

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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## Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

# May 4, 2021

ZOOM

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

**VISITORS:** Dawn Spilsbury Pucci, IC Salmon Recovery, Seth Luginbill, IC Noxious Weed Program, Sasha Horst, NWSC, Dana Oster, NWSC, Joseph Huang, Nolan Simmons, IC EH

**CALL TO ORDER:** Kelly called the meeting to order at 3:05pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Randy moved to approve the agenda. Ken seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Kes moved to approve the April 6, 2021 meeting minutes. Scott seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** We received a letter of appreciation from the Board of Island County Commissioners (BICC) in honor of National Volunteer Week.

The MRC was invited to send a representative to participate in a focus group on how the [Maritime Washington National Heritage Area](#) can provide value to our local communities. There is a focus group meeting and then a public meeting after. Jill offered to participate, and is planning to go to both meetings to represent the MRC.

### **NOXIOUS WEEDS PRESENTATION (Seth Luginbill)**

Seth Luginbill, Island County (IC) Noxious Weed Program Coordinator, gave a presentation about noxious weeds and aquatic environments. Noxious weeds are undesirable non-native plants that have economic, ecological, or aesthetic implications. All noxious weeds are divided into three categories: 1) For Class A (Regulated) weeds, eradication is required by state law. 2) Control is legally required for Class B (Regulated) weeds. These can sometimes be non-regulated if the spread is too rampant. 3) For Class C (Non-regulated) weeds, control or eradication is strongly recommended, but there are no legal requirements. However, counties can require these be controlled (such as Canada and bull thistles in IC).

All noxious weeds on the noxious weeds list can be disposed of for free at IC Transfer Stations. Please bag them or use a tarp while transporting to reduce accidental spreading.

The terrible ten are the most prioritized species for removal in IC. Poison hemlock, tansy ragwort, and spurge laurel are toxic species. Yellow archangel, garlic mustard, Scotch broom, and Canada/bull thistle are terrestrial weeds. Common cordgrass, knotweeds, and hairy willow herb are aquatic weeds.

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The Noxious Weeds Program helps the community in several ways. They conduct site visits for landowners to help them identify noxious weeds and come up with a site plan, do a lot of education, rent out weed wrenches to the public for free, and are regulatory on non-compliant landowners (this happens rarely).

The IC Noxious Weed Control Board is looking for another member from the northern district (south Oak Harbor to Deception Pass State Park). If anyone is/knows anyone who is interested in joining, please reach out to Seth. Anyone is welcome to join public meetings, including when they update the weed species list.

Marine invasive species:

- 1) *Spartina angelica* and *densiflora*– sometimes our work supports the creation of habitat that is good for *Spartina*, so it is good to consider *Spartina* when doing projects. These plants can travel with the tide and infest new areas. It was brought in as a beach stabilizer, but takes over. It outcompetes native vegetation and reduces forage fish habitat and shellfish beds. It is very difficult to get rid of. There is no *S. densiflora* left on Whidbey Island, but we did have a flare up two years ago. Hancock Lagoon and English Boom are the main hot spots of *S. angelica* in IC. Since 1997, nearly 450 acres have been eradicated!
- 2) Hairy willow herb – IC has the worst infestation in Washington. There is a big infestation in Crockett Lake, and they have done removal projects at Swan Lake.
- 3) Parrotfeather – Seth has not seen too much of this. It is an escaped aquarium plant. There is an infestation in Deer Lagoon. They have done removal work there, but it keeps coming back.
- 4) Brazilian *Elodea* – There is an infestation at Lone Lake. They did control work that involved introducing grass eating carp, which ended up eating native vegetation as well. Local volunteers have been working to fish them out.
- 5) Purple Loosestrife – There has been some success with biocontrol. It is present, but not spreading.

Controlling aquatic weeds requires using several techniques. When removing aquatic weeds, be sure to have the correct permits in hand (Hydraulic Project Approval. If you're working in a wetland, contact the IC planning department. Anna will share the resources that Seth listed and the presentation.

Fill out [this form](#) to report a noxious weed. There is also [an app](#) through the Washington Invasive Species Council. Washington invasive species council. You can contact Seth at [s.luginbill@islandcountywa.gov](mailto:s.luginbill@islandcountywa.gov).

Questions and comments:

- How often do we use biological control, and how effective is it? Does it work with tansy ragwort?
  - Biological control has been used in a lot of situations. It is a great tool for containment and stop-gap measures, and is not generally an eradication tool. The control species will usually crash before the noxious weeds will. It is good for places that are difficult to reach.

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- For tansy ragwort there have not been too many releases. Sometimes the cinnabar moth caterpillar has been used along right of ways. There is always concern about non-target species being affected.
- Is there any work being done about *Sargassum*?
  - There is catching up to do with this, especially as the intent of noxious weed laws evolve. There have been challenges to finding good control techniques for similar species. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Ecology might have more information.
- Have you seen changes in noxious weeds because of climate change, or do you anticipate any changes?
  - This has not been fully addressed yet. We are seeing changes in native plant communities, especially fragile ones. It seems like noxious and invasive weeds have a wide threshold in terms of what they can tolerate for habitat. The range of Class A weeds will likely move north. It would be a good PhD research project.
- Will sea level rise change the prevalence of *Spartina*?
  - Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) has a large weed database. It houses all of our noxious weeds data points throughout IC. The ability is there to gather special data, see where they are migrating to, and create a picture. A lot of that data is based on public property, not private.
- Are there community science arms to this work?
  - There is no designated body, but Seth does a lot with Washington State University (WSU) Extension Master Gardeners. They do a lot in terms of identification and knowledge. Plants leave and pop back up. There is an element of recruiting people to help look at places that have historically been considered eradicated.

