

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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## Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

# September 1, 2020

WEBEX

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

**VISITORS:** Maya Kocian, Earth Economics (presenter), Erin Mackey, Earth Economics (presenter), Jessica Cote, SRTCC, Ryan Elting, WCLT, Lucas Hart, NWSC, Bennett Lafond, Jessica Larson, WCLT, Kevin Lee, WDFW, Kelsi Mottet, WICD, Dana Oster, NWSC, Meredith Penny, IC Planning, Dawn Spilsbury Pucci, IC Salmon Recovery, Jill Wood, IC EH Director, Keesack (name on WebEx)

**CALL TO ORDER:** Kelly called the meeting to order at 3:12pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Anna noted that Dawn would like to give an update about proposed work at Sunlight Beach. Gwendolyn moved to approve the agenda with the proposed change. Randy seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Andi moved to approve the August 4, 2020 minutes. Randy seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

### ECOSYSTEM SERVICES VALUATION PRESENTATION (Maya Kocian, Erin Mackey)

Earth Economics is an organization which helps decision makers take ecosystem services into account. Ecosystem services are the quantifiable benefits and critical services we receive from nature. With funding from the Department of Ecology, they are in the process of conducting an ecosystem services valuation for the Salish Sea basin. In addition, they will be doing a case study in Island County (IC) to assess the ecosystem services value gained, protected, or lost in response to changes in landcover and zoning policies between 1992 and 2016.

Earth Economics uses a benefit transfer method to effectively estimate the value of a variety of ecosystem services (landcover analysis, spatial attributes, benefit transfer, and landcover type). They look at similar areas and transfer value from one area to another, similar to housing evaluations. They have a database comprised of thousands of published ecosystem valuation research works. They are currently working on the Salish Sea ecosystem services valuation. They have started with IC data collection and outreach; they have been in communication with key people in IC. They will have at least 3 people from IC review their draft. They would like suggestions for people they should reach out to.

They asked for questions, comments, and suggestions:

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- How are the projected ecosystem service benefits tracked to help ensure projects are realized? It depends on the client and resources. Primary valuation takes more resources and time. Measuring impact is usually looking at financial aspects.
- It was suggested that they engaged with the Ecosystem Coordination Board and Puget Sound Partnership.
- How do they measure the impact of human migration? This is likely going to be captured in analysis regarding zoning analysis. If growth is accounted for in zoning, it will be included.
- ILIO is conducting a survey about the importance of sense of place, and MRC is going to be doing interviews to update awareness of emerging issues in IC. They could use this data.
- There is a great influx with tourists seasonally. They should consider permanent and seasonal changes of residence.
- Are success indicators tracked to see if indicators are turned into policies? The project budget is too limited in most cases.
- How does invasive blackberry play in? They look at invasive impact. There are some benefits to blackberry, but overall it decreases value. Part of it is tying it in to the land before invasion. In an area where a development project stopped, they won't assess blackberry unless there's already data present. The goal is to look at the current state and system, and then compare with the projected system.
- How do they put a dollar value on an ecosystem service? This presentation is a high-level overview, and doesn't get into the technical aspects so much. There is a database of primary studies for willingness to pay for benefits to be preserved. For example, housing prices can be affected by water quality. They can compare housing prices when water quality is poor vs when water quality is improved. They also assess avoided risk. Additionally, they look at more complex issues such as water filtration. There are studies that help determine the cost of replacing the natural function of water filtration. She can share information about transferring valuation and greater detail. They use a suite of studies and determine a high and low value range.
- They should contact the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT).
- There are some extra considerations for valuing land in IC. It would be good to look at differences so that conclusions are applicable.
- Are they accounting for exemptions and illegal use, using land use regulations and zoning? They are in early stages of data collection and are open to suggestions about how to address this.
- How will the data be quality assured? GIS may be out of date. They are in early stages of data collection and are open to suggestions about how to address this.
- They will forward an NRCS report related to agriculture and private forest for soil health and water quality in Pierce County. The valuations considered replacement or avoided cost.
- Will the analysis be on a parcel by parcel basis or less discrete? It will likely be by acre rather than by parcel.

If you have more feedback, suggestions, and/or recommendations, you can contact Maya Kocian at [mkocian@eartheconomics.org](mailto:mkocian@eartheconomics.org) and Erin Mackey at [emackey@eartheconomics.org](mailto:emackey@eartheconomics.org).

