

**Minutes of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council Meeting  
October 24, 2007**

Natural Resources Building, Room 172  
1111 Washington Street SE  
Olympia, Washington  
10:05 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

**Approved: March 26, 2008**

Voting members present: Alan Black, Janelle Downs, Elizabeth Gray, Cherie Kearney, Bob Meier, Wade Troutman. Ex-Officio members present: Steve Saunders for the Department of Natural Resources, Rob Fimbel for the State Parks and Recreation Commission, Elizabeth Rodrick for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Jim Eychaner for the Recreation and Conservation Office

Members absent: Roger Hoesterey, Merrill Peterson, Cheryl Schultz; Jeanne Koenings for the Department of Ecology

DNR staff present: Pene Speaks, John Gamon, Curt Pavola, Marsha Hixson, Anna Jones, Craig Calhoon, Janice Miller, Lisa Hallock, Joe Arnett, Michele Zukerberg, Rex Crawford, Priya Shahani, Jennifer Zarnoch

**I. Introductions**

Chair Black called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and participants introduced themselves. Pavola introduced Jenifer Zarnoch, a new Natural Areas Program Manager in the DNR Southeast Region. He also mentioned that a position in the Northwest Region would be advertised. Gamon added that Joe Rocchio, who spent eight years as an ecologist in Colorado, was offered and has accepted the position once held by Chris Chappell as a Natural Heritage ecologist. He will be joining DNR on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and working closely with Rex Crawford.

Black said the Agenda order will be modified as needed to fit member and staff needs.

**II. Minutes of the March 14, 2007 and May 31/June 1, 2007 Meetings**

*Approval of the Minutes was tabled until the January meeting.*

**VI. Other Business**

**Set meeting dates for calendar year 2008**

*The meeting dates for the 2008 calendar year were set as follows: January 30, March 26, June 5 and 6, and October 22. A confirming e-mail poll will be sent out to the Council.*

**IV. New Business**

**Proposed Trombetta Canyon Natural Area Preserve – (see attached)**

Joe Arnett presented a recommendation (see attached), including a PowerPoint, for the proposed Trombetta Canyon Natural Area Preserve. A field trip on October 17, 2007, to the proposed area was attended by Black, Rodrick and led by Arnett.

Questions and discussions regarding the boundary followed Arnett's presentation. Discussion points included management needs, public access, the degree to which the boundary captures the various features, as well as the significance of this site for the forest types present within the boundary. The region staff indicated that the boundary makes sense since the site is isolated, defensible, requiring no or little management, and the timber value in the canyon is low. The area surrounding the canyon has greater value for timber. Other property owners contacted are currently in favor of the proposed site as a buffer. Crawford said that the ninebark vegetation type, with or without Linnaea, extends into this part of the Canadian Rockies ecoregion on limestone and other substrates. There was further discussion of ownership in the surrounding area, the upcoming DNR land exchange, what boundary modifications might be considered, and status of timber for potential harvest. Crawford pointed out that while some of the forest types are not rare everywhere, they are rare on limestone. There was discussion of fire impact in the area, particularly to ponderosa pine.

Speaks clarified that the Council can recommend the ecological boundary, and then DNR staff can work with that. Kearney recommended following the greater boundary. Fimbel suggested looking at management for forest health issues.

*Downs moved that from the evidence presented on the landscape, the Council be in favor of recommending this area for a Natural Area Preserve. Kearney seconded the motion.*

Additional discussion included mention of the overall range of the priority species and ecosystems (*i.e.*, that they do occur elsewhere). Meier suggested looking at the canyon, not the timber, *i.e.*, indicating support for the smaller of the two boundary alternatives.

Black called the question as a two-part motion, with part one being whether the area is worthy of Natural Area Preserve status.

*The first part of the motion, that the area is worthy of Natural Area Preserve status, carried unanimously.*

Additional discussion ensued. Downs asked whether the features present were represented elsewhere in the natural areas system and how the quality within this proposed site compared to other examples. Crawford explained different community types on the site. There was also discussion of having both NAP and NRCA designations. The notion that NAP status might be appropriate, given that public access would be very difficult, was expressed. Another thought expressed was that without impacting the conservation features, some of the forest stand can be kept as managed timberlands for the local economy. The upland area is used for hunting by the local community.

*Kearney proposed an NAP boundary that represents the purple boundary (see map) of whatever is reasonable.*

There was discussion of what that meant, including talk of a layered ecological and acquisition boundary proposal. Black asked for amendment. Speaks said it should be legally describable. Gamon indicated that if the Council approved the boundary (purple), we would look at a minimal design based on that line and parcel lines.

*Kearny restated proposal: Moved to accept the outer boundary [purple on map] with provisions that it could be modified to accommodate legal description. Downs seconded the motion.*

There was further discussion of increasing or decreasing the size. Black called the question.

*The motion passed with four ayes, two opposed (Troutman and Meier were in favor of a smaller boundary).*

Troutman asked to see a squared up version next meeting. Staff agreed to bring such a boundary to the next Council meeting. Pavola said that boundary would then go to public hearing, and finally to the Commissioner of Public Lands.

### **III. Old Business**

#### **Proposed Wanapum Natural Area Preserve**

Hallock presented a recommendation (see attached) for the proposed Wanapum Natural Area Preserve. A field trip on June 1, 2007, as part of the summer Council Meeting, to the proposed area was attended by Black, Kearney, Meier, Schultz, Troutman; Metlen, Fimbel, Rodrick, Koenings; Pavola, Gamon, Speaks, Jones, Arnett, Calhoon, Fleckenstein, Shahani, and led by Hallock and Crawford. There was discussion of the area to be included in the preserve, and of the threats to the site and its features, including roads and possible ORV use.

Management of the area was discussed, including the interests of the Bureau of Reclamation, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Grant County.

*Troutman moved and Gray seconded to approve the proposed boundary as shown in the recommendation.*

Questions were raised about the irregular pattern of the boundary. Staff responded that the lines were drawn with consideration for connectivity and restoration and to use roads and topography breaks for boundary lines.

Black called the question. *The motion carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned for lunch at 12:20 p.m. and reconvened at 1:05 p.m.

#### **Progress on Past Recommendations: Acquisitions Report**

Calhoon presented the Special Lands Acquisitions report (attached). At Washougal Oaks NAP, 9.7 acres were acquired. The acres acquired are primarily covered with good quality Oregon white oak/Douglas fir forest, with a waterfall and occurrences of small-flowered trillium. This is the first conservation easement acquired on private land in the state Natural Areas system. Per the agreement, fee title will vest with DNR at the end of the seller's lives.

Cypress Island NRCA had two acquisitions: 1) 40.21 acres plus tidelands at Secret Harbor as part of the second phase of a two-phase project, and 2) 5 acres on the western shore surrounded by NRCA lands, the fifth of seven undeveloped lots that have been acquired adjacent to the NRCA.

At Stavis NRCA, 12.55 acres were acquired, consisting of two contiguous tax parcels, with an old cabin located on one of the parcels.

Transactions in