

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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## Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

# October 5, 2021

ZOOM

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

**VISITORS:** Dawn Spilsbury Pucci, IC Salmon Recovery, Heather McCoy, WICD, Bill Leeds, Interact Club, Sasha Horst, NWSC

**CALL TO ORDER:** Kelly called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Barbara requested to add a grant report update to the Needs Assessment Discussion item. Kes moved to approve the amended agenda. Andi seconded. The amended agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Jill moved to approve the September 7, 2021 minutes. Kes seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

### TRIBAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the lands we're on today are the ancestral and current homelands of Indigenous Nations who have stewarded them since time immemorial. We respect their sovereignty, support their Treaty rights, their right to self-determination, and we honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. These Indigenous Nations include the Jamestown S'Klallam, Lower Elwha Klallam, Lummi, Makah, Nooksack, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Samish, Stillaguamish, Swinomish, and Tulalip Tribes.

### WHIDBEY ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT PRESENTATION (Heather & Gwendolyn)

Heather and Gwendolyn gave an overview of the Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD) and Conservation Districts (CDs) in general. WICD services all of Whidbey Island, and Snohomish CD (SnoCD) covers all of Camano Island. CDs are locally-led non-regulatory special purpose districts. They are all over the country, and were established in the 1930s. WICD was established in 1967, has a small team, and is able to share expertise with other CDs. Their mission is to assist in the management of natural resources on and around Whidbey Island for present and future generations, inspiring voluntary conservation practices.

WICD provides technical and financial assistance to implement conservation projects, promotes conservation through education and outreach, and engages stewards. They have four main

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service areas: Forestry Services, Agriculture and Livestock Services, Backyard Stewardship Services, and Water Management Services.

The MRC and WICD partner together in several ways. WICD provides technical advice, champions projects, and helps with outreach. The MRC helps WICD with outreach and education, special project opportunities, and community involvement.

The group then asked questions and made comments:

- WICD is doing fantastic work.
- How do you measure your impact? What kind of metrics are you using, and do you consider ecosystem services and valuation?
  - This often has to do with the number of best management practices (BMPs) installed and their reach. There has been a dramatic increase in demand for services in the last year. WICD is not involved in ecosystem services right now because they are non-regulatory. They have an annual work plan and summary of what they have accomplished, which is available online.
  - They measure the size of the impact for BMPs. This also includes acreage. WICD helps bigger farms, but they have a larger impact with the number of smaller areas they help.
- Has the issue of climate change (CC) impacted their priorities, and is there a way to measure carbon sequestration?
  - They do not have funding to do this. They never recommend tillage, and all BMPs are for conservation and climate resource conservation and protection. They do ask for information from landowners to hear what their priorities are. The community decides what their priorities are, and they help with that. There has been an increased concern of sea level rise (SLR). They will be working on the next 5-year plan and reaching out to the community to see what their priorities are.
- What of information do you provide for homeowners about well capacity?
  - This is complicated. There are no leaders on private wells, and in terms of pollution and water remaining, it is only when someone's well dries up or they are testing water that it is reported when there is an exceedance. Water resources on Whidbey Island are going to continue to be a challenge.
  - There was discussion that Island County does not have a Hydrogeologist, and it is difficult to know who to talk to. WICD is contacted about this often.
- For the 5-year plan, how do they assess what the community needs? The MRC's needs assessment is there to help them, too.
  - They are going to be piecing together elements of what they would like to do. This might include focus groups with potential partners, but surveys need to stay anonymous to ensure that landowners are responding in an unfiltered way.
  - The Maritime Washington National Heritage Area (MWNHA) focus group used a good process, and Jill can speak to WICD about this if they are interested.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT DISCUSSION: CURRENT AND EMERGING ISSUES & GRANT REPORT UPDATE (Barbara)**

### **Needs Assessment**

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Barbara reviewed the pages 2 and 3, and graphs 3, 4, and 5 in the Appendix of the [Needs Assessment Overview](#). She pointed out the current and emerging issues that were putting pressures on the stakeholders who were interviewed. This included SLR, CC, and storm surge issues, as well as deterioration to shoreline conditions, including accumulation of smaller impacts. There was also discussion about the conflict with private property rights and government services.

We have potential to be a neutral source of information, and advise on these issues. Our neutral position allows us opportunities to help educate the community and government staff.

The next discussion will focus on actions that were recommended by those interviewed. Our strategic planning sessions will be a good opportunity to further delve into these issues.

## **Grant Report Update**

The Needs Assessment process has led to a series of opportunities for the MRC. For example, the need for people to understand how policy work is done became apparent, and Barbara formed a learning group for the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) update. This was presented to Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) as a concept, and they have encouraged the idea. Barbara has been leading this learning group. The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) announced an SMP grant, and Island County (IC) Planning is working on developing that concept. Barbara was invited as representative of the MRC. They will be able to bring that concept to us when the Island County Commissioners have been informed about the plan and been given the opportunity to decide if IC Planning can proceed. The potential for MRC to be invited as support of a Planning grant is a unique opportunity that fits with possible roles and actions from the Needs Assessment.

Thank you to Barbara for doing and leading all of this work!

## **RETREAT UPDATE (Kelly)**

At the September meeting, we spoke about forming a couple of new subcommittees and reviewing existing subcommittees. Forming subcommittees now will allow time to prepare so that our retreat discussions will be as rewarding and productive as possible. Not all will continue indefinitely – some will get us to strategic planning and disband. The goal is to look at what we want to be doing in the next 3-5 years within the scope of our mission.

- Change Committee: this committee would focus on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). It would be responsible for looking into ways we can do better, and ensuring that we are being inclusive and not harming others in our decisions.
  - Kelly, potentially Hannah
- Impact Subcommittee: This group would help identify our projects' impacts, measure if our projects are doing what we want them to do, and dig into what our most impactful projects are. They will work closely with the Education & Outreach and Community Science subcommittees.
  - Jill, Gwendolyn, potentially Kelly
- Needs Assessment Subcommittee: this group will work closely with the education and outreach subcommittee.

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- Barbara, Andi
- Education and Outreach Subcommittee (including county engagement).
  - Scott, Barbara, Andi, potentially Jill, potentially Kelly
  - Please feel free to begin meeting.
- Community Science Subcommittee
  - Potentially Ken

## **MARITIME WASHINGTON NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA UPDATE (Jill)**

The MWNHA encompasses a large, diverse area in Puget Sound (PS). There is work on an update to the management plan, and Jill attended a series of focus groups. There was also a separate tribal advisory group. They put together a draft plan and enumerated their goals. After this, they called everyone back together for summits to enumerate how stakeholders might have work that related to their mission and how they can come together. A few goals align with ours, such as respectful tourist visitation, and there will likely be ways to work together that come out of this, such as with voluntary no-anchor zones and including kelp beds in cultural stories about Ebey's Landing. The way they facilitated and organized the focus groups was a good process.

They are having one more summit, and are putting together a draft management plan. Jill is hoping that their break out group discussions will be incorporated into the management plan.

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

We are signed up to provide a "Make a Difference Column" submission for November. Barbara and Andi have done this in the past. Anna offered to write an article if no one else is available.

Jan Holmes Volunteer of the Year Award – we need 2 MRC members who want to be on this committee. Anna usually coordinates committee, and they do not usually meet until January. The committee is composed of 2 member from Sound Water Stewards (SWS), 2 from Washington State University (WSU) Extension, and 2 from us.

On October 26-27, the Pacific Northwest Citizen Science Virtual Summit will be held. Please join if you can. The overall objective of the summit is to connect citizen science practitioners and managers for the purpose of creating partnerships and synergies between projects.

The Ecosystem Recovery Summit will be October 21<sup>st</sup> from 10-3pm. This is a partnership effort with us, the Island Local Integrating Organization, and the Island County Salmon Recovery Technical and Citizen Committee (SRTC). It will be completely virtual. Please register even if you can only come for some of it. This will help the groups learn about each other and prioritize planning and efforts.

Forage fish monitoring – the Hidden Beach team is losing some members. If anyone is interested in joining a forage fish team, please let Ann know..

We may potentially schedule an extra meeting this spring, likely in April, for project planning. More details are coming, but if we have an extra meeting in the spring, we likely would not meet in July.

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The ability to change tide locations has been added to the MyCoast app. This suggestion came from us. Thank you for providing helpful feedback!

