

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

August 3, 2021

ZOOM

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

VISITORS: Jackie Lindsey, COASST, Sage Ince, IC EH, Allie Simpson, NWSC

CALL TO ORDER: Kelly called the meeting to order at 3:08pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Ann requested to adjust the agenda so the Island County (IC) Commissioner's Leadership Report can occur before 4pm. Ken moved to approve the amended agenda. Gwendolyn seconded. The amended agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Jill moved to approve the June 1 and July 6, 2021 minutes. Ed seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

LEADERSHIP REPORT

IC Commissioner

Commissioner Saint Clair asked the group if they had questions for her.

- There was a request for an update about the influx of cargo vessels in IC waters.
 - This is a federal decision, and Holmes Harbor has been in use for decades as a backup port. She is in contact with federal employees. They have told her that they will check with their higher-ups about speaking to the community about it. It is a complicated issue, and is being tracked. With the pent-up demand from COVID, the backup is likely to continue through the holidays. She is in contact with them every 3-4 weeks.
 - There was a comment that any environmental review done in the 1970's would be different now. Commissioner Saint Clair is looking to see if the Coast Guard should recertify these waters as a port; it is a federal decision.
 - Kelly will be working with Commissioner Saint Clair about having someone come to speak to us about it.
- There was a question about COVID and its impact on financial impacts especially with housing.
 - IC has local health authority; we meet the required guidelines for the state, and the local Board of Health and Community Advisory Board will continue to meet. Housing affordability is key issue. She recommended masking indoors.

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Commissioner Saint Clair is excited to be on the Salmon Recovery Council (SRC). She recently attended a fascinating 6-hour meeting, which covered everything from policy to practice to future investments and priorities. She is looking at forest practices and runoff as a salmon recovery issue.

Tomorrow at the Board of Island County Commissioners (BoCC) meeting, Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR) will be bringing in a team to talk about the intersection between timber permitting and the conversion piece of forestry practices. They are putting a lot of focus on what can be done with education and incentives. This can particularly apply to small forest grant programs. They are trying to work with private property owners, looking into updating the Public Benefit Rating System, and education regarding best practices. This connects to Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD) and Snohomish Conservation District (SnoCD).

The Ecosystem Coordinating Board (ECB) has an ad hoc position open for IC. It is an opportunity to help create positive change.

The BoCC is moving into its budget cycle, and will likely be faced with challenges from COVID and IC business.

COASTAL OBSERVATION AND SEABIRD SURVEY TEAM PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION (Jackie Lindsey)

Jackie gave a presentation about the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST). She is presenting to MRCs about how different pieces of COASST might be interesting for different members. They are a citizen science organization that encompasses a lot of different programs and projects. COASST's volunteers (Coasters) find data and are involved in the "deduction" element to help identify results. They are part of the University of Washington (UW), which is a research institution. Some goals are to find big stories in data, and to be a feedback loop for local communities. This is where the MRC can fit in. They have over 1000 participants.

For the dead birds survey program, participants are assigned a beach, and once a month they gather data about birds that wash up on their beach. These reports are defensible in court (in case of an oil spill).

COASST can track cyclic change and create a baseline. They monitor fisheries interactions. They do send Coasters out to collect data for individual oil spills. They also collect data about marine debris. She reviewed some of the patterns and results regarding this.

They try to make their data as widely available as possible, and Jackie asked to please let her know if we are interested in setting up a program that matches our needs and goals. They do have a virtual training program.

The group then made comments and asked questions:

- Why is there a spike in trash at Carkeek Park in the winter?
 - High winds and dramatic tides bring in trash that accumulates high on the beach. There might be less impact on inner beaches versus outer beaches.

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- Was there an increase in seabird mortality during the summer heatwave? A combination of high temperatures and low tides killed billions of sea creatures according to some reports.
 - There were more common murre mortality than usual, but they did not see anything normally outside of their baseline.
- Kelly commented that she has done seabird surveys, and recommends them.
- How many IC beaches does COASST need bird and debris data for?
 - In IC, they have a constant flux. There is an [up-to-date map online](#) – there are some local beaches that are needed for bird and debris surveys.
- How do you measure marine debris, especially small debris (such as microplastics)? Do you operate under a Quality Assurance plan?
 - Coasters do not survey MPs. There are different protocols for different debris types/sizes. They will subsample the beach for smaller plastic pieces. Everything is done with the naked eye. For medium debris (2.5-50 cm), they distribute rectangles randomly over the beach. Different debris types and sizes tell different stories.
- There was a suggestion to connect with Dr. Lyda Harris at the Seattle Aquarium; they are looking for people to take sediment samples at beaches for MP monitoring.
- There are several organizations talking about these topics.
 - COASST is involved with the ones from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- Are there correlations between bird deaths and outfalls with poor water quality?
 - If anyone at the Washington State Department of Health (WA DOH) wants to do that research, they can get ahold of Jackie. In the past, there are ones for biotoxins. There are many directions to go with these comparisons.
- If we wanted to integrate distribution and abundance with distribution and abundance of forage fish, could we work with her?
 - Yes – they have data sets that go back about 20 years.
- Who, besides NOAA's Marine Debris Action Plan, is involved in trying to keep the public informed about which organizations are taking action regarding marine debris? There was a comment that WA DNR is also involved.

