

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

March 2, 2021

ZOOM

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

VISITORS: Chris Michalopoulos, Port of Coupeville, Hiller West, Dana Oster, NWSC, Nolan Simmons, IC Planning

CALL TO ORDER: Hannah called the meeting to order at 3:04pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Scott moved to approve the agenda. Jill seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Barbara moved to approve the February 2, 2021 minutes. Elsa seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

PORT OF COUPEVILLE UPDATE (Chris Michalopoulos, Port of Coupeville Executive Director)

Chris gave a presentation about the Coupeville Historic Red Wharf restoration, and potential ways that the MRC can collaborate with the Port of Coupeville.

The presentation reviewed the history of the Port of Coupeville, and provided an overview of the proposed complete rehabilitation of the Wharf pier, building, and dock. This is a multi-phase project, and they are trying fund as much as possible through grants before asking for a tax levy. Their grant expires at the end of the year, and they are waiting on federal approval for their submitted application before they can begin work. The work should only last for a few weeks. They want to remove as much creosote as possible. For Phase Two of this project, they are hoping to have an advisory group to help enhance the experience of visiting the Wharf by showcasing its history.

The MRC might be able to help this project by having a representative on the advisory group, providing advice for adding beach nourishment to the cove and creosote removal, and by advocating for the project. Chris is interested in knowing if there are programs out there to help provide beach nourishment and fortify the beach. They will also want an advisory group for the building rehabilitation. They would potentially like to consider dredging in the future and have the MRC provide feedback. The goal is to help the Port be an economic driver for Island County (IC). He wants to bring in more jobs and help with economic development.

The group then asked questions and provided feedback:

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- Does the Port have the ability to issue bonds?
 - Yes. They explored using bonds, tax levies, etc., and have taken out a line of credit instead.
- IC's Shore Friendly program could be helpful, especially for providing expertise with beach nourishment and armor removal.
- There was discussion about potential environmental implications for sea level rise (SLR) and the Wharf's fuel lines.
 - There is funding to replace fuel lines. There is a need to upgrade fuel line and pipe infrastructure.
- Do we know much about the anthropological history of the site?
 - We can go back to the mid-1800s. Chris is working to understand more, and is getting in contact with tribal leaders. The lack of education at the Wharf is an issue, and he wants to work with historians to bring its history to life.
- What would the timeline be for the advisory committee seeking representation from the MRC?
 - This advisory committee could have a big impact once the cap and pile upgrade project begins. He is hoping for September.

SHORELINE MASTER PLAN UPDATE (Barbara)

Barbara reviewed the main points of her written report. She is MRC's representative to the Shoreline Master Plan (SMP) update Technical Review Committee. The SMP provides the guidance for planning uses for the shoreline, and addresses the area 200ft from the ordinary high water mark inland as well as some freshwater. There have been observations made about a lack of clarity in the code. Today, she is hoping for specific feedback that she can bring back to the SMP update committee. The current changes will be released towards the end of March, and then there will be 30 days for public response.

Balancing urban growth and desire for development creates tension, and the SMP update strives to balance private property rights while championing careful land use.

There was discussion about increasing public access to the shoreline, and being mindful of creating more inclusive community access, as well as incentivizing the ability for fish to traverse barriers. There should be feedback given to ensure that the practices in the code are increasing ecosystem services. Using stories and examples could help with public understanding and buy-in. There will be opportunities to give feedback to the Planning Commission as well.

There was a comment about repair versus replacement of bulkheads, which depends on the percentage of bulkhead that needs repairing. Property owners have found loopholes to avoid full bulkhead replacement, and there have been requests in the past that they include a time limit for certain repairs, except in emergencies. This would close the loophole.

We want to protect first and restore second, recognizing how Whidbey and Camano Islands are unique in Puget Sound (PS), and keep in mind our ecologically sensitive areas. We do have a lot of healthy shoreline relative to other areas in PS. We want to be sure to incentivize managed retreat and help communities to become more resilient to SLR. Right now, there is a disincentive to install new soft shore protection. Landowners need to show that a structure will be threatened

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in three years, but by time that happens, soft shore protection is less of an option. We should encourage incentivizing soft shore protection.

When landowners need to impact land with critical areas on them, there is a hierarchy of prioritization (such as soft shore practices first, and bulkheads as a last resort). There is some disconnect with requirements and how they play out in the real world.

Often, shoreline protection situations are high pressure for the landowner and IC, where there is damage or perception of potential damage occurring on the property. This applies especially where legacy developments were made early or in the last century. We are now living with those results. It is difficult for staff to go through prioritization analyses in these emotional situations. The structural solutions are not the desired solutions, and are being discouraged. There is growing acceptance that structural protection is a damaging option. It is tough in IC because of the way the shoreline has been developed over the decades. This is going to take years of effort. People are accustomed to seeing shorelines developed similarly to other areas, where almost everything is developed. This is changing the vision, and is a chance to insert some encouragement for political will to stand this ground.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT (Anna)

Since we have not been able to meet in person and there are new members, this section was an opportunity for members to chat about their backgrounds, their involvement in MRC, and places they are interested in becoming more involved. Since there was a time constraint, the group decided to table this item until a future meeting.

COORDINATOR'S UPDATE (Anna)

Anna reminded the group to watch the 16-minute Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) training that she emailed out. It is a requirement and MRC members need to have a training every 4 years.

Upcoming meetings:

- April: Ken will be presenting about the sunflower sea star research he's been conducting. Ann will present a final draft of the Eelgrass Storymap.
- May: There will be a Noxious Weeds and Native Plants presentation by Seth Luginbill, IC's Noxious Weed Program Coordinator. Anna asked the group if they had any questions or issues that they would like Seth to address (please email her suggestions, too):
 - Are there endangered species in the marine environment?
 - How do you properly dispose of invasive species: Should they be bagged? Can they be disposed of for free at any IC transfer station? When should they be disposed of (e.g. before seeding)?
 - What services does IC Noxious Weeds provide (so the MRC can help spread the word in the community)?
 - What are the how-to's for removing aquatic invasive species? Is there a pamphlet or brochure?

The barge has been removed from Seahorse Siesta! There will be some planting on site later this month.

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There will be an Island County Shore Friendly workshop on March 17th at 4pm. Topics will include: coastal processes, marine habitats, and natural and soft shoreline protection strategies. A registration link is available on the MRC homepage. Feel free to register and/or share with interested parties. The Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) hosted a regional Shore Friendly workshop last week, which was well-received.

Anna will be on jury duty starting March 18th. She will respond to emails and calls as she is able, but responses may be delayed.

NWSC GRANT REPORTS

Forage Fish Monitoring

- Volunteer monitoring is still on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions. Jason Morgan from NWSF is continuing to monitor at Cornet Bay and Hoypus Point, and Ann Prusha is monitoring Hidden Beach. Ann will likely begin monitoring Seahorse Siesta in late February/early March.
- NWS is hosting a Forage Fish update on Friday, March 12 at noon. The Zoom link is [here](#) if you would like to attend.

Kelp Monitoring

No updates.

Seining/Eelgrass

Eelgrass: No underwater eelgrass monitoring is planned, as there have not been any changes in the last 15 years, except maybe at Cornet Bay.

Seining: Seining is planned to start at Cornet Bay in January of 2022.

OTHER REPORTS

Northwest Straits Commission/Foundation

Update at meeting.

Update: NWS has been exploring options for a virtual conference. They would like to do something, and want it to be meaningful.

There was discussion about engagement. This could include a passport, where people drive around on their own and visit different sites. There is potential to do virtual sharing every other year; maybe this year there could be a focus on a virtual climate series. Other ideas included virtual topical get-togethers, or maybe fall picnic at Padilla Bay.

Salmon Recovery Technical & Citizen Committee

Update at meeting.

Update: There are virtual site visits for two proposed projects this week, and Lisa Kaufman will be presenting about both. Anna will send out an invite.

Washington State University (WSU) Extension

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Update at meeting.

Update: Things are moving along with the Master Naturalist program. They are working on completing modules.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair: None

County Lead: None

County Commissioners: We will create a bullet point list to give to Janet St. Clair for her to bring back to the Board of Island County Commissioners.

COMMUNITY COMMENT FORUM AND Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC:

Dana is applying for funding to keep the regulatory effort going for the Voluntary No Anchor Zone protections. There is a group that meets monthly for all interested in PS to make a transboundary initiative for branding. They are looking for volunteers to do vessel watches, (there is a standard volunteer protocol).

There was discussion about invasive plants in lakes – they are an issue in IC. Gwendolyn has been involved with projects involving this. Matt Colston with IC Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is starting a volunteer program for freshwater lakes.

In mid-April, some IC DNR staff will be hosting a symposium meet and greet. There will be mini presentations with opportunities for Q&A. Topics will include water quality, shellfish harvesting, Shore Friendly, and noxious weeds.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:00pm.