

County: Island
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PROJECT TITLE: Island County Marine Resources Committee Operations and Projects

TASK NUMBER: 3 – Education & Outreach

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Island County Marine Resources Committee Outreach Needs Assessment Summary

February 2017

The mission of Island County Marine Resource Committee (IC MRC) is to investigate, research, and identify local marine resources, and marine resource and habitat issues; recommend remedial actions to Island County agencies and authorities; carry out such recommendations where so approved; and build local awareness of the issues and broad-based community support for the remedies.

Recognizing its primary charge to advise County elected officials and staff regarding marine resources and in anticipation of its 2017-2018 strategic planning and work plan development cycle, the IC MRC decided to conduct a needs assessment focused on County elected officials and staff. The newly formed IC MRC Outreach team, represented by Team Lead Barbara Bennett, was tasked to conduct the assessment in collaboration with Elsa Schwartz, now Chair, and Anna Toledo, Coordinator.

A questionnaire was developed (sample attached, Appendix A) and County Department heads and staff were identified for interviews based on their interface with marine resources. One County Commissioner, assigned to the MRC for 2017, was also interviewed. A total of 11 individuals were interviewed representing 6 County Departments and one Commissioner. Barbara Bennett conducted all interviews and assembled the attached summary of responses. Six interviews were individual interviews, one was conducted with two representatives from the Planning Department, and one with the three staff who work most closely with the MRC from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Interviews were conducted January - February 2017.

The Assessment Summary (Appendix B) lists responses to each question. The number to the left of each response indicates the number of times the same point was addressed by different individuals. Responses are listed by frequency under the heading of each question.

This summary will be used to inform the IC MRC's focus for outreach work in 2017, and in the development of the work plan for 2017-2018. While it would be impossible for the IC MRC to address all the recommendations, there are strong themes, and important context within the responses that will help the MRC meet its charge to advise the County and build local awareness regarding marine resources.

Appendix A: Sample Questionnaire

IC MRC Planning Interviews

Date: _____

Name: _____

Introduction and reason for the interview -

IC MRC is an advisory body to County Government established in 1999 to:

- investigate, research & identify local marine issues and resources
- recommend remedial actions,
- carry out approved recommendations,
- build local awareness of issues and broad community support for remedies.

In that capacity, the MRC has done:

- Monitoring work: Ongoing: forage fish, eelgrass, kelp, salmonids, pigeon guillemots, and Did a study on phytoremediation
- Restoration work in Cornet Bay and anticipates future work in
- Outreach work: signage, videos, collaboration on forums
- Advisory work: research re: fin fish net pens for Commissioners' re: SMP update

Provide fact sheet

What trends and issues are pressing for your Department in 2017

What trends and issues do you anticipate looking ahead 3-5 years?

How do marine components interface with these trends and issues?

- **Water quality**
- **Fish, shell fish and wildlife**
- **New building requests on shorelines**
- **Derelict structures on shorelines**
- **Beach Access, Tideland ownership**
- **Sea Level Rise**

Given the MRC's purpose to advise the County re: Marine Resources, how can the MRC support your work? Short term ... and long term?

What issues need to be:

- researched?

- remedied?

- communicated to County Staff?

- communicated to local residents?

Appendix A: Sample Questionnaire

What is the best way to communicate with you, County Commissioners and your staff:

- attend Commissioners' work sessions?

- develop white papers?

- provide one page (or less) summaries on topics?

- meet with you and your staff in person?

- provide educational presentations at MRC meetings for staff to attend?

- other?

What are your thoughts on past and future MRC work:

- What do you value most that the MRC has done?

- What comments do you have about other projects?

- What recommendations do you have for future MRC work?

Who else should we interview? (Provided a list of Department Directors and Staff for consideration)

Other County Staff / Officials to interview? The following Departments were represented on the list:

**Commissioners
Planning
Emergency Management
Department of Natural Resources and Health Administration
Maintenance Facilities
Public Works
WSU Extension**

Final Caveat:

- Thank you very much for your comments and your time. I will report on this interview and others as the MRC works on its strategic plan for the new year.
- The MRC may not be able to do everything you have raised.
- Our goal is to assist leaders and elected officials in their roles as they relate to marine resources
- We assess all new project ideas or requests in relation to the MRC's mission and capacities.

