

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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ISLAND COUNTY
MARINE RESOURCES
COMMITTEE

Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

June 1, 2021

ZOOM

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

VISITORS: Dawn Spilsbury Pucci, IC Salmon Recovery, Dr. Lyda Harris, Seattle Aquarium, Allie Simpson, NWSC, Dana Oster, NWSC

CALL TO ORDER: Kelly called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Jill moved to approve the agenda. Hannah seconded. The agenda was approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

MICROPLASTICS RESEARCH (Dr. Lyda Harris, Microplastics Fellow, Seattle Aquarium)

Dr. Lyda Harris gave a presentation about the microplastics research being conducted by the Seattle Aquarium (SA). She gave an overview of the microplastics program and potential ways that the MRC can be involved.

She gave a brief overview of the route that plastics, including from clothing fibers, take into marine waters. They become microplastics, and as these pieces get smaller and smaller, more organisms can ingest them. These microplastics takes up space where food should be, and can be a sponge for harmful chemicals.

She gave a summary of the SA's microplastics program. For their in-house program, they conduct water monitoring to describe long term baseline contamination in Elliot Bay, and to determine if contamination is seasonal. They also measure the contamination levels that organisms experience. They assess vertical settlement rate of microplastics and other anthropogenic debris, among other research topics. For their Salish Sea program, they conduct water grabs (short time scale), collect mussels (medium time scale), and sediment (long time scale). For community science, there are opportunities for sediment sampling across the Salish Sea. On the policy end, they are supporting several laws/acts that will help reduce plastics.

The data collected by this program could be applied to restoration and protection, education and information, place-based research, outreach, policy, aquaculture, and stakeholder groups.

Questions/Comments:

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- This is an ongoing conversation about how the MRC can best be involved in microplastics research.
- Plastics float, but this is not the entire story. Sampling high on the water is where we can see and sample most easily, but it actually appears most frequently lower in the water column. Weathering and processing by organisms makes microplastics heavier and causes them to sink lower. In the research they are conducting, in a 24-hour period, they can figure out the rate of sinking and analyze material type. Once it ends up in the sediment, it is difficult for it to get back up. Near a shoreline, however, waves can deposit it (for the same reasons we find a wrack line).
- Can you elaborate on the sediment's role as part of a longer study?
 - In this case, it would be best to collect the same samples annually to establish a baseline. It is definitely not an intensive collection process. This would be paired with our sites. It is long-term in the sense that the microplastics will settle in sediment for a long time.
- What are a couple of tasks that you would like us to consider? Where do you want these samples to be collected? Do you want us to scuba dive or collect along the shore line?
 - There would be no scuba diving. The sediment samples would be collected on the beach, not in the water. Ideally, these samples would be paired with forage fish egg collection. It would help determine what is around forage fish when they hatch. The SA is interested in accessible, environmentally important, sustainable sites that can be sampled long-term.
- Can you define the protocols you would like us to use, so we can decide if this is something we should take on?
 - The SA would provide containers that are cleaned, and volunteers would take them out to the beach and scoop the sand.
- How frequently would sampled need to be taken, and how would they be stored?
 - Sampling frequency ranges from every few weeks to once a year. Ideally, the minimum would be quarterly or more frequently, depending on our capacity. Once they are collected, they have a long shelf life.
- Are you working with other MRCs?
 - Not right now; she is starting with us and would like to involve other MRCs.
- Can we couple this with outreach/education? Are there materials prepared?
 - She has prepared materials, but due to COVID delays, she is waiting on them to be finalized.

VOLUNTARY NO-ANCHOR ZONES UPDATE (Dana Oster and Allie Simpson, Northwest Straits Commission)

This is an opportunity to work together to expand voluntary no-anchor sites. The Salish Sea Eelgrass Protection Group is transboundary. Everyone is welcome to come to their meetings if they want.

Dana gave an overview of the Voluntary No-Anchor Zones program. More can be learned by visiting [Jefferson MRC's website](#). These zones are a visual cue to prevent anchoring on eelgrass beds. There is 98-99% boater compliance each year in areas where they have been implemented.

Allie then facilitated a discussion about what next steps look like, and who we can be reaching out to.

