

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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## Minutes

Prepared by Anna Toledo

# January 2, 2018

COMMISSIONERS' HEARING ROOM B-102, COUNTY ANNEX, COUPEVILLE

**PRESENT:** Elsa Schwartz, Chair, presiding, Barbara Bennett, Matt Kukuk, Linda Rhodes (WebEx), Ruth Richards, Kestutis Tautvydas, Lori Clark (WebEx) Island County DNR (non-voting), Anna Toledo MRC Coordinator (staff) **ABSENT:** Ed Halloran, Jill Johnson, Tim Lawrence, Frances Wood

**VISITORS:** Dawn Spilsbury Pucci (Island County Lead Entity Salmon Recovery), Kelly Zupich (Sound Water Stewards), John Amell (WebEx)

**CALL TO ORDER:** Schwartz called the meeting to order at 3:34pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were done. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** Tautvydas moved to approve the agenda. Bennett seconded. The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** Tautvydas moved to approve the December 5, 2017 minutes. Bennett seconded. The minutes were approved.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** Toledo read a letter from Tony Turpin announcing his withdrawal as an advisory member to the MRC on creosote and marine debris removal. The MRC expressed thanks for Turpin's engagement with the MRC.

**New Member Welcome (Schwartz):** Schwartz introduced new MRC member, Matt Kukuk. Kukuk worked for Island County from 2001-2010 in the Planning Department and as manager of the Resource Enhancement division. He spent 3 of those years on the MRC as an ex-officio member. Kukuk currently works as a consultant providing assistance to landowners in areas including wetland delineation, biological reports, and permit preparation.

**Educational Presentation: Bull Kelp Monitoring (Rhodes):** Rhodes presented on the bull kelp monitoring project and the results from 2017. The presentation is available online: <http://www.islandcountymrc.org/media/17901/2018-0102-bull-kelp-presentation.pdf>

The 2017 boat-based survey looked at six sites, focusing on areas where there are additional ongoing monitoring efforts. The sites compared areas with marine influence to areas with river influence. The 2017 survey included an aerial imaging component. Images were taken with visible light (RGB) and infrared (NIR) cameras in both oblique and orthogonal views. The aerial imaging proved to be an effective and efficient way to measure where kelp beds are, and could be used to see how that changes from year to year.

Discussion was deferred until the public comment period to allow time for other items scheduled on the agenda.

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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**Marine Debris Conference Debrief (Richards):** Richards attended a workshop hosted by NOAA to develop a statewide Marine Debris Action plan. Several nearby states have developed or are working on similar plans. The workshop identified four working groups: removal, research, prevention (education & outreach), and coordination.

The concerns included:

- How to navigate a wide variety of stakeholders
- How to avoid getting administratively top-heavy
- Access to beach and coastlines
- Stable source of funding

John Amell also attended, and noted that derelict boats were a large concern and an opportunity for education. A second workshop will be held in May.

**MRC Opportunity Fund (Toledo):** The MRC reviewed and discussed ideas from the list of future project ideas generated at the retreat and December meeting.

Tautvydas noted that the storm surge project is working well under Sound Water Stewards (SWS). Eight teams have been setup and some initial photos have been taken and stored on Dropbox. Currently USGS is covering any funding needs, though there is not insurance for non-SWS volunteers. The MRC would like to stay connected to the project, but it would not need to be proposed as a project through the Opportunity Fund.

Richards noted that most of the actions coming out of the marine debris action plan would not be developed until the summer. She will review her notes for any project ideas, but it may be more appropriate for a future grant round.

The MRC was supportive of the idea of an educational video and supplementary educational materials about the marine ecosystem around Island County/Puget Sound, similar to Florian Graner's "Discover the Olympic Coast" video and materials. This could provide an opportunity to engage with other MRCs.

## ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **Richards** and **John Amell** will look into potential project ideas for marine debris.
- **Toledo** will check with Lisa Kaufman on needs around SHARP monitoring.
- **Toledo** will check with Graner on strategies for integrating an educational video and materials into local school curriculum.
- **Toledo** will check with Caroline Gibson on using the Opportunity Funds for the video or as matching funds.

## BUSINESS ITEMS

**Election of officers (Schwartz):** The nominations presented at the last meeting were Schwartz as Chair and Bennett as Vice-Chair. No further nominations were presented.

## ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **ACTION: Tautvydas moved to accept the slate of nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair as presented. Richards seconded.** The motion passed unanimously.

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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With Ed Adams no longer on the MRC, the position of Representative to the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) is vacant. Schwartz offered to fill that position. Bennett offered to serve as Alternate.

## ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **ACTION: Bennett moved to recommend that the Board of Island County Commissioners appoint Schwartz to serve as Representative to the Northwest Straits Commission. Richards seconded.** The motion passed unanimously.
- **ACTION: Tautvydas moved to recommend Bennett serve as Alternate for the Representative to the Northwest Straits Commission. Richards seconded.** The motion passed unanimously.

Schwartz announced that the Executive Committee will be formed at the February meeting, and will consist of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and 2 additional members. Members are encouraged to consider serving on the Executive Committee.

**Membership (Schwartz):** The MRC reviewed three new applications: Mike Bianchi, Mark Stamey, and Kelly Zupich. Stamey lives in Anacortes, but has family on Camano and spends significant time there. He is familiar with the work of MRCs and has previously worked with the Snohomish County MRC.

