

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WWW.ISLANDCOUNTYMRC.ORG



Minutes

Prepared by Ann Prusha

November 2, 2021

ZOOM

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

VISITORS: Allie Simpson, NWSC, Ryan Elting, WCLT, Heather McCoy, WICD

CALL TO ORDER: Hannah called the meeting to order at 3:07pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Kes moved to approve the agenda. Barbara seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Barbara moved to approve the October 5, 2021 minutes. Kelly seconded. The minutes were approved. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

TRIBAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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.

WHIDBEY CAMANO LAND TRUST PRESENTATION (Ryan)

Ryan gave a brief overview of the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT), which is a 501(c)(3) organization that acquires land to protect and provides volunteer stewardship opportunities. They protect land through conservation easements, facilitated lands, and fee ownership/preserves. Their work is guided by their strategic land protection plan. You can learn more on [their website](#).

Ryan reviewed coastal protection projects, which include projects all over Island County. He also spoke about restoration work that WCLT does, and reviewed restoration sites. They also monitor plant survival and do maintenance work.

Crockett Lake Preserve had once of the biggest hairy willow herb populations in the state, and this has been removed. They planted it with native plants, and volunteers are pulling any invasive plants that come back.

The group asked questions and made comments:

- How do you quantify your work, including impacts for coastal resilience?

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WWW.ISLANDCOUNTYMRC.ORG

- When looking at coastal resilience, it means protecting the most intact, functioning ecosystems. They help make sure development is not impacting the ability of those systems to do what they need to do. For forests, they absorb carbon and provide habitat for wildlife. They can quantify by acres and miles, but have not done so with carbon sequestration
- What is their relationship like with smaller landowners who are conservation minded? This would include properties that have a lot of reed canarygrass (RCG).
 - This depends on the specifics of the individual property. They work with a lot of smaller landowners. They try to expand on previous protection and conservation work, if the property is adjacent to protected lands or in a priority area or habitat corridor area, it will help facilitate its connection.
 - Lands with RCG are tough because it is so omnipresent in wetlands. They probably cannot do a lot for RCG unless they own a bigger area or are working with neighbors. It takes a larger-scale effort.
 - There are great opportunities; they take a lot of calls from landowners. There are opportunities to work with the Conservation Districts (CDs), and backyard work is very important for resilience. They hope to partner with CDs on this.
- Is public access an element of all your protected lands?
 - They look at the conservation values that are present on a property and look at historic use. If they have a functioning, intact ecosystem, and no expectation of use, they will try to protect it as a Forever Wild project. It depends on the scale. Some areas are more of a trade-off. They also look to partner where possible.
- In the MRC's Needs Assessment (NA), the connection between land and water was highlighted. How do they factor areas where tidelands will be impacted by climate change (CC) and sea level rise (SLR), since there will be a net loss of land?
 - This is a tough question. It is likely that they will have buffers inland with their protection work. They are trying to work up and down stream
- It is wonderful that the Stillaguamish Tribe bought Triangle Cove. In the past, there were conversations about that becoming a commercial shellfishery.
 - We are not sure if this will be happening.
- As you plan for CC with longer drought seasons, can you plant more drought tolerant plants?
 - They are planting more drought tolerant plants, as well as looking at sourcing plants from farther south in their range, to compensate for CC.

Please contact [Ryan](#) with any more questions.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT DISCUSSION 3 OF 3: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION (Barbara)

Barbara encouraged the group to the [NA Overview](#) to help prepare for our strategic retreat in 2022. Our identity is distinct. Barbara reviewed page two and graphs 5 and 6 of the NA Overview. She spoke about public vs private land usage, encouraging adaptive regulations, integrating science elements, and our role of being of but not in government. This fits in with all we do, and we have the ability to weave in messages as we talk about what we are doing.

We were invited to speak with IC PW and Planning about staff education.

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WWW.ISLANDCOUNTYMRC.ORG

Barbara asked the group to think about what topic(s) emerged from all of this and what we would like to delve into more, especially at our retreat. The group split into breakout rooms:

- Group 1: The MRC has a dual role in being responsive to requests for information from the Board of Island County Commissioners (BICC) but also being proactive in providing input before we are asked. Importance of listening and valuing differing perspectives in discourse.
- Group 2: Bluff erosion (broader shoreline best practices).
- Group 3: Interconnectedness, and the MRC's unique role.

Barbara reported on an upcoming grant, and how it fits with what we are talking about. It was submitted by IC Planning and approved by the BICC. It allows a team that includes the MRC and Sound Water Stewards (SWS) to work with 3 or 4 communities that have already been identified as high risk from threats of storm surge and SLR. They are finding a way to communicate about risk, liabilities, and the opportunities that this presents. The grant term is one year. Work on this should begin in January. It is in line with what we have been talking about.

BULL KELP AND FORAGE FISH UPDATE (Ken)

Both the forage fish and bull kelp reports were submitted. The 2021 forage fish report can be found [here](#), and the 2021 bull kelp report can be found [here](#). Forage fish teams are continuing to monitor monthly. The bull kelp season has wrapped up. The stability of bull kelp is fairly stable; it was a healthy year. In general the kelp community is starting to focus on understory kelp.