A teacher from South Whidbey Middle School reached out to Ann. Please let her know if anyone is interested in doing an interview with students for a project they are doing about waste. Andi, Barbara, and Kelly offered to do interviews.

## NWSC GRANT REPORTS

### Outreach

The 2021 Needs Assessment Overview was presented to and accepted by the Board of Island County Commissioners (BICC) on September 15th. The Overview has been posted on the MRC website and is now available for public access. A thank you note with a copy of the Overview was sent to each person who was interviewed, and responses have been positive. Discussions about Current and Emerging issues and Actions for the MRC highlighted by the Needs Assessment are MRC agenda items in our October and November meetings.

### Hoypus Point

Update: There is still work being done on the permitting moving forward; the final design is going forward.

### Cornet Bay Stewardship

1. The MRC is hosting a volunteer event with Whidbey Island Conservation District for vegetation maintenance at Cornet Bay. It will take place Friday, October 8th from 12:00-2:00pm. Due to COVID considerations, we are limiting participation to 10 volunteers.
2. Some of our planting was destroyed due to construction of the new pier. Overall, the new pier will have positive long-term effects on the area; the eelgrass beds offshore will have reduced impacts from dock shading, creosote will be removed, and the dock and finger piers will meet current standards and requirements for protecting nearshore habitat and species. The repair of our restoration area will be part of the contract, and this construction phase should be completed around February 2022. This is an opportunity to incorporate lessons learned about what types of plants thrive in that area.

Update: We have enough volunteers for the upcoming event, and the link is now disabled. Thanks to everyone who signed up.

## OTHER REPORTS

### Shore Friendly

Update: The consulting firm is catching up, and sent 18 reports back for landowners. There was a site assessment for Mutiny Bay, and hopefully some action comes from this.

### Sound Water Stewards

1. Mussel bagging: 36 total volunteers are being sought to help produce 500 bags of mussels from Penn Cove Shellfish for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife toxins monitoring, 6 to 8 volunteers for 2 shifts per day, Oct 18 to 21. After letting the mussels recover for a few weeks, the mussels are placed in cages that will be deployed at nearly 100 Puget Sound locations at 0.0' tide between Oct 27 and Nov 1, including Penn Cove and Naval Air Station (NAS) on Whidbey, and Maple Grove on Camano.

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2. Sound Waters University will be held online and with field trips on February 5-6, 2022. Various subcommittees are being formed to cover all details of the event.
3. Toxic *Alexandrium* found on Camano: The SWS Sound Toxins team first reported *Alexandrium* in their weekly net tow at Camano Island State Park (CISP) on August 11. The numbers increased and peaked (so far) on September 1. The Washington Department of Health (WDOH) closed Saratoga Passage for shellfish harvesting before the peak. Butter clams are the source for WDOH analysis to reopen the shellfish harvesting. Sound Toxins is a Washington Sea Grant program, and our site is just one collection point and contributor to the WDOH process; many more factors are looked upon. This was a moment of satisfaction for the Camano SWS Sound Toxins team.
4. Beach Cleanups continued on Whidbey Island and Camano.
5. Training for new Stewards: Fall session began September 9th, and is being held each Thursday for 7 weeks.

Update: Please let Kes know if you are interested in mussel bagging. This will take place at the Coupeville Town Park in the pavilion. It is one of the biggest SWS projects as far as the number of people involved and the data generated.

## Island Local Integrating Organization

Update at meeting: None

## LEADERSHIP REPORTS

**Chair:** None

**County Lead:** None

**County Commissioners:** None

## COMMUNITY COMMENT FORUM, MEMBERSHIP REPORTS, AND Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC

The group decided to send a general thank-you card to Florian Graner, for championing marine issues.

Bill commented that the Interact Club is made up of about 14 students at South Whidbey High School, and to please let him on of any ways for the kids to become involved, and anything they can take on as a project. Ann will send him information about the upcoming mussel bagging events.

Jill commented about pinto abalone recovery. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is asking for public comments regarding their draft recovery plan for pinto abalone seeding. It seems that northwestern Whidbey would be wonderful candidate site for seeding. She will write a comment letter and suggest that we might be a good place to consider seeding.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 4:49pm.