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## **OUTREACH NEEDS ASSESSMENT (Barbara)**

The team is prepped to polish questions (next week) and then conduct interviews (beginning in October). She is hoping to have the team conduct 20-30 interviews. Interviews can be scheduled at your convenience. Many will need to be by phone or Zoom (Zoom calls can be recorded with permission). This is a structured discussion; we want to give the interviewee an opening to talk about their observations about past and future issues. Members who volunteer should expect to take an hour-long training and conduct 4-5 interviews. The group was reminded to make sure notes are legible and taken in a cohesive manner. We want to be sure to capture all ideas. It is important to stop the interview and make sure the notes reflect exactly how the interviewee wants to address issues.

There will be other tasks, such as data analysis. This team will identify threads and common issues (most frequently raised to least frequently raised).

Please let Barbara know soon if you are interested in conducting interviews. She suggested holding a training immediately before the October meeting. She will send out a poll to determine the best time to hold the training. She is also available for one-on-one trainings if needed.

Hannah volunteered to help interview and may be able to help with the analysis as well. Elsa volunteered to help with interviews. There was a suggestion to add the Snohomish Conservation District and Snohomish MRC to the list of proposed contacts.

## **UPCOMING OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES (Anna)**

**Orca Recovery Day:** Puget Sound Conservation Districts are recognizing Orca Recovery Day on October 17. Anna is coordinating with Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD), Sound Water Stewards (SWS), Washington State University (WSU) Extension, Orca Network, and Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF). A lot of the organization is coming from Conservation Districts. It will be entirely virtual. There are a few different events. On October 14, NWSF will host an orca forum. There will be a trivia night on October 15. If anyone wants to help with questions about orcas or related species/habitat, please let Anna know. However, if you do write a question, you cannot participate in the trivia night. Gwendolyn volunteered to help with trivia questions. There will be an online eco-challenge where people can join a team and take actions. There will be another art contest; Anna is coordinating on this with SWS and Orca Network. Anna will keep everyone updated so members can promote and participate in the events.

Commissioner St. Clair asked the MRC to prepare a proclamation to come to the Board on Orca Recovery Day and provide information on events. Anna asked the group if they would like her to prepare a proclamation to take to the Board of County Commissioners. The group decided yes.

**Marine Food Web Virtual Classes:** Kelly and Anna have been talking about ways to engage more with schools, potentially by developing videos. Anna spoke with school coordinators, and SWS Education & Outreach Coordinator, Allie Hudec, who has been putting together awesome videos. They are short clips about a couple of marine species. MRC can partner with SWS, and experts can talk about specific species or habitat in videos. The school district could use someone with expertise who can teach teachers. Andi volunteered to talk to teachers. Barbara would like to be involved, as well. She has a presentation already on ocean acidification. Randy suggested asking teachers what they are interested in talking about. Anna will present about the MRC at a

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teacher training at the end of September. She will ask if there are specific topics, learning objectives, and presentation guidelines. Kelly would like to expand to other school districts. We need members to champion connecting to teachers. We are trying to wrap this into the *Discover our Island Shores* video. Andi has a food web game for preschoolers, and is working out lesson plans for elementary-aged children. Kelly and Andi will touch base about this. Hannah suggested the *Project Learning Tree* work book. Kelly and Hannah are certified to teach this, and we can potentially wrap it in. Gwendolyn volunteered to show kids plankton on microscopes.

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

Randy and Dana's kelp presentations from the last meeting are up on the website.

We will be switching to Zoom starting in October. Updated meeting invitations will go out this month. There have been some issues with federal employees not being allowed to use Zoom with work accounts, but Anna spoke to other MRCs and it hasn't been much of an issue. Please let Anna know of any concerns.

Anna is working on the MRC annual report. She is hoping to have a draft in by mid-September. The annual report is matched with the grant cycle. Please read this and provide feedback. She will also ask for project leads to share information.

Volunteer hours are always important, now more than ever. Please submit them.

The volunteer of the year award is switching to digital form. The plan is to move forward with accepting applications year-round. Anyone can go in and submit applications, and the cut-off will be at the end of year. The review team will select the winner. The selection committee includes 2 people from MRC, 2 from WSU Extension, and 2 from SWS. Randy and Scott will continue to be on this committee.

Anna plugged MRC while being interviewed on the Northwest Fish Passage podcast. This is a new podcast that interviews people in the restoration world. She will share it.

## **NWSC GRANT REPORTS**

### **Forage Fish Monitoring (Anna)**

Monitoring continues at Cornet Bay, Ala Spit, Hidden Beach, and Glendale. We have three new volunteers at Hidden Beach who have attended two survey events and are quickly getting up to speed. We will be working with Jason Morgan to plan monitoring at Sunlight Shores. Ann Prusha will be attending a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) training this month, and will be helping coordinate and support the forage fish team. We are also exploring options with WDFW to provide training to new volunteers.