## OUTREACH NEEDS ASSESSMENT (Barb & Andi)

Barb and Andi gave a presentation about this project, which they have been working on for 5 months. They did a series of interviews with multiple stakeholder groups. This is an opportunity to take the pulse of where things are now in marine resources, and to recalibrate our work so we are hitting on the most important topics for our community. A similar assessment was conducted 5 years ago (but not as ambitious).

This is anecdotal and qualitative information. The Outreach Needs Assessment Team developed a questionnaire, identified audience types and individuals to interview, trained MRC interviewers (Andi, Ed, Kelly, Randy, Scott, and Barb), and conducted 22 interview from 10 audience types.

Andi gave an overview of themes and desired outcomes across audiences. This includes the things that people value about the MRC, the most mentioned MRC roles, education and outreach comments, community science comments, comments about supporting the policy process, and suggestions for future MRC work. She also highlighted themes by audience types, which included State government and conservation partners.

Andi asked the group to provide feedback on how they would like this information to be presented.

Questions and comments:

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- It seems like we need to provide all of the people we interviewed with how we're going to participate in solving their problem, rather than trying to come up with the data to say that there are more people aligned with you (such as, it sounds like you need an outreach mechanism, so here are groups to connect with).
  - We could send a copy of the survey, and then also thank them personally and address their comments.
- We should review with a critical eye to defining terms and use of verbiage.
  - Having a summary that is brief, clear, and concise would be helpful.
  - Interviews tried to capture the language that people were using, and definitions can vary among people. We can look to phrase things in similar ways so it is less confusing.
- A critical component is the next steps for this report; we do not want it to sit on the shelf. What are our takeaways, what are we going to do, how are we going to ensure we do it?
  - When we can gather for a strategic discussion, this can be a tool we use.
- One of the key takeaways is that the MRC, being of but not in government, allows us to be a trusted source. This is extremely valuable and we do not want to erode that trust. Being trusted means that we can do out and in reach so we can say things that others cannot. It gives us the opportunity to be advocates.
- The information from government agencies will be critical going forward.
- We can play a role by providing information and advocating for the environment using ecosystem services valuation as a key point.
- We can use the opportunity when talking about heavier use of parks and dog waste as a way to educate about plastics.
- This will be a standing item on our agenda, even 10-15 minutes each meeting to keep this on our minds. We can start a subcommittee to bring forward action items to ensure that this is an action-oriented working document.
- It is great that there is so much we want to do, but it is important to remember the longer game. We could find ourselves in the middle of conflict, and we need to be aware of that and be stewards of conversations.
- We can be specific about which items we pick. We can potentially work on broader themes, and keep our priorities and strategies manageable.

## MRC GRANT APPLICATION (Anna)

Anna will be working with project leads as she fills out information about grant applications. This is due in early June. If anyone else has questions or wants to provide input, email her before the June MRC meeting.

## COORDINATOR'S UPDATE (Anna)

- Upcoming meetings:
  - Lyda Harris, Microplastics Fellow at the Seattle Aquarium, will present about microplastics research in June. Please let Anna know if have specific questions so we can email her ahead of time.
  - At the June meeting, Dana Oster and Allie Simpson from the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) will present about the voluntary no-anchor zones project that they have received funding for.

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- Jill has started her literature review on microplastics, and has put together a presentation for a future MRC meeting. She will tentatively present this in July.
- Scott will be presenting at the May 28<sup>th</sup> NWSC meeting about the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area report card update. Anyone is welcome to attend. Anna will send the meeting agenda when it is available.
- The Eelgrass Storymap is complete, and will be live soon. In conjunction with the Storymap, we have put together an assessment to gauge what people learned and any actions they will take after viewing the Storymap. There will be a drawing for a copy of *Getting to the Water's Edge* for those who complete the assessment.

## NWSC GRANT REPORTS

### Forage Fish Monitoring

1. We are back to using volunteers!
2. New volunteers are being oriented to the process and sites (Seahorse Siesta, Maple Grove, Hidden Beach, Cornet Bay, and Hoypus Point so far with more to come).
3. Ken has volunteered to serve as the MRC forage fish project champion and is also getting up to speed on sites with help from Ann and Matt Kukuk.
4. We have been discussing sharing results with teams and how we might make the data more accessible.
5. Anna and Ann will be presenting about our forage fish program to SWS Class of 2021 on Thursday, May 13th at noon.

### Kelp Monitoring

The kelp team met to discuss plans for the upcoming monitoring season. Linda Rhodes will be stepping back from the primary coordination role, but will continue to volunteer on the water. Ron Beier, a Sound Water Steward who has been volunteering with the team for a few years will be taking on the coordination role. Hannah will remain the MRC Champion for the kelp project, with support from Randy and Ken.

## OTHER REPORTS

### Northwest Straits Commission/Foundation

Update at meeting.

Update: Elsa brought up the question of microplastics, and can share some resources. Also, Elsa was elected chair!

### Salmon Recovery Technical & Citizen Committee

Update at meeting.

Update: None

### WSU Extension

Update at meeting.

Update: Jerilyn put out a newsletter about forage fish and beach processes last week.

## LEADERSHIP REPORTS

**Chair:** None

**County Lead:** Lori has resigned, and this will be her last MRC meeting.

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**County Commissioners:** The group was encouraged to look at upcoming legislation, and what it means for salmon recovery and restoration.

**COMMUNITY COMMENT FORUM AND Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC:** Dana commented that the kelp season kickoff is this Thursday. There is a great set of videos created by Linda and Vern on their methods if anyone is interested.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 4:59pm.