MEMBERSHIP (Kelly)

We are down one member, and the Executive Committee (EC) is discussing how to move forward with recruitment. Sound Water Stewards (SWS) just had a board leadership class, and an example of the board matrix they used was included in the agenda packet. Its purpose is to show board member skills and demographics to help us identify our gaps. We can also adjust the one that was sent out, and this was one of many examples. We can also have discussions to find out what we need. Ann and Kelly could synthesize responses, and this could also be something we do at the retreat to see what our goals are and what we want to bring to the MRC.

There was a comment that the matrix document will drive discussions, and looks like a good tool. If we look forward, there might be more gaps than what we have now. We do not want to wait forever to have a matrix, but a snapshot would be great to have first.

There was a comment that we need to consider what we found in the NA. We need to consider adding some less generic and more specific expertise so that when we do an assessment of who

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we are, we can identify gaps and what we need, and the portrait of an ideal person would emerge. It could also show if some members need specific training.

We do not have enough time to cover this in meetings. Kelly asked the group about when a good time to have a retreat would be. The group decided to have the retreat after Anna is back from maternity leave. We can do a retreat in the fall. The EC can work on what the retreat will look like, and members can do a Board Matrix activity before the retreat.

Kelly and Ann will send out a poll for retreat days. If anyone has edits for the matrix, send them to Kelly. We can work on that as we get closer to the retreat.

MICROPLASTICS MONITORING PROPOSAL (Jill)

Jill put together a proposal for us to consider regarding the Microplastics (MP) Monitoring Project, in response to our recent presentation by Dr. Lyda Harris with the Seattle Aquarium (SA). They are able to do MP analysis from sediment that we collect. This can tie into our Forage Fish program, because our volunteers are already collecting sediment on beaches.

There are other groups doing plastics analysis. We need to work on coordination. This proposal gives us the opportunity to collect data and do place-based research because there are broader implications from this research. It can show important trends or we could show how prevalent MPs are in Puget Sound (PS) and IC. We need to get a baseline of microfibers in the environment and figure out what public policies and actions can evolve from that. We can start as soon as possible. However, the SA does not have a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) in place.

We do not have analytical capability, and little time will be spent on this. Jill can deliver samples to the SA, and Ann can store them at the IC DNR office until transport. We can be a proving ground for other MRCs who might want to do this sort of thing.

The group then discussed this proposal:

- When establishing process, steps are important in assigning responsibility. We need to do some more brainstorming about what those steps are, and what the primary requirements are for members and volunteers, and then we will figure out how to get resources to support that.
- In terms of IC being the initiator, someone has to get these programs started as a showcase. It seems like the entry point is so simple, and with a little structure from the SA, we can get samples through the process. We can get started and problems can easily be solved. We can test it out, and bring our experience to the group.
- The time commitment needs to be adjusted so that, if Jill is unable to continue with the MRC, the time to drive samples to the SA is accounted for.
- Monitoring for MPs is important, but we do not typically monitor for monitoring's sake; there needs to be a specific research question we are trying to answer. What is the question we are trying to answer, and how will we use the data to support our community? We need to be tighter on what those questions are. It could tie into the forage fish data from the samples that are collected concurrently.
- We are supposed to be investigating local issues, and building local awareness. We need to answer a very specific question; does this fit our purpose, and is it local? What are we

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going to be doing with this data? There are so many things we love to monitor, but do we have capacity for this? For MP, using this data to educate people would potentially be appropriate for us.

- Members expressed concern that there is no QAPP.
- We need to be careful about using volunteer time.
- This monitoring would track MP type, distribution, and abundance. Labs can also break down type and origin of the MPs. Characterization of MP shape is also important, since it affects marine biota.
- We know MPs affect marine organisms, yet our outreach does not tell that story fully.

Jill will communicate back to Dr. Harris, that, without a QAPP, we will not partner with the SA on this. She will also bring the other concerns to her. Please send Ann or Kelly questions you may have for Dr. Harris, and we can discuss this more at the next meeting.

COORDINATOR'S UPDATE (Ann)

- The Needs Assessment (NA) Overview is on our website and will be presented to the Board of Island County Commissioners. Great work from everyone involved.
- Forage Fish monitoring is continuing as normal – WDFW was able to find funding.
 - Elsa commented that the Northwest Straits (NWS) is creating a subcommittee to come up with a communications plan about the importance of forage fish.
- Dan Pederson passed away recently.
 - Scott commented that he was an important part of our MRC's history, and was integral in a lot of the different efforts that we have made, especially with communications. He helped write the signage all along the shoreline throughout IC. He did a lot of writing, including for *Getting to the Water's Edge*. He will be missed.

NWSC GRANT REPORTS

Outreach

No Update.

Hoypus Point

Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) orchestrated and led a site visit for state and local entities involved in the permitting process. Later in August there will be surveys conducted for large woody debris (LWD) and beach wrack.

Cornet Bay Stewardship

Ann and Gwendolyn are watering and weeding bi-weekly throughout the summer months.

OTHER REPORTS

Shore Friendly

No update.

Sound Water Stewards

- **Junior Rangers** is a state park nature program at Fort Ebey and Fort Casey for children 7-14 but is also fun for the whole family. Sound Water Stewards assist a park ranger and/or Allie as they lead participants with an exploration of seaweed, nature journaling,

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or how trees talk to each other. Dates for this activity are July 1, July 8, and August 26. The Waldorf School marine camp is a Readiness to Learn program for K-3 students from the Waldorf School on Whidbey. Campers learn about and explore whales, seaweed, plastic, and plankton. The camp ran July 12-15 from 10 to noon each day with varying locations.

- **Digging for Dinner** occurred at Double Bluff County Park on July 23rd and 25th. After 45 minutes orientation, members of the public learned all about how to dig their own shellfish over the following 2 hours.
- **Island County HR Training for MRC Activities:** Volunteers who want to participate in Island County activities (including MRC activities such as bull kelp, forage fish monitoring, crabbing education, etc.) are required to attend a brief training with the county's Human Resources Department. If Sound Water Stewards are participating as part of a class activity (such as a field trip), they do not need to undergo the training. Please contact Ann Prusha (a.prusha@islandcountywa.gov or 360-678-2347) if you have questions or would like to schedule a training.
- **MRC / SWS Crabber Education:** On July 1st and 2nd, volunteers gathered at boat launches to hand out crabber education materials and crab trap escape cord as a joint MRC and SWS activity, for 2 hour shifts. Locations included boat launches at Langley, Cornet Bay, Oak Harbor, and Camano Island State Park
- **Beach Cleanups** continued at Keystone on Whidbey Island and Camano Island State Park on Camano.
- **Moon Snail Egg Educational Posters** were created and posted on both islands, educating those who walk our beaches not to pick up and discard moon snail egg shell casings, which can resemble trash to those not familiar with them.
- **Marine Mammal Stranding Network Training** will be occurring in the near future to interested volunteers on both islands.
- **Intertidal Monitoring** resumed in 2021 after the 2020 cancellation due to COVID concerns. In 2021, monitoring started in April and goes through July with data collection and species identification/observation on 12 Camano beaches and 11 Whidbey beaches. Dedicated Stewards capture beach slope, water salinity, water temperature, describe the substrate, and identify species in quadrats set up along lines at established locations where monitoring has been done for more than 25 years.
- **Bull Kelp Surveys:** Under the auspices of Island County MRC and NW Straights, SWS teams survey bull kelp beds in specific locations on Whidbey (Ebey's Landing, Polnell Point, Possession Point and Hoypus Point) and Camano Island (Lowell Point). This year, Stewards are taking additional water temperature tests at Possession Point and Lowell Point.
- **Pigeon Guillemot Survey:** The new-last-year Camano Pigeon Guillemot Survey Team of 7 Stewards reports they are monitoring a total of six bluff faces with possibly as many as thirty burrows on a large bluff area on the Port Susan side of Camano Island. On Whidbey, 36 Stewards report they are thoroughly enjoying their time with these delightful birds in the long-established Pigeon Guillemot surveys on Whidbey.
- **Asian Giant Hornets:** New this year, SWS has recruited 30 people to put up and maintain traps that appeal to the Invasive Asian Giant Hornets, also called Murder Hornets because they kill native bees by decapitating them. Washington Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is coordinating the program and providing materials.

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- **Large Woody Debris and Beach Wrack Surveys:** NWSF seeks volunteers to assist in conducting large woody debris and beach wrack surveys at Cornet Bay (inside Deception Pass) on Wednesday, July 28. This is part of continued post-construction monitoring for the restoration site. The surveys are expected to take about 3 hours, 11 am to 2 pm. No prior training is required.
- **Shellfish die-off:** Following the record-breaking heat wave in June, Teri King, a shellfish biologist with Washington Sea Grant, and other officials are seeking descriptions and photographs from shoreline observers about sites of shellfish die-off possibly caused by the extreme and extended heat. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife set up an online form for observers to fill out, or you can send information by email

Island Local Integrating Organization (ILIO)

The ILIO is in process of updating IC's Ecosystem Recovery Plan (ERP) to better align with the new Action Agenda (AA).

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair:

Kelly asked the group to consider reading the following Tribal Acknowledgement at the beginning of each MRC meeting.

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.

There was a comment that this was fully vetted by NWS.

Gwendolyn moved to include the Tribal Acknowledgement at the beginning of MRC meetings. Jill seconded. The motion was approved.

County Lead:

There have been ongoing forestry management discussions, including a presentation to the BoCC by WA DNR tomorrow.

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

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:03pm.