think about activities geared towards kids and their parents.
  - There can be a beach cleanup, where kids sort and categorize trash and make a simple bar graph or some other easy curriculum plan.
  - We could host contests. For a beach cleanup, they can take photos and tag us. We have done a couple of art contests, and they did not get a lot of participation when we marketed it ourselves. There was much more participation when we worked through teachers.
  - South Whidbey School District is interested in educational videos. They want to make something that is accessible for all kids.
  - Maybe the library can rent out the *Discover Our Island Shores* video. We can figure out how to package it with the food web game that goes with it.
  - Andi suggested making a coloring book – she has experience doing this. It can be shared widely, and can include information about tide zones and identification. This is a longer term idea – Andy volunteered to take the lead on it. Kelly will help with identification. It would be great to make this available in late spring/early summer, and have a Spanish version available. We can also get tribal input.
  - The education subcommittee will have a meeting.

## COORDINATOR'S UPDATE (Anna)

### Port Susan MSA project

Anna, Scott, and Elsa met with the subcommittee in December. Anna has had additional conversations with SnoCo MRC staff about the logistics of a project partnership.

She also met with the Director of Student Affairs from University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy and Governance about the possibility to work with a team of 4 graduate students in their Master of Public Administration program. The cost is about \$2000 to work with the student consulting group for five months. This would be an opportunity to engage with graduate students and have assistance with the MSA update project. The Director of Student Affairs thought this sounded like a great topic for their program.

### Shoreline Master Plan Update Technical Review Committee

Barbara will be participating in this review committee. They had their first meeting this morning.

### Tire Removal

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Puget Soundkeeper Alliance reached out about a report of ~30 tires on the beach a little west of Seahorse Siesta. They are working with the Washington Department of Natural Resources and WSU Extension to see if they can be removed. SWS can potentially help with this if human power is needed.

## **Maternity Leave**

Anna is expecting! She plans to take maternity leave from about mid-June through mid-October. Ann and Lori will help provide MRC staff support while she's out. Congratulations, Anna and the Toledo family!

## **NORTHWEST STRAITS COMMISSION (NWSC) GRANT REPORTS**

### **Outreach (Barbara)**

#### Needs assessment

Anna contacted prospective interviewees to introduce the Needs Assessment and invite them to participate. She followed up with a fact sheet about the IC MRC and an overview of interview questions. Once she confirmed their interest, Anna notified the interviewer identified for each person to proceed with scheduling and conducting the interview.

Andi, Anna and Barbara prepared an excel spreadsheet for interviewers to transcribe their notes following each interview. Andi and Barbara are prepared to do a simple analysis that will cluster themes under each question and tally the frequency of each theme in each question.

Ed, Kelly, Andi, Randy and Barbara have all begun interviews with non-county interviewees. Florian has also expressed interest in doing interviews when his schedule allows. Holidays, power outages, etc. have slowed scheduling. Interviews of county staff will begin in February. Interviews will continue through February, analysis will take place in March and results are anticipated to be reported to the MRC in April.

Update: The team is getting out there. They are ready to initiate appointments with IC staff and Commissioners.

#### MyCoast Training

Kelly Zupich and Anna Toledo held a training on how to use the MyCoast app for Sound Water Stewards and MRC members. The training was recorded and will be made available on the MRC website.

#### Port Susan MSA Update

The Port Susan MSA subcommittee met to discuss the proposed MSA update project. The subcommittee discussed stakeholder engagement, gathering new scientific information, and role of the MRCs, consultant, and possible graduate student(s). MRC staff will explore the idea of working with a graduate student(s) to assist with the project.

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

Update at meeting.

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Update: There is a meeting coming up on Monday with Blue Coast Engineering. The virtual site visit for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board will be on March 4. Dawn or Anna can share the agenda when available. Commissioner Bacon is going out there for a site visit.

## **Cornet Bay Stewardship (Gwendolyn/Scott)**

Update at meeting.

Update: There was a meeting at Cornet Bay on Thursday. There are established plants in a fenced off area, and new plantings will need to be watered (they will be mulched). There has been some vandalism to the plants in the past. Volunteering is challenging due to COVID restrictions.

## **OTHER REPORTS**

### **Shore Friendly (Anna)**

We are partnering with the Northwest Straits Foundation on two Shore Friendly workshops. The first will be held on Wednesday, February 24, 6-8pm, and will be open to shoreline landowners and interested parties around Puget Sound. The second workshop will be held on Wednesday, March 17, 4-6pm, and will be geared specifically towards Island County shoreline landowners.

Update: The IC workshop date will be March 17<sup>th</sup>, not 11<sup>th</sup> as previously noted.

