

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

October 6, 2020

ZOOM

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

VISITORS: Stinger Anderson WSU Extension (presenter), David Day Port Commissioner – Port of Coupeville, Dana Oster, NWSC (presenter)

CALL TO ORDER: Hannah called the meeting to order at 3:05pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were done **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Barbara requested to move the Restore America’s Estuaries Conference Debrief item to the top of the meeting because she has to leave early. Lori requested a few minutes to talk about Island Local Integrating Organization’s (ILIO) Human Wellbeing survey just before the Coordinator’s Update. Kes moved to approve the agenda with the proposed changes. Randy seconded. The agenda with the proposed changes was approved. **MINUTES:** Randy moved to approve the September 1, 2020 minutes. Scott seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

RESTORE AMERICA’S ESTUARIES CONFERENCE DEBRIEF (Barbara)

Barbara congratulated Elsa for her work on this conference. Collaboration is important because the need for change is so apparent. Rhode Island and New Jersey have a lot of parallels with our shoreline. Our situation here has unique elements, but we have common ground with them. Loss of birds and marshes were big subjects, among other things like blue carbon and the Coastal Zone Management Act. These presentations are on file, and Barbara has access to them with her registration and offered to answer questions. Elsa commented that everything was recorded, and participants can still use their registration to have access to up to 500 presentations for the next 5 months.

COMMUNITY LITTER CLEANUP PROGRAM (Stinger Anderson, Washington State University (WSU) Extension)

Stinger gave a presentation about the Community Litter Cleanup Program. They have been in Island County (IC) for over 20 years. Volunteers are essential, and they have 4 programs: regularly scheduled beach cleanups, the Purple Card Program, student outreach, and Youth Corps.

They are currently focusing on the Purple Card program due to COVID-19. Volunteers can get a Purple Card for free. It allows them to bring the beach litter they find to transfer stations, and the program will be charged instead of individuals. They also provide some equipment to use for

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litter pickup. If you are interested in participating or sending information out, contact Stinger at 360-941-3171 or stinger.anderson@wsu.edu.

Whidbey Island Conservation District often gets questions about removing trash from private beaches; volunteers can go onto private land with the Purple Card if they are invited. They will begin group cleanup events when WSU guidelines allow. Stinger will be retiring next year, and that's also when their grant cycle ends.

Kelly commented that Sound Water Stewards is also going to be working with Stinger to get their own beach cleanup program going. This will hopefully kick off in the next few weeks. Kelly is working with other organizations to develop a protocol to do a brand audit for marine debris and plastics. It would be great if this program was region-wide. If there is interest from the MRC, she can bring back more information. She would also like to work on removing trash from private beaches.

Thank you to Stinger and the volunteers for taking on all of this work.

EELGRASS VOLUNTARY NO-ANCHOR ZONES (Dana Oster, NWSC)

Jefferson MRC started a voluntary no-anchor zone program in 2004. It provides a visual cue and social prompt for boaters to avoid anchoring in designated areas with eelgrass, and there has been a 98-99% compliance rate. Every MRC has talked about doing this, but there are many barriers, such as liability, permits, divers, maintenance, mooring, etc. Dana is working on doing the difficult work for the region and expanding it so individual MRCs are able to implement voluntary no-anchor zones. She wants to gauge our interest and potential locations. She would like to work on roles for the next two years as well as long-term stewardship.

The first year would be spent doing a deep dive into sites to determine if they are feasible, useful, and who partners would be, as well as permitting work. In 2022, we would work on designating various sites. These can be broken down into tiers – ones that would be ready to have this implemented, and ones that have more challenges.

It was suggested that Cornet Bay be seriously looked at. There was discussion about adding Crescent Harbor; there has not been eelgrass monitoring there or in Oak Harbor Bay, and eelgrass has not been observed in either place. Oak Harbor Bay is very shallow and muddy, and it does not seem like boats anchor on either side of the channel. Dana has been in contact with Gregg Ridder, who should be able to speak to some of these items.