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The group named potential stakeholders and volunteers, along with the name of the person who can reach out to make contact (in parentheses):

- Washington State Parks – Jason Armstrong (Kelly) and Julie Morse (Anna)
- The Power Squadron organization (Deception Pass Sail and Power Squadron) – Jennifer Geller (Barb)
- South Whidbey Yacht Club – James Rogers
- Oak Harbor Yacht Club
- Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR) – Solene Walker (Dana)
- Cornet Bay Homeowners (Commissioner Saint Clair or Lisa Kaufman)
- Tribal Contacts: Shellfish Program Manager at Swinomish
- Companies that do tours within Deception Pass, including Deception Pass Tours
- SCUBA divers – Florian Graner
- The Nature Conservancy
- Whidbey Audubon Society – Patty Cheek (Kelly)
- Waggoner Cruising Guide

Please contact Allie (simpson@nwstraits.org) or Dana (oster@nwstraits.org) if you have more ideas.

For the Piloting Vessel Monitoring Program this summer, they are in the process of creating a protocol to figure out vessel monitoring and getting baseline data before buoys are put out. Allie and Dana can meet at Cornet Bay and determine 1-2 photo points. Kelly, Barb, Ken, and Hannah would be interested in helping with some of the monitoring dates. They will have more details this summer, but the commitment is pretty light.

The group then asked questions and made comments:

- Have they determined if there is enough room for anchoring? A lot of the data/images collected by Gregg Ridder looks like there are anchor strikes in the eelgrass, and maybe buoys that direct to dredged channels would be better.
 - This is in flux and something they would like guidance on for Cornet Bay's particular needs.
- The use is different at Cornet Bay versus Port Townsend. Holidays and the opening of the crabbing season would probably be the busiest times at Cornet Bay. Jason Armstrong can probably speak to that.
- If Allie can synthesize this into a paragraph or so, Ed can reach out to the Harbormaster in Langley and the rest of the Port Commission.
- Keep in mind that the use of Cornet Bay is transient, and people tuck in there to wait to get through Deception Pass. A lot of people will anchor for a couple of hours. Big dates are when fishing seasons open and holiday weekends.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT UPDATE (Barb, Andi)

They are getting down to the baseline. They have done a lot of work! Anna sent out the draft overview and sample graphs that they pulled together for a number of questions. The report will have the overview. For each question, there will be one page with a graph and then a section for notes. This is an opportunity to pull together some threads and see relationships.

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Barb reviewed the pages in the draft.

The group then asked questions and made comments.

- Are you expecting this type of material to be briefed?
 - It can be sent electronically; they will not print many. They will be distributed to everyone interviewed, and people can read the overview if they do not want to look into the specific graphs.
- Not many people are going to read it in this detail, but those interviewed will likely check to make sure it captured what they said. As we put our strategic plan together, it will be a useful background document.
- There were a couple of comments about wordsmithing:
 - There was discussion about the sentence “STATE GOVERNMENT interviews indicated that Island County’s shorelines are uniquely under pressure from erosion and development as compared to other counties with shorelines.” This language is from the Department of Ecology and is based on permitting. There was a comment that this should be highlighted and given a little more description.
 - For “Collect and leverage...financial data”, we can change this to “economic value”.

Barb asked group to review summary and graphs and let her know if there is more feedback.

Jerilyn commented that we are uniquely at risk because we have the second highest percentage of parcels on the shoreline, and 80% are developed or slated to be. She gave kudos to the team, and would like to collaborate when it is time to do workshops to educate the public.

This will be added to each agenda as an ongoing item.

COORDINATOR’S UPDATE (Anna)

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Grant

We will be submitting our grant proposal this week. Our main tasks are forage fish monitoring, kelp monitoring, and the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area (MSA) report card update. More can be added, but these are main projects with deliverables. Staff support can be given to some other areas. You can provide any feedback through June 3. Scott gave great presentation at the NWSC meeting about the MSA update.

Jill moved for general approval of the grant proposal, with the understanding that there might be some minor changes and wordsmithing. Hannah seconded. The motion was approved.

Crabber Outreach

We are working with several interested Sound Water Stewards (SWS) volunteers to conduct crabber outreach. Possible boat launch locations on Whidbey include: Cornet Bay, Captain Coupe Park, and the Langley Marina. Scott is helping to organize outreach on Camano. Possible boat launch locations on Camano include: Cama Beach State Park and Maple Grove Boat Launch. Please reach out to Anna and Scott if you are interested. If anyone is interested in distributing materials, they will be arriving the next couple of weeks. We generally get them out to hardware stores and places where licenses are sold.