Appendix B: Assessment Summary

IC MRC Needs Assessment 2017 Assessment Summary

What trends and issues are pressing for your Department in 2017?

8	Public Outreach	Sea level rise, armoring options, DNR shoreline regulations
7	Aging infrastructure	Culverts, water systems, tidegates, septic and wells
7	SMP 2020 Update	Net pen task force & anticipate no net loss with update
6	Drainage	Stormwater runoff and beyond
6	Sea Level Rise	Runoff, road flooding, septic flooding
5	EPA Requirements and Funding	Shoreline, LIO, MRC, funding changes, fresh water projects
5	Fresh Water	Water quality, EPA fresh water projects, ground water contamination
5	Monitoring	Inventory, pre/post project monitoring & reporting outcomes
5	Planning by Drift Cell for shoreline permits	Shoreline studies per drift cells for property guidance re: options in building and to streamline permitting process
4	Marine Water Quality	Ocean acidification
2	Streamline permitting in Planning Dept.	Make permitting more efficient - anticipate options for location types and pre-evaluate shoreline sections (drift cells) to whole blocks vs. site by site
1	Articulate environmental constraints and allowances for natural systems to function in all County initiatives	Incorporate a message of the importance of natural systems and allow for natural constraints in planning & project descriptions
1	Coordinate shoreline information with Public Works	Permitting interface for example w/forage fish for road and culvert work e.g. Maple grove
1	Emergency preparedness	Community engagement and education, anticipate oil spill response, prepare for marine rescue, and identify bluff landslide warning signs
1	Integration of mental health and chemical dependency needs	

What trends and issues do you anticipate looking ahead 3-5 years?

8	SMP update 2020	No net loss discussion, net pen discussion, anticipate other issues
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Appendix B: Assessment Summary

7	Aging infrastructure	Wells, water systems and tidegates
6	Drainage and stormwater	Maintenance of aging infrastructure, compliance with new requirements, and dealing with littoral drift
5	Coordinated Water SP (CWSP)	WRAC priority
3	Littoral drift	Flooding and impact on septic systems, roads, culverts
3	Planning, standardize permitting	Make permitting more efficient
3	Shoreline studies	Make permitting more efficient - anticipate options for location types and pre-evaluate shoreline sections (drift cells) into whole units vs. site by site
2	Extreme storms	Storm surge
1	Anticipate fish friendly culverts	IC Public Works is being proactive to meet this criteria as maintenance and replacements present opportunities in case this is eventually required
1	Environmental constraints	Incorporate a message of the importance of natural systems and the need to allow for natural constraints in planning & project descriptions
1	Affordable housing	
1	Get smarter on shoreline risks and hazard potential	Survey landslide risk indicators from the water around both islands

How do marine components interface with these trends and issues?

7	Need to look beyond MRC/ not just educating MRC members	Extend outreach opportunities to staff and public
1	Great to have Camano participation	Important to define unique needs of each shoreline and community
1	Identify target audiences	Outreach should be tailored to the audience
1	Interface departmental focus with marine ecological functions	In educational outreach be sure Dept. and MRC both reflect interface between marine functions and various County services

What needs to be researched by the MRC?

6	Pre and Post Monitoring of various County projects	Pre and post project monitoring is very important for awareness and shaping future County projects
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Appendix B: Assessment Summary

5	A comprehensive list of all monitoring in Island County would be helpful	The MRC might be the right entity to collect and maintain a comprehensive list of monitoring projects by all organizations in the County. For example: this could be used to create a basis for "no net loss" discussion with the next SMP cycle
1	Debrief projects	Capture lessons learned and identify new questions to address

How can the MRC strengthen its work?

9	Identify the question to be answered for each project	The credibility and reputation of the MRC can be enhanced by articulating why projects are done, what is learned and practical implications
8	Be bold and persistent as advisors (WRAC example)	
7	Leverage role with decision makers, staff and public	
6	Retire projects as they meet objectives	Create a legacy option, and reduce effort as appropriate
6	Don't be a silo within County and don't silo projects	Articulate how they fit together
2	MRC could serve as a focus group for Planning Dept. to discuss plans with MRC before they go public	
2	The Planning Dept. would appreciate MRC support as Planning initiatives are presented to the public	

What needs to be communicated to County Depts. and staff?

8	Develop white papers on emerging and hot issues	Do not need to make highly technical but describe tensions and anticipate factors for consideration
6	Have more forums and invite staff	Get Dept. and staff input on topics for forums
2	Generate an annual report	Circulate to staff and public
2	Understand the time pressures on staff	

What needs to be communicated to local residents?

7	Host regular forums on educational topics	Possible topics: Armoring Options, Sound IQ, PSEMP
2	Support staff presentations to the public	

Appendix B: Assessment Summary

1	Shoreline and bluff risks	Help property owners anticipate the joys and risks of marine locations; Raise awareness of cause and effect, and the need to identify outcomes desired, and then mold behavior toward that desired outcome
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What is the best way to communicate?

Commissioners' work sessions - should MRC make presentations at work sessions?

7	Get on Commissioner's work sessions	Schedule MRC slots during lull periods for work sessions: Jan/Feb/Mar good; Ask to be on agendas with leeway (avoid pairing with controversial topics that may have lengthy public input; only hold space on the agenda if nothing to report. Aim for several times a year
7	Report on milestones	Capture and showcase accomplishments, lessons learned, priorities for new work
2	Meet informally and regularly with each Commissioner	Not only the one Commissioner assigned to the MRC. Seek 1-on-1 conversations and do this frequently enough to build relationships and baseline understanding

Should MRC write and distribute white papers?

8	Short balanced written summaries on projects, topics and issues would be helpful	1 page, vetted for details, reflect scientific approach especially what question addressed and what learned, all aspects, conclusion, recommendations, explain NW Straits role and relationship; anticipate tensions around the topic, anticipate decisions coming up and provide advice: "best guess"
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Should the MRC meet with Dept. Directors or Staff - How best for MRC to communicate with Depts.?

5	As needed	Opportunities for dialogue are always open to be initiated by either Dept. or MRC
5	Publicize educational events to staff and distribute white papers and annual reports	
1	Engage in staff dialogue	Especially for MRC strategic planning for each coming year

What do you value most that the MRC has done?

6	Advisory role in 2015 to Commissioners and DNR re: Net Pens	
5	Cornet Bay role - public outreach, monitoring, finding resources	

Appendix B: Assessment Summary

4	Ocean Acidification Forum
2	Becoming integral to County operations
1	Active and project driven; Ideas into action

Recommendations for future MRC work?

9	Identify the question to be answered for each project	Identify question(s) to be addressed, conduct a literature review in initial planning so don't duplicate what is already known and incorporate lessons already learned, monitor, report what done, learned and recommendations
8	Communicate with Commissioners - formally and informally	
8	Identify, explore, explain and persistently champion issues as MRC identifies priorities	Define a position on an issue and carry it to Commissioners to advise (e.g. Net Pens)
8	Boldly take on role as advisors and champions	As MRC wishes to take this on
7	Organize more public educational forums	OA forum was impressive
7	Engage public in discussions about marine issues	Through forums
5	Monitoring pre and post projects is very helpful if reported solidly	Report on why a project is done, what question(s) it addresses, what was done, what learned and recommendations
1	Seek input on future planning for MRC	Continue periodic needs assessments for strategic planning
1	Focus on the MRC Mission	An important capacity to influence County operations re: marine interests
1	Be proactive	Anticipate issues, talk with candidates before elected, establish dialogue with Commissioners 1-on-1

Other ideas

6	Don't let projects be the only focus of MRC	Be proactive, identify trends and issues and articulate opinions when it is felt to be appropriate
5	Exercise critical thought and dialogue	The reputation of the MRC hinges on quality of work
5	Break down silos between projects	Present a coherent picture of how all MRC activities connect
3	Reflect MRC mission in synthesis of MRC work	Focus on role to advise the County and educate residents

Appendix B: Assessment Summary

2	Target audiences for education and dialogue	Chambers, Businesses, Schools, etc.
1	WSU may help with literature review	Can allow on individual basis Affiate Status
1	Importance of natural systems	Reinforce importance of natural systems and the need to include an allowance for natural systems to function in planning decisions
1	Connect with HS students	
1	Anticipate elections	Discuss MRC and issues with candidates before elections
1	Begin and end meetings on time	
1	Have fun and sustain member energy	

Departments Interviewed

Commissioner

DNR

Emergency Management

Environmental Health

Planning

Public Health

Public Works

WSU