Dana is working on identifying sites and developing monitoring protocols. Use before and after buoy installation and compliance will need to be tracked, and eelgrass monitoring should be conducted via underwater survey before buoys are installed. She is hoping to survey every 5 years after, and Gregg may be able to do yearly aerial surveys. They will be looking at the recovery of scour marks. NWSC would also take the lead on regional branding and social marketing. She wants to make sure people are aware of voluntary no-anchor zones. Additionally, she is looking at putting maps out to supplement the buoys. There will be a need for volunteers to monitor buoys and perform vessel counts. She is also identifying community members to reach out to. Some places change out buoys in the winter; those wouldn't need as much maintenance. Other ones would need more maintenance due to biofouling. We can look for

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partners that would help steward/adopt areas. This will need an MRC, in project champion at least, or a sub-committee.

Partners in British Columbia (BC) are also interested in implementing this program. She is looking at creating a consistent logo and maps with BC partners. San Juan MRC is also very interested. There was a 33% increase in boat sales this year, indicating that boating activity has increased.

The next step is identifying key individuals and community groups to reach out to. Kelly commented that she might know a great diver for this. Randy suggested that a group could adopt a buoy. Barbara commented that she appreciates the outreach to look at other designs. Navigation buoys are important as visual cue, and maps are helpful, too. We can do targeted outreach, and if maps create behavioral change, we can weigh it against expenses.

Dana will know if she is getting funding in early December.

Dana provided the following links:

- [Jefferson County No-Anchor Zones](#)
- [No-Anchor Zone map](#)
- [Friends of the San Juans green boater guide example](#)

Please note that Elsa removed herself from this presentation. She physically left the room and did not participate at all. She will continue to leave during all future discussion of this topic.

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT (Kelly)

Kelly participated in a meeting with all of the chairs from MRCs. They looked at what is and isn't working with virtual meetings. They have been having breakout rooms, and want to be able to work as a team. She asked for suggestions for ways members can engage with each other (as members or socially). Some suggestions were:

- Field trips, especially for newer members
- Virtual social hour after MRC
- Have meetings with a specific topic to converse about.
- Have a trivia night, and submit questions. We can have our own trivia, or do a trivia with all the other MRCs (we'd be a team).
- We can do something for holidays, such as a Secret Santa, where a person is assigned and you get to know them, and then switch to another person.
- Potential "speed dating," where we have 5 minutes with each person, and have some questions we ask each other.
- We could have something that slowly travels around IC – one person gives a clue and the other has to find it, and then that person needs to hide it and give a clue to the next person.
- One member can send another questions about marine animals and they have to guess which one it is.

NORTHWEST STRAITS COMMISSION & FOUNDATION MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (Elsa)

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Anna emailed out the NWSC (Northwest Straits Commission) and NWSF (Northwest Straits Foundation) Memorandum of Understanding. This came about due to a desire to make clear the roles and responsibilities between the Commission and Foundation. There was a big crossover when it started. It separated more in 2010; they had their own boards and staff. This MOU was developed to delineate who does what. Please review it. They are not looking for wordsmithing, but want to make sure they didn't leave anything out. The group approved the document. Please send Elsa comments, questions, and feedback.

ILIO Human Wellbeing Survey (Lori):

ILIO's Human Wellbeing Survey has been completed and emailed to the MRC. Please do not distribute it yet; we are waiting for the Spanish translation first. The data from this survey should help Barbara and her team with interviews. Please let Lori know if anything can be worded better, if there is anything confusing, and/or if it takes more than 10 minutes to complete. She is not trying to change a lot, but please let her know if something can be worded better; they are shooting for a 4th grade reading level. Anna will email the group this clarification.

COORDINATOR'S UPDATE (Anna)

Representative Rick Larsen's office reached out to see if he can visit Island MRC sites. He will visit Seahorse Siesta and Sunlight Shores tomorrow. The group needs to be limited due to COVID-19. Kelly, Lisa Kaufman, and Lucas Hart will be there, along with community representatives.

