

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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## Minutes

Prepared by Anna Toledo

# February 19, 2019

WSU EXTENSION OFFICE (406 N MAIN ST), COUPEVILLE

**PRESENT:** Elsa Schwartz, Chair, presiding, Barbara Bennett, Randy Berthold, Ed Halloran, Matt Kukuk, Linda Rhodes, Kes Tautvydas, Kelly Zupich, Florian Graner (non-voting, technical advisor, WebEx), Lori Clark, Island County DNR (non-voting), Janet St. Clair, Board of Island County Commissioners (non-voting), Anna Toledo MRC Coordinator (staff) **ABSENT:** Mike Bianchi, Jodi Crimmins, Tim Lawrence, Mark Stamey

**VISITORS:** Bill Howard (Beachcombers), Dawn Spilsbury Pucci (Island County Salmon Recovery - WebEx)

**CALL TO ORDER:** Schwartz called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were done. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Tautvydas moved to approve the agenda. Bennett seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Bennett moved to approve the January 8, 2019 minutes. Tautvydas seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

**Welcome New Members (Schwartz):** Schwartz announced that Randy Berthold and Jodi Crimmins have been appointed to the MRC. Berthold introduced himself. His background includes diving and working with kelp at the Department of Ecology's Marine Biomass Program and working on climate research with NASA's Earth Science Division.

### PROJECT PLANNING

#### Funding Opportunities (Toledo):

- Annual grant from Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC): Supports MRC administration and projects (monitoring, outreach, and restoration). Usually \$10-15k available for project implementation.
- Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Opportunity Fund: \$10k for MRC projects. Creativity and MRC collaboration are encouraged.
- Orca outreach: The NWSF has funding for orca recovery work from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and will be issuing an RFP to MRCs to apply for funding to hold an outreach event in support of orca recovery. MRCs are encouraged to collaborate.
- Shore Friendly: The NWSF and Island County will both be applying for Shore Friendly funding to offer incentives to shoreline homeowners to choose environmentally-friendly protection options along their shorelines. The MRC could help in an advisory role and/or assist with outreach.

**Project identification (Toledo):** The MRC discussed projects to include in the 2019-2020 work plan:

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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## Bull Kelp:

- Would like to continue this project into 2020. Aerial photography provides information on how much shoreline has associated kelp beds. Kayak surveys provide more detailed information on specific beds, including temperature and observations of species using the beds.
- Rhodes is current project lead, but will be finishing her MRC service at the end of 2019. Graner and Bennett expressed interest in picking up co-leadership of the project. Rhodes offered to continue assisting with the project after her MRC term.
- Could explore using drones as alternative to flying plane for aerial imagery, which is currently conducted by a single volunteer. Pros: can preprogram flight paths, a couple MRC members have the necessary experience and equipment. Cons: could not cover the entire shoreline, unclear if it would fill a data gap
- Would be worth exploring a collaboration with kayaking groups to crowdsource data collection

## Eelgrass:

- Plans for 2019: conduct underwater videography at Cornet Bay, aerial photography of both islands. There won't be any sonar monitoring, which will free up \$2,500 originally budgeted for the sonar analysis software, Biobase.
- Graner has towing equipment that could be used for the underwater videography.
- We should be clear about the use of the data: is it useful for WA DNR, Island County? Can we incorporate the data into Island County's maps and use it to help with the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) update?
  - **Follow-up:** *The eelgrass team will meet in the upcoming months to decide how best to move forward.*

## Forage fish:

- Would like to continue this project into 2020. Several SWS volunteers are interested in helping.
- Bennett has been learning from Ruth Richards about leading the project, and would be interested in co-leadership. Kukuk offered to help however he can.
- Include outreach focus: monitoring at restoration sites helps tell an impactful story and relates to orca recovery. Develop one-pager on why we monitor for forage fish.
- Expand outreach to schools and school groups. Whidbey Watershed Stewards could be a good contact.

## Outreach

- Forum plans for 2019: Repeat forum on aging shoreline structures, and add information on sea level rise and coastal resiliency
- Looking ahead, continue to coordinate with Shore Friendly to offer forums
- How to reach new homeowners? Develop packet for new homeowners, partner with Shore Stewards, connect with realtors
- Learn about Plastic Free Salish Sea from San Juan MRC, and how our MRC could participate
  - **Follow-up:** *Bennett, Schwartz, Kukuk, Zupich, and Berthold offered to serve on an outreach team.*

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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- **Follow-up: Commissioner St. Clair** requested the MRC explore potential solutions to the issue of plastics in our waters.

## Restoration

- Which projects need match or monitoring assistance?
- Before and after monitoring is important and helps tell a story.
- MRC's role: could focus on monitoring, could apply for funding towards feasibility, design, or implementation
  - **Follow-up: Toledo** will connect with Lisa Kaufman on project needs.

## BUSINESS ITEMS

**Pinto Abalone comment letter (Rhodes):** In response to a request from the Board of Island County Commissioners (BICC) for the MRC to provide information regarding Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) proposal to list pinto abalone as a State Endangered Species, Rhodes conducted research and drafted a letter that the BICC could use to provide comment to WDFW.

The western side of Whidbey Island facing the Strait of Juan de Fuca is included in WDFW's potential range of abalone observation. This area might be good habitat for outplanting abalone. The listing would not affect recreational or commercial fisheries, as harvest of pinto abalone has been prohibited since 1994.

- **ACTION: Zupich moved to give the letter to the Commissioners for their review. Tautvydas seconded. The motion passed.**

**20<sup>th</sup> anniversary planning (Schwartz):** The Island County MRC was established on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1999, making 2019 the MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Schwartz suggested forming a subcommittee to plan for how to commemorate the MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Suggestions included:

- A family day with examples of seining and forage fish sampling
- Incorporating an event with Whidbey Earth & Ocean Month
- Having a table at the Penn Cove Water Festival

- **ACTION: Rhodes moved to form a subcommittee for the MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary planning. Zupich seconded. The motion passed.**

- **Follow-up: Schwartz and Zupich** offered to be on the subcommittee. **Graner** offered to help with images, if needed.

**Executive Committee (Schwartz):** Schwartz proposed the makeup of the Executive Committee as: Schwartz (Chair), Bennett (Vice-Chair), Zupich, and Rhodes.

- **ACTION: Berthold moved accept Schwartz's recommendation for Executive Committee. Rhodes seconded. The motion passed.**

## Coordinator's Update (Toledo):

- MRC applications: We have received two new applications: one for full membership from Florian Graner, currently a non-voting technical advisor. The second application is from Gwendolyn Hannam. The Executive Committee will review the applications and send their recommendation to the BICC who make the official appointment decisions.

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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- Quarterly update to the BICC: The next quarterly update is scheduled for Wednesday March 6<sup>th</sup>. The newsletter will likely highlight forage fish results and the upcoming implementation of the Discover Our Island Shores film and curriculum.

## LEADERSHIP REPORTS

**Chair:** No further updates.

**County Lead:** No further updates.

**County Commissioners:** The County will be going through to process to update the Shoreline master Program this year.

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

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:23 pm.