Maternity Leave

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Anna will be working a reduced schedule starting June 14, and then plans to be fully on leave from June 21 through October 15. Ann will be taking care of MRC tasks while she is out. Anna will be checking in with Ann regularly about MRC topics. Please be mindful of Ann's time, as she has many other job duties.

Seining data

Julia Indivero, a graduate student from the School of Aquatic and Fisher Sciences at University of Washington (UW) reached out to let us know that they are conducting a synthesis of Puget Sound nearshore fish and invertebrate data as part of a larger Washington Sea Grant project evaluating the effectiveness of nearshore restoration. They are asking for Puget Sound nearshore fish and/or macro-invertebrate data, collected using beach seine or similar methods, during any period from the 1990s to the present. The resulting data paper would be submitted to the journal Ecology for publication. They are interested in relevant nearshore fish or invertebrate data, including other individuals they should be contacting. This is a great opportunity to share our seining data. Dawn will be working with Jason Morgan to share the data.

Membership

Randy has stepped down from the MRC, and shared that he was proud to have served on the committee and sends his best wishes to all. We will be sending him a Kudoboard this evening, and we will also plant a tree in his honor when we have established the MRC alumni tree program. Membership will be a topic for discussion at the July meeting.

NWSC GRANT REPORTS

Outreach

No Update.

Hoypus Point

Blue Coast Engineering completed the 90% design for restoration. The project team met with the Multi-Agency Review Team (MART) to discuss how to pilot this project through a streamlined permitting process for nearshore restoration work. Lisa Kaufman is leading the permitting efforts.

Cornet Bay Stewardship

Ann, Gwendolyn, and Anna will be visiting Cornet Bay in June to strategize a watering plan for this summer, as well as assess any needs for future weeding/planting work.

OTHER REPORTS

Shore Friendly

We are working both with Herrera Environmental Consultants and Whidbey Island Conservation District to provide technical assistance to several shoreline landowners who have expressed interest in learning about managing their shoreline properties.

Sound Water Stewards

1. The Sound Water Stewards 2021 class training finished May 20th, and will be resuming in fall 9/9 – 10/21. Small groups within the class are working on different projects, one being recreational crabber information. MRC and Northwest Straits will be providing them some materials to hand out.

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2. The Stewardship Committee has continued offering beach cleanups on both islands, which have been successful.
3. Intertidal Monitoring has been taking place at various locations on both islands, where it has taken place annually for many years. Numerous Community Science (aka Citizen Science) projects have continued on both islands.
4. Digging4Dinner@Double Bluff Beach will take place several times in June and in July.
5. There are now a large number of original educational videos that have been produced by Sound Water Stewards Educational Committee. Be sure to check out our offerings at: [Education Videos - Sound Water Stewards](#).
6. Volunteers and staff have been working on how Sound Waters University will be held in 2022.

Island Local Integrating Organization

They are going through a transition – Lori Clark is leaving, and will be working at WA DNR on forest issues. The last two ILIO meetings delved into forest management.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair

The Hoypus Point walk was set for June 5th, but did not have a lot of sign-ups. She will send out a Doodle Poll to find a day that works for more people. There was a comment about adding more sites to visit, particularly Barnum Point. Kelly will send out a second Doodle Poll to see about more site visits.

Kelly asked if anyone is interested in taking Randy's place in the Executive Committee. It entails a monthly meeting under an hour to set agendas and any over-arching items. Jill volunteered.

County Lead

Lori Clark has left, and it is possible that there will be a new IC DNR manager next month.

County Commissioners

Commissioner Saint Clair let the group know that there will be a public hearing about the Shoreline Master Plan (SMP) on June 22nd. It is an opportunity to speak to that process.

She was at the Salmon Recovery Council, and is interested in Dawn's work. There are changes in how we do project planning. Barb is going to talk about our LIO work; that group met, and there is some interesting work happening there as well.

COMMUNITY COMMENT FORUM AND Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC:

Barb will be getting together with a small group of people from Snohomish and Clallam MRCs to explore SMPs. She is asking that we think about this now so that the next opportunities to modify regulations will be ones that we are ready for.

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