The Island County Commissioners signed a proclamation (Resolution C-80-20) making October 17, 2020 Orca Recovery Day. Commissioner St. Clair requested this at the last MRC meeting. To celebrate Orca Recovery Day, we are partnering with Conservation Districts on several events through October:

- [EcoChallenge](#): Create a team and log actions that you take this month to support orca recovery. Report your actions to earn points and win prizes.
- [Orca Forum](#): Wednesday, October 14, 5:30-7pm. Join this virtual workshop to learn from local experts about orca recovery research taking place in Puget Sound.
- [Orca Trivia Night](#): Thursday, October 15, 7pm. Challenge your friends (or team up with them!) in this fun evening full of questions about orca, salmon, and marine habitat.
- [Orca-Inspired Art Contest](#): Young and old alike are invited to show their artistic creativity to depict orca recovery or the human connection with orcas. Entries are due Saturday, October 31. This is done in collaboration with SWS.

At the IC Commissioners' meeting today, the Commissioners thanked the MRC for all our hard work.

Our plan for the next fiscal year will be going to the IC Commissioners as a grant amendment. This year, it will include the needs assessment, forage fish and kelp monitoring, Cornet Bay stewardship, and an eelgrass storymap outreach tool.

Ann will be creating the eelgrass storymap. Hopefully this will be an opportunity to highlight no-anchor zones as an actionable item for eelgrass protection. If anyone would like to be involved on the sub-committee, please let her know.

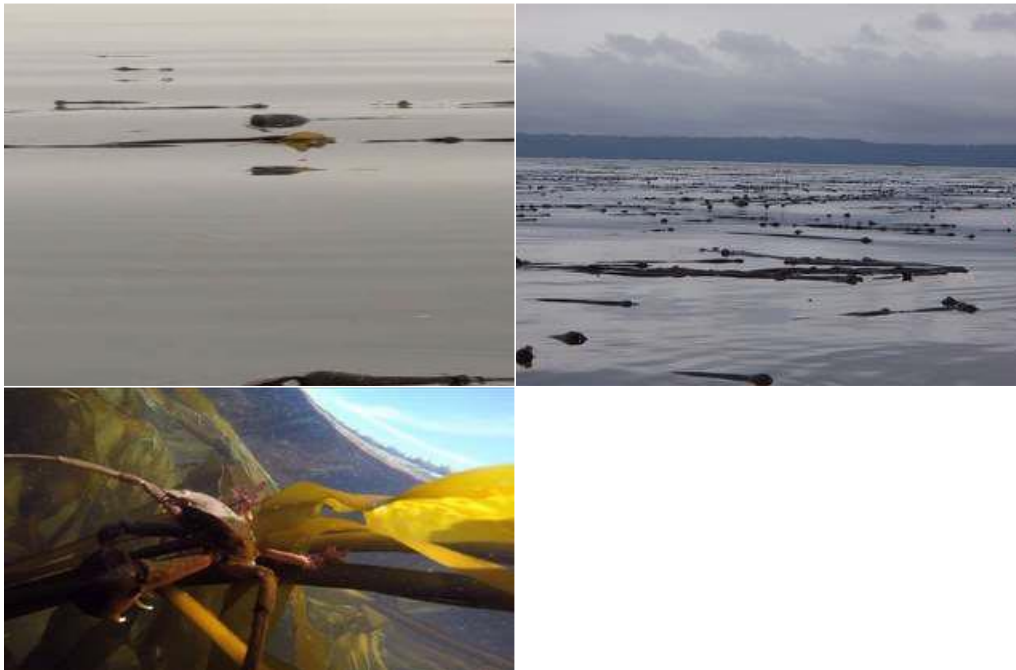
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Anna will have the annual report for review later this week. There was a delay due to Representative Larsen's visit.