Update: We are continuing to sample at Hidden Beach and Cornet Bay. We might pick up sampling at Sunlight Shores. There will be restoration and removal of a barge at Seahorse Siesta in late September/early October, and sampling will resume after this project, in the fall. Currently, samples are not being processed by WDFW. They have been preserved and stored, and there is a backlog.

### **Outreach (Barbara)**

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## *Needs assessment*

Outreach is focusing on a needs assessment this fall. Interviews will take place October - November and a summary report will be presented in February.

Committee members working on planning the assessment, Kelly, Ed, Anna and Barb (and Andi who will catch up one-on-one with Barb) met virtually on 8/19. Topics included: selection of questions to ask in interviews and a wish list of individuals, and representatives of County Departments and Organizations to be interviewed, and logistics for scheduling interviews and training MRC members who wish to conduct interviews. Next meeting: 9/17 2:30.

## *Art contest*

We announced the winners of the Design Your Own Salish Sea Creature art contest, in partnership with Sound Water Stewards. The winning entries are posted on the [MRC website](#).

## **OTHER REPORTS**

### **NW Straits Commission/Foundation (Elsa)**

None.

Update: There is continuing work on the communications plan; they are developing an elevator pitch. She will share it when it is finalized. Anna asked the group to email her or Elsa if they are interested in getting minutes from NWS meetings. They are also available on the NWS [website](#).

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

Update at meeting.

Update: ILIO is distributing a sense of place survey to the general public. It is a different angle on the value of the work we do. There is a meeting next week to discuss the Ecosystem Recovery Plan. ILIO is going to be basing projects off of strategies rather than Near Team Actions. This will be founded on the findings of this survey. Commissioner St. Clair emphasized that local communities need to be involved with local decision making. We need to push to make sure there's a local voice. Lori is a strong advocate for this.

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

Update at meeting.

Update: SRTCC's Salmon Recovery Plan update was approved by the Board of County Commissioners and adopted by resolution. It was last updated in 2005, and SRTCC started updating it in 2017. They are the only lead entity who has gotten this far without external facilitation. She offered to present this at a meeting.

Anna will give a presentation about the Oak Harbor Marina project at next the SRTCC meeting and a future MRC meeting.

Diking District 1 (the east side of Deer Lagoon) has low houses along the beach. They have had issues with bulkheads. The beach is in an erosion phase, and there is a need for immediate repairs or residences will be endangered. There is a proposed project, and public comment period for the Army Corps of Engineers is open. Comments are due September 19. They have decided

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that they will stick with historical practices. This area was diked in 1914. The historical practices include building wooden sills perpendicular to the beach, driving down pilings, and using wooden boards to capture sand as it drifts. They will also be looking at big bags of sand and gravel that were placed there in a previous emergency. These will be emptied onto the beach to nourish the area. They will shorten groins and use rock to repair bulkheads that are failing. Then they will excavate a new mouth at the south end of Henny Spit. They will use that material to plug the north channel. Sand should distribute along the shoreline to build up the beaches in front of the Sunlight Beach community. This is a short term fix, and buys 10-15 years. A long-term sustainable fix should be looked at. This is the financial responsibility of the homeowners. Dawn asked the group to read the erosion study. There are some useful strategies. It's important to be respectful and aware that homes are threatened. The natural system does this on occasion. A concern is that neighboring properties were not assessed. It would be beneficial to have commitment on long term resolutions so they don't go back to historical resolutions in 15 years. Maybe they can look at raising houses. There are other beaches facing this. We can help the public to understand this is an issue with real consequences. When hiring a new planning director, it would be great to have someone with skill sets that include using forward thinking concepts on issues like this. If County Commissioners ask MRC for advice, we need to wait for direction from the Commissioners to act. Dawn is asking the MRC to think about strategies we can adopt that can be used in planning efforts to help people in these communities. Commissioner St. Clair will follow up.

There was a request to have an update about changes in the Shoreline Management Plan over the last few years.

## LEADERSHIP REPORTS

**Chair:** None.

**County Lead:** None.

**County Commissioners:** Commissioner St. Clair said that the Board of County Commissioners has been focused on COVID-19, but is starting to get back to normal business. She asked the group to think about how issues present as opportunities, and forming next steps. The Board is committed to ensuring IC Planning, Environmental Health, and Public Works work collaboratively. The Shoreline Management Plan is still on the work plan. It will roll into 2021. They are moving into budget season. IC Natural Resources programs will largely not be affected by any budgetary changes in 2021.

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

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:15pm.