Mike Bianchi noted when submitting his application that he is applying as a citizen and not in his capacity as the Natural Resources Manager at NAS Whidbey Island.

Kelly Zupich noted she would like to help facilitate collaboration between the MRC and Sound Water Stewards.

## ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **ACTION: Bennett moved to recommend that the Board of Island County Commissioners appoint Mike Bianchi, Mark Stamey, and Kelly Zupich to the MRC. Tautvydas seconded.** Discussion included the MRC's support for Mark Stamey despite residing outside of Island County. The MRC agreed his strengths, experience, and familial and recreational connection to Island County would bring a useful perspective to the MRC. The motion passed unanimously.

Toledo noted that Schwartz, Richards, and Halloran have each been reappointed for an additional 3-year term.

**Letters of support (Toledo):** Toledo presented two letters of support for Near-Term Actions (NTAs) submitted by the Northwest Straits Foundation: one for the Shoreline Armoring Reduction and Prevention Program and one for Shoreline Restoration Effectiveness Monitoring.

## ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **ACTION: Bennett moved to have the Chair sign both letters of support for the two regional Near-Term Actions submitted by the Northwest Straits Foundation. Tautvydas seconded.** The motion passed unanimously.

# ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

[WWW.ISLANDCOUNTYMRC.ORG](http://WWW.ISLANDCOUNTYMRC.ORG)

## Coordinator's Update (Toledo):

- Rich Childers stepped down as Director of the NWSC. More information on next steps will be shared as that is relayed from the NWSC.
- Nominations are open for the 2018 Jan Holmes Island County Coastal Volunteer of the Year award. One nomination has been received so far. Members are encouraged to help spread the word.
- Toledo reminded members to send her their volunteer hours for October-December.
- Hats: Toledo presented a stitched sample of the MRC logo to be printed on hats for MRC volunteers.

## ACTIONS/DECISIONS/FOLLOW-UP

- **ACTION: Bennett moved to approve the stitched logo design as presented. Tautvydas seconded.** The motion passed unanimously.

- Updates from MRC staff meeting:
  - o Net Ecosystem Improvement: The NWSC Science Advisory Committee has developed a method to quantify how actions in the ecosystem are contributing to Puget Sound recovery. The NWSC is planning on presenting this to MRCs via WebEx in the upcoming months.
  - o This year is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the Northwest Straits Initiative. The annual conference will be held on November 16-17 at Fort Warden. Any interested members are encouraged to participate on the planning committee.

## NWSC GRANT REPORTS:

*NWSC Grant Reports and Other Reports include information shared from written project updates submitted by project leads as well as any additional information shared during the meeting.*

**Eelgrass Monitoring (Tautvydas):** Albert Foster sold his boat and is now planning to try using a kayak for his sonar mapping next summer. We are not planning to do the current eelgrass monitoring project next summer. We are thinking of having a meeting of the team in January to discuss future plans for eelgrass monitoring in Island County.

Lucas Hart (NWSC) has launched significant effort to identify projects that MRCs could conduct to monitor eelgrass. One would monitor eelgrass wasting disease. The other is a global protocol, Seagrass Net, which is conducted four times a year at low tide. Hart advised forming a workgroup with representatives from MRCs to explore these options further.

**Seining (Tautvydas):** There are not plans to seine in 2018. The current grant will need to be amended to reflect this.

**Outreach (Bennett):** Bennett is working with Toledo to organize a forum in late April or early May regarding aging shoreline infrastructure, such as armoring, tidegates, septic, and water systems. The forum would include information on the challenges and opportunities of aging infrastructure, a panel of community members implementing innovative solutions, and the opportunity to speak with representatives from Island County departments, Department of Ecology, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. One forum would be held on

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Whidbey and one on Camano, with the goal to have attendees leave with some next steps for their specific shoreline situation.

## **OTHER REPORTS:**

**Smith & Minor Islands Aquatic Reserve:** The “Welcome to the Smith & Minor Island Aquatic Reserve” signs are ready to be installed at the access points on Whidbey, (e.g., Libbey Beach). These signs were designed and constructed by WA Dept. of Natural Resources, & provide some natural history information about SMIAR. Discussions about displays for the Libbey Beach kiosk continue, and there is an effort to develop a research project around the birds of the SMIAR.

**WSU Extension:** No updates.

## **LEADERSHIP REPORTS**

**Chair:** Sound Waters University is on February 3. Registration is open through January 24. The next MRC meeting will be held at the Camano Island Library from 3:30pm-5:30pm. Toledo will send around carpool information.

**County Lead:** No report.

**County Commissioners:** No report.

## **COMMUNITY COMMENT FORUM AND Q&A FROM THE PUBLIC:**

Kukuk asked about the possibility of using drones to help with the bull kelp monitoring. Rhodes replied that they have looked extensively into this possibility, but there are several restrictions on where drones can fly, and flying one for the monitoring project would require a fair amount of technical expertise.

Rhodes asked about the status of the Shore Stewards program. Toledo will check.

Spilsbury Pucci reported that the Salmon Recovery Funding Board approved the four Island County projects. There is an executive order from the Governor’s office regarding orcas. Workgroups will be looking at three topics: prey availability, noise and disturbance, and legacy and emerging contaminants. The workgroups will be looking at strategies that can start to be implemented by the spring.

Kelly Zupich noted that if any MRC projects need volunteers, she is happy to help connect them with SWS volunteers. In the spring SWS will be holding a volunteer fair, and she would love to have MRC participate.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business and no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm.