

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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## Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

# May 5, 2020

WEBEX

**PRESENT:** Kelly Zupich, Chair, presiding, Barbara Bennett, Randy Berthold, Scott Chase, Ed Halloran, Gwendolyn Hannam, Kes Tautvydas, Matt Kukuk, Elsa Schwartz, Lori Clark, IC DNR Manager/Island LIO Coordinator (non-voting), Anna Toledo MRC Coordinator (staff), Ann Prusha (staff) **ABSENT:** Janet St. Clair (notified absence); Hannah Liss, Vice Chair (notified absence), Michael Bianchi (un-notified absence); Tim Lawrence (WSU Extension (non-voting, un-notified absence)

**VISITORS:** Lucas Hart, Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC); Dana Oster, NWSC

**CALL TO ORDER:** Kelly called the meeting to order at 3:03pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Kes moved to approve the agenda. Elsa seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Ed moved to approve the February 18, 2020 Strategic Planning meeting minutes and the March 3, 2020 minutes. Scott seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** The Board of County Commissioners sent a letter of appreciation to the MRC, in honor of national volunteer week.

**MRC OPERATIONS AND UPDATES (Anna):** Anna gave a short tutorial for using WebEx and logistics for this meeting.

In April, the County Commissioners put a hold on committee work, which is why the MRC did not meet in April. It has since been clarified that meetings are allowed, but decisions cannot be brought to the Commissioners. Monitoring is on hold. All of the other MRCs are in a similar situation. Regional and local guidance will determine when this can start again.

Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) and Commission (NWSC) announcements:

- The MRC Conference has been postponed until 2021.
- The Opportunity Fund has been suspended, including any unspent funds in the existing fiscal year and applications for the upcoming year. This is separate from the annual grant from the NWSC.
- The communications committee has done a lot of great work and created a solid document for the communications project, which will be presented at the next MRC meeting.
- Earlier this week, there was a call with NWSF and MRC Coordinators. The NWSF is supportive of helping MRCs move forward with projects, and will help them find funding and continue their partnerships. MRC members should think about specific projects that they could use additional help with.

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

[WWW.ISLANDCOUNTYMRC.ORG](http://WWW.ISLANDCOUNTYMRC.ORG)

- Not much is going to change in the near term for NWSC funding, but next winter in the state legislative session there will be challenges over acquiring funding. Thirty percent of total funding comes from state appropriations. The state is taking a huge hit due to COVID-19, and most of the general fund is through tax revenue. We need to wait and see, but major cuts are expected. It is unclear at this point how this may affect future MRC funding.

The MRC had an opportunity to partner with the SeaDoc Society on a grant to do beach cleanups and teacher education. Unfortunately, they were not chosen for this grant, but *Explore the Salish Sea* books will still be provided to students. Updates to come.

Membership and staff capacity, rather than funding, are the greatest limiting factors for MRC projects. Staff is continuing to be paid through annual funds. Staff support will remain the same in this year. Projects are heavily volunteer-driven, and don't require a lot of financial resources.

**VIRTUAL MRC SYMPOSIUM (Kelly):** Island MRC has an opportunity to do a presentation to all of the other MRCs. It would be 10 minutes on our MRC, followed by 20 minutes featuring a project. There would be a second session featuring a second project. It will be July 9, and if that doesn't work, it can be set up for later. It is a great opportunity to make connections and share with other MRCs. Gwendolyn volunteered to talk about the Hoypus Point Feasibility Study. Kelly would be willing to present a project, and Barbara would be willing to present about outreach. This can be discussed more at the June meeting. Dana will help distribute materials ahead of time and coordinate the presentation. She is available for strategizing.

Anna highly encourages members to attend the upcoming MRC presentations. Skagit's is coming up on May 7, and has some projects that we are interested in. Please register in advance on the NWS website or email Anna or Dana. Email Sasha Horst at [horst@nwstraits.org](mailto:horst@nwstraits.org) to get access to the shared drive that has materials from previous presentations.

**PROJECT PLANNING (Kelly/Anna):** The MRC is now in the first year of a 2-year grant cycle with the NWSC. A new contract does not need to be submitted, but we do need to submit a new amendment for the October 2020-September 2021 year. We need to determine what we want on next year's project list. There is flexibility in the outreach budget to take advantage of events that spring up, and some funding for training for members. After salaries, travel budget, and overhead, there is \$8-10,000 left over for projects.

There is some amount allocated for bull kelp monitoring supplies. Randy and Hannah are listed as the champions for these projects. Linda Rhodes is doing a lot of the continuation, especially with volunteers.

## **Outreach**

At this point with COVID-19, it is difficult to foresee what outreach will look like in the future. There are several larger events, and hopefully by next year they will be able to continue. This funding could be for items such as brochures, a banner, tablecloth, etc.

An intern could create a storymap for eelgrass, similar to San Juan's storymap for orca recovery.

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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There was discussion about determining audience, goals, and vehicles for outreach. All projects have merit, but it would be valuable to determine the top three outreach goals. Marketing materials, being prepared for public events, and looking professional and consistent are good ideas. For eelgrass monitoring, we want to educate people but haven't picked an audience. This could be a discussion within the education sub-committee. A needs assessment for outreach would be useful.

Now is a great time to share virtual information, such as the eelgrass storymap. A forum in a virtual setting could be valuable. Other MRCs are doing this already. We could do one about removing derelict structures. Barbara is willing to champion a video or virtual speaker series.

MyCoast training could be completed online, to prepare volunteers for later in the COVID-19 recovery.

For a signage map, the budget could cover the cost of printing and making it look appealing. Perhaps the eelgrass intern can have time designated to help with the graphics for the MRC sign map as well.

## **Restoration**

The Hoypus Point Feasibility Study has the most potential to move forward. Blue Coast Engineering will complete a conceptual design this summer. At this point, we do not need matching funds for permitting and final designs, which is the project's next phase. The MRC's role is to be involved; there isn't a need for funding. The MRC can continue to stay engaged.

For Cornet Bay, stewardship needs – such as ongoing plant maintenance and watering – should be supported. In the past, the NWSF has contracted with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to lead this work. The NWSF has funding to continue this work through spring 2021. The MRC could consider funding this work to continue through summer 2021. We need to determine ways that the MRC can continue this stewardship beyond grant funds. We are waiting for a cost estimate from Lisa Kaufman. Anna's guess is that it will be in the low-thousands dollar range. It's been a struggle to get volunteers to the north end. The MRC should consider how to leverage partnerships. We can look into having the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT) help promote our volunteer search. Kelly would be willing to champion this as long as it meant hiring someone or finding volunteers. Gwendolyn may be able to help as well.

## **Monitoring**

For sample processing, the MRC is still encouraged to work with WDFW to maintain cohesion within MRCs. If we had a specific research question to answer, we could work with Dan Penttila. WDFW would have to reanalyze any samples coming in from volunteer analysis. It would be redundant. The Skagit MRC had a couple of volunteer opportunities where volunteers got together to do analysis. Sharing egg photos on social media would be a good idea. Gwendolyn offered to take pictures with her microscope for this.

**NWSC PRESENTATION (Elsa):** There is an annual meeting where all MRCs present on one project they are doing in the upcoming year. This year, it will be broken into two virtual meetings – half will be May 29 and the other half will be June 26. We are slotted in June. This is

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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different from the MRC symposium. Barb is willing to make the presentation. This can be discussed more at the June meeting.

## **NWSC GRANT REPORTS:**

### **Forage Fish Monitoring**

Forage fish monitoring has been suspended due to COVID-19 precautions. We will continue to follow state and local guidelines on when to re-initiate surveys.