NWSC GRANT REPORTS

Kelp Monitoring (Hannah/Randy): From Linda Rhodes: The 2020 bull kelp monitoring season came to a close on September 16, when the Camano Island volunteers conducted a final survey of the Lowell Point bed. A total of ten full in-water surveys were conducted by three survey teams of four beds (Possession Point, Lowell Point, Polnell Point, Ebey's Landing). Surveys began in June, & were conducted approximately monthly. Bed areas were similar or slightly smaller than those measured in 2019, so there are no concerns about loss of bull kelp this year. This year, water temperatures in beds were lower than observed in previous years, & none approached the temperature threshold of concern of 17°C. A temperature logger system was used by three teams to collect subsurface temperatures as well as surface temperatures. Kelp crab were observed in three of the four beds, but not in frightening densities. A shorter grant report was submitted for FY20, but a full report for 2020 will be posted to the project website by the end of the calendar year. Here's a few images from the season.



Clockwise from left: Harbor seal swimming in kelp (Lowell Point, photo by Jenny Roman), Possession Point bed in August (photo by Ron Beier), Kelp crab at home in the bed (photo by Linda Rhodes)

Update: The team conducted 10 full in-water surveys. They reported lower temperatures and kelp crabs. All MRC volunteers were encouraged to take photos when out monitoring or during events if they want to.

Hoypus Point (Gwendolyn): Hoypus Point has received funds from the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and is moving forward with a final design for restoration. Currently, Blue Coast Engineering is working on agreements with subcontractors to include assistance with obtaining permits for construction, and an upland planting plan.

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Update: Salmon Recovery Technical and Citizen Committee (SRTCC) funds have moved through. The project is underway. Blue Coast Engineering is moving forward with subcontractors and permits and working is working on the final design. They received construction funding from the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP). Thank you to Lisa Kaufman and Anna!

Outreach Needs Assessment (Barbara): Update at meeting.

Update: none

OTHER REPORTS

Shoreline Restoration and Armor Removal (Anna): Restoration work will begin at [Seahorse Siesta](#) this month! This project, led by the Northwest Straits Foundation, involves the removal of a large barge and bulkhead from the base of a feeder bluff at a private community near Langley. Congressman Rick Larsen will be visiting the Seahorse Siesta and Sunlight Shores restoration sites on October 7th to see a couple MRC projects and hear updates on the MRC's work.



Shoreline armoring at Seahorse Siesta

Update: The Shore Friendly mini-grant program was just launched! Anna is sending the information out, and it will also be in the newsletter. Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD) is a partner on this; they will be working with vegetation and drainage site visits and designs.

Sound Water Stewards (Scott):

- 1) Volunteer Education Training second session starts Oct 1 and runs for 5 Thursdays in October, then formal training is complete.
- 2) SWS is participating in Orcatober, Orca Recovery Days, but at the moment we have few details to share except that we're partnering with MRC on an art contest.
- 3) Monthly member meetings resumed in Sept - via Zoom. Randy Berthold was the featured speaker.
- 4) *Getting to the Water's Edge* sales are going strong - over 1300 sold, with more retail outlets carrying it.

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- 5) Our Education and Outreach Coordinator, Allie Hudec, is reaching out to teachers in South Whidbey schools to see if SWS can offer training and or resources/ideas to teachers on using our videos and more. This is being done in collaboration with the MRC.
- 6) We are working with multiple organizations to potentially start a "brand audit" beach clean-up program for the Salish Sea region. Please let us know if the MRC might want to be involved in these discussions.
- 7) We are currently looking for more Citizen Science opportunities for our volunteers.

WSU Extension: Update at meeting.

Update: Commissioners voted on the budget; it should be business as usual for them for the next year. For Shore Stewards, they are working on getting a speaker series going.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair: None.

County Lead: None.

County Commissioners: None.

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

ADJOURNMENT: Elsa commented on a potential perceived conflict of interest. Her organization, Restore America's Estuaries, is administering the grant for the no-anchor zone project. She is not involved in the selection process and has absolutely no say in the grant award. There is no conflict of interest. She will continue to remove herself from any discussions about this project, as she did at this meeting.

Happy birthday to Barbara and Tim!

There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 4:37pm.