There was a comment about a [recent article about kelp in the Seattle Times](#).

PINTO ABALONE UPDATE (Jill)

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has provided an opportunity to submit public comments on their Pinto Abalone Plan. Jill drafted a public comment letter, and comments are due in January. Pinto abalone could play an important role in our kelp forest ecosystem. There is potential opportunity on the west side of Whidbey Island in the Smith and Minor Aquatic Reserve for seeding. There has not been seeding done on Whidbey, and the comments include suggestions for using this area. Bringing back pinto abalone would be a major accomplishment.

This comment letter would need to be approved by the BICC. To address land use concerns, it was noted that this area is already preserved as state-owned aquatic land, and is closed to the public year-round.

Ken moved to submit to the BICC the pinto abalone public comment authored by Jill, and then to submit the comment to WDFW upon approval by the BICC. Andi seconded. The motion was approved.

If the BICC does not approve of the comment, Jill will change the wording as appropriate and submit the comment to WDFW it as an individual, not as a representative of the MRC.

NORTHWEST STRAITS COMMISSION FUNDING UPDATE (Anna & Allie)

There might be congressionally directed spending coming through, which would fund our MRC for an additional ~\$200k if it is approved. Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) is also working on securing more long-term funding. We could receive this funding as soon as January, but it is not

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WWW.ISLANDCOUNTYMRC.ORG

guaranteed yet. NWSC has asked us to provide them with a wish list of projects that we could use some of that funding on.

Anna asked the group to provide ideas for what to use the funding for:

- In the Marine Debris Plan from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), there is a commitment from MRCs to engage fireworks sellers and users to pick up debris. We could do outreach for this.
- Monitor plastics
- To mitigate cigarette filter waste, we could use portable ashtrays as an educational tool for fishers.
- Restoration at the Oak Harbor (OH) Marina and Hoypus Point
- Crabbing educational materials translation
- Support the IC homeowner septic inspection training program. This could include a presentation about landscaping over drain fields. More information can be found [here](#).
- New locations for county/state parks for signage.
 - Ryan is working on signage/interpretive work at Barnum Point. Those should be installed in the spring.
 - SWS is working on an Adopt-A-Sign program.
- Support for voluntary no anchor zone buoys.
- Free assessments for Shore Friendly programs. It could be a good intersection to host some workshops (including about septic systems).
- Internal training for IC staff, especially with a field work component.
 - There was a comment that IC has significant staff turnover, and we need to be mindful of how to invest in staff education and providing resources and materials that new employees can take advantage of.
- Network of water quality temperature monitors throughout IC.
- The topic of unlicensed buoys in the waters of IC has been raised this year. We could do an inventory of buoys as a striating project.
- Please email Anna if you think of anything else in the next few days.

COORDINATOR'S UPDATE (Anna)

- The outreach, bull kelp, forage fish, needs assessment, and annual reports are available on our website.
- The [Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference](#) will be virtual, which means that we can send more people. Anna will email everyone; please let her know if you want to go. The dates are April 26-28, 2022.
- Being on a subcommittee would involve having a few meetings before the retreat. Anna will email out the subcommittee list; please sign up for a specific one.
- Our retreat will likely be in March. Anna will send out a Doodle Poll.
- The Jan Holmes Island County Coastal Volunteer of the Year Award subcommittee needs a couple of members. This is co-sponsored by us, SWS, and Washington State University (WSU) Extension. Scott and Ed volunteered to join.
- It is our turn to contribute a Make a Difference column article for *Whidbey Weekly*. Anna will do this unless someone else wants to. There was a comment that it would be great to see an article that talks about the marine setting of IC, economic and mental health values, quality of life, and interconnectedness. It might be interesting to pull

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WWW.ISLANDCOUNTYMRC.ORG

from the NA and Island Local Integrating Organization (ILIO) survey. Hannah is interested; she and Anna will touch base.

- At the MRC Executive Committee (EC) meeting, the group spoke about doing a shorter business meeting in December and hosting virtual holiday social time after. The first hour will be business, and the holiday get together will be in the second hour of our usual meeting time.

NWSC GRANT REPORTS

Forage fish monitoring

Monitoring is continuing as usual. NWSC and WDFW are planning to host a volunteer training event this fall; details to be determined.

Update: Provided earlier in the meeting.

Kelp Monitoring

Update: Provided earlier in the meeting.

OTHER REPORTS

NW Straits Commission/Foundation

Update: The incoming funding discussed earlier is the biggest update. The CC Symposium will be on November 18 from 3:30-5, and is part of a series.

Salmon Recovery Technical & Citizen Committee (SRTCC)

Update: Dawn Spilsbury Pucci has moved on to a new job, and IC hopes to hire for the SRTCC Coordinator position soon.

WSU Extension

Update: On Camano Island, Jerilyn is moving offices, which allows other coordinators to be more active on Camano. They recently hosted an [Our Earth Our Home](#) series webinar.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Chair: None

County Lead: None

County Commissioners: None

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

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:04pm.