Whatcom MRC hosted a virtual presentation on forage fish by Lisa Hillier from WDFW. The recording of that presentation is available through the Whatcom MRC website: <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/media/19295/hillier-presentation-doc.pdf>.

Update at meeting: No samples were submitted, and nothing has been received back from WDFW.

### **Outreach**

Barb has drafted up a communications plan, which the communications sub-committee has provided feedback and edits for. Once final edits and formatting have been made, the final draft will be shared with the MRC for any additional feedback.

The MRC participated in a virtual town hall hosted by Commissioner St. Clair. Anna and Kelly shared about the history and goals of the MRC, and highlighted two projects – forage fish monitoring and crabber outreach.

Kelly and Anna have been partnering with Sound Water Stewards to offer a streaming version of “Discover Our Island Shores” to local students during Earth week (April 20-24). Students are also invited to participate in an art and essay contest. Top entries will be placed on the MRC website in May, and anyone can vote on their top entry for the People’s Choice Award.

Update at meeting: A plan was made without engaging a consultant. A needs assessment will help to gain direction.

### **Hoypus Point and Possession Point Feasibility**

Blue Coast Engineering conducted site characterization at both sites, and met with project partners (MRC, NWSF, and WA State Parks) to discuss site opportunities and constraints. Project partners discussed which site to move into conceptual design. Due to constraints at Possession Point, primarily the need to protect an existing house and associated drainfield on the Parks property, Possession Point was not selected to move forward to conceptual design at this time. Opportunities for restoration at Possession Point will be discussed in the narrative of the feasibility report, and can be considered in the future.

Hoypus Point was selected as the site to move forward to conceptual design. Blue Coast Engineering will present about the draft feasibility study at the MRC June 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, and the MRC will have the opportunity to provide feedback.

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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The NWSF has applied for funding through the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program for the next phase of work at Hoypus Point, which would include design and permitting.

Update at meeting: All is well and the design should be completed by the end of June. Everything is moving forward.

## **OTHER REPORTS:**

### **NW Straits Commission/Foundation**

The MRC Conference has been postponed and will be rescheduled in 2021.

The NWSF Opportunity Fund has been suspended indefinitely. Projects with unspent funds from FY20 will be cancelled, and there will not be a FY21 Opportunity Fund grant process. This does NOT affect the MRC's annual funding through the NWSC.

The NWSC is hosting a Virtual MRC Symposium for each MRC to share about their committee and highlight a couple projects.

Update at meeting: None

### **Island Location Integrating Organization (ILIO)**

Update at meeting: The ILIO scored projects to receive an additional \$100,000. PSNERP (Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project) ranked as number 1 – it can be locally implemented as the Livingston Bay Project with the Conservation District and WCLT.

### **Salmon Recovery Technical & Citizen Committee (SRTCC)**

Update at meeting: Last month there was pre-scoring for Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Later this month SRTCC will have the final ranking. The process has sped up. The projects are: Hoypus Point and Polnell Point armor removals, a nearshore protection implementation tool for WCLT, and a large acquisition for the Stillaguamish Tribe for former tidal wetlands to acquire for restoration.

## **LEADERSHIP REPORTS**

**Chair:** Kelly thanked everyone; it's a trying time and she hopes we stay safe and healthy.

**County Lead:** The County is probably opening up to public in a limited capacity next week. Lori, Anna, and Ann will likely not come in full time right away. The County is easing into opening back up.

**County Commissioners:** None

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

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**ADJOURNMENT:** This meeting is shorter because it's via WebEx. The group decided that, instead of having a second May meeting, Anna will condense the Project Planning discussion into an Excel sheet and prepare it for the amendment process. She will send it out to everyone, and members can have questions answered individually. At June's meeting the MRC will be in a position to approve the projects. The MRC cannot vote by email. Lucas will find out what the deadline is for submitting amendments. Early June should be fine, as long as it doesn't coincide with payment processing.

There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 4:40pm.