

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Jill Lipoti

June 3, 2025

ONLINE MEETING

PRESENT: Present: **Jill Lipoti**, Chair, **Barbara Bennett**, **Scott Chase**, **Greg Easton**, **Patrick Havel**, **Andi Kopit**, **Kirk Larsen**, **Paul Ben McElwain**, **Jennifer Schmitz**, **Kelly Webb**, **Jeff Wheeler**, **Kelly Zupich**, MRC Staff

ABSENT: Note if notified or un-notified – **Joshua Berkowitz** (notified), **Ken Collins** (notified), **Kirk Larsen** (notified), Commissioner Melanie Bacon

VISITORS: **Jessica Reid**, Lead Entity Coordinator WRIA 6, **Renee Zavas-Silva**, IC Surface Water Quality, **Quinn Farr**, Pollution Identification Coordinator and Beach and Shellfish Lead, **Linda Rhodes**, technical advisor, **Jessica Owens**, NWSC, **Carlos Anderson**, Whidbey Island Audubon.

CALL TO ORDER: Jill called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** The agenda was approved.

MINUTES: A motion to approve the Minutes from May 1, 2025 was made by Greg Easton, seconded by Kelly Webb, and approved unanimously.

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.

Guest Speaker: Carlos Anderson, Whidbey Audubon Society, gave a presentation about Deer Lagoon Reserve. He began by discussing the history of Deer Lagoon, which is unique because it has freshwater marsh, saltwater marsh, and forest. Because of this ecosystem diversity, it is home to 218 documented bird species, as well as mink, beaver, otter, etc. It was purchased in 2004, and Island County Public Works is the owner, not parks. Officially opened to the public in 2021. Federal Grant requirements dictate that the site be maintained in an undeveloped condition to ensure the preservation of the wetland functions. It must be preserved and/or restored for fish and wildlife habitat. The Audubon Society has noticed that a number of activities are not consistent with this use. For instance, trees have been limbed which were home to great horned owls. Motorized boats, kite boarders, and other human activities are impacting the reserve. Dogs (both leashed and unleashed) have been frightening the birds, and sometimes people do not pick up the dog waste. People drive golf balls into the water. Algal blooms have been observed due to pesticide/fertilizer runoff from a nearby golf course. The Audubon has been volunteering to help remove invasive species at Deer Lagoon. Whidbey Audubon has put together a site-specific management plan which will be ready to go to the

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Island County Commissioners in about 2 weeks. MRC members had lots of questions for Carlos, and were very engaged in the discussion about Deer Lagoon. Carlos agreed to share the management plan with the MRC after it goes to the Commissioners.

CORRESPONDENCE: Dr. Florian Graner has offered to speak to the MRC at an upcoming meeting. His new film, “Orca’s Life in Black and White” has been well received and was held over at the Clyde.

REPORT FROM JILL LIPOTI:

Joshua Berkowitz has offered to represent the MRC on the Salmon Recovery Technical and Citizens Committee. A motion was made by Andi Kopit and seconded by Paul Ben McElwain to approve Josh as the MRC representative. The motion passed unanimously.

PROJECT PROPOSALS:

All of the project proposals have been forwarded to the NWSC by the deadline. Assistance may be needed to address any comments received.

The NWSC Science Advisory Committee will provide a consultation with Kirk Larsen on July 9 for review of the Forage Fish proposal.

Coordinator Update:

There were 40 applicants for the MRC Coordinator Position. Jen Schmitz is reviewing and will narrow it down to about 5 applicants who will be called in for an interview. It is possible that an MRC member will be able to sit in on the final interviews for the position. Hope to have someone hired by the end of June.

It was decided to cancel the MRC meeting scheduled for July 1. Without a full time Coordinator it is difficult to pull the meetings together. Thanks were given to Kelly Webb for putting together the agenda packet for today’s meeting!

The Shore Friendly Sea Level Rise workshop for Camano had to be postponed and is now set for June 17 from 1-4pm.

There will be a budget meeting with the NWSC on June 11 for an update on the federal funding.

Report from NWSC:

Meeting held at the Dungeness River Nature Center – if you haven’t been there, you should go.

Planning for the NWSC Conference is proceeding. Reserve the dates of November 7-8, 2025 to attend the conference in La Conner. The title of the Conference is “Shared Currents – Collaboration across Water and Community”.

Kelly Webb reported that there was a derelict vessel is planned to be removed from Possession Point at the end of the month.

Kelly Webb reported that training occurred for all of the volunteers involved in monitoring kelp beds. There were more volunteers who signed up after the training, so they are on a wait list. This is a very popular volunteer activity.

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Barbara Bennett said that the Comprehensive Plan goals have now been put out for public comment. Greg Easton said that we need to compare the county document to all of our comments to see if they were included and if not, perhaps we want to raise them again.

Jeff Wheeler met with Lynn Wenberg regarding the Derelict Crab Pot proposal and the counties seem to be working well together with the tribes.

Scott Chase reported on the success of the Penn Cove Water Festival. Andi Kopit and Josh Berkowitz were also there.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.