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

1. The Sound Water Stewards training registration for 2021 is open, and the application due date is March 18. Training classes are once a week, beginning 4/8 -5/20, then resuming in fall 9/9 – 10/21.
2. Sound Waters University takes place online on February 6th. The Jan Holmes Volunteer award will be presented on that date.
3. The Education Committee, reported on during the last MRC meeting, has two new videos for the public. One features the First Day Hike of 2021, taking place at Deception Pass State Park, and can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/495923175>. The other great video, with Craig Olson showing the life cycle of salmon, can be seen in the link at <https://soundwaterstewards.org/web/education-videos/>
4. The newly formed Stewardship Committee, described in the last report, is preparing to offer beach cleanups on both islands, hopefully beginning in February. Those interested in volunteering can find out more by contacting committee leads Kelly Webb at [kellybwebb@gmail.com](mailto:kellybwebb@gmail.com), or Scott Chase at [kschase80@hotmail.com](mailto:kschase80@hotmail.com).
5. The MRC hosted an overview on the MyCoast app for interested SWS volunteers on January 22nd, taught by Anna Toledo and Kelly Zupich.
6. 2020 was a good year for SWS financially. Sound Waters University was successful, and there was a COVID PPP loan that was “forgiven”. Add to that donations by members and others, the LEP grant, and sales of *Getting to the Water’s Edge*. Although online registrations for Sound Waters University puts the event “in the black”, it will not be as profitable as an in-person event, so SWS funding will likely not be as positive in 2021 as it was in 2020.
7. Over 2,600 copies of *Getting to the Water’s Edge* have been sold. Since this is close to half of the 6,000 printed, it appears that a new edition should be in the works.

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8. The winter SWS BEACH LOG newsletter is out and available to read. It features not only news about SWS, but links to many events, activities, webinars, and videos produced by other organizations throughout the region. You can view the newsletter at: <https://mailchi.mp/c3a75f0b91b3/2021-winter>.

Update: This is their first virtual SWU event, and around 500 people have signed up so far.

## **Island Local Integrating Organization (Barbara)**

The LIO (Local Integrating Organization) is responsible for coordinating locally with the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) planning, priorities and project funding. The Island County LIO meets every 2nd Tuesday (with occasional changes) and the Coordinator is Lori Clark.

This is a report on LIO activities through January, 2021.

- This fall, through specialized staffing and funding provided by PSP, IC residents were surveyed about the shoreline's role in their Sense of Place. Survey data has now been analyzed and makes this illusive topic more tangible for policy discussions.
- In collaboration with the MRC and based on the Sense of Place survey results, the LIO framed two questions to be added to the MRC Needs Assessment questionnaire. These questions build on results from the Sense of Place survey and are being asked in every interview conducted this winter for the MRC Needs Assessment. They are:
  - In this recent survey, Island County residents identified drinking water, air quality, and sound stewardship as their top natural resource priorities. How does this finding relate to your department's / organization's priorities?
  - The results from this survey were compared with a larger 12-county survey around Puget Sound, which found that Island County residents in particular feel their identity is tied to the shoreline, and they utilize the shoreline to benefit their psychological wellbeing and find relaxation. In addition, 69% of Island County residents have observed changes along the shoreline, and more frequently indicated they felt the changes were negative (44% negative vs. 13% positive). These findings tell us that Island County residents value the shoreline and notice changes that are happening. How do you think this finding fits with your department's / organization's priorities?
- In January, members of the IC LIO were asked to review the 2021-2023 Puget Sound Budget Request to the Legislature for entries that impact Island County directly. Discussion at February's meeting will consider responses.

## **SRTCC**

SRTCC had three fish project letters of intent submitted, and they were invited to submit a full proposal. They are 1) Hoypus Point, 2) Polnell Point, and 3) a new project sponsored by the Whidbey Camano Land Trust, about an acquisition in the English Boom area tidelands.

SRTCC needs an MRC representative on their committee.

## **LEADERSHIP REPORTS**

**Chair:** None

**County Lead:** None

**County Commissioners:** Janet St. Clair felt lucky to be part of the Salmon Recovery Council; 2 incredible presentations were made. One was regarding the understanding of metrics for salmon,

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restoration, and recovery. She put on Facebook a presentation about the urban runoff substance that is killing Coho. It is good for policy and awareness. The Derelict Vessel Program is consistently underfunded, so please share with her any education or outreach opportunities. She was re-designated the Commissioner to the MRC, and asked the group to think about what we would like her to take back to her colleagues. An overview of the most important things to share would be helpful. Kelly can go to the upcoming MRC update to the BICC, and you can let her know what you want her to express or share. There was a suggestion that the Commissioner Update can be earlier in our meetings, so that it is less crunched for time.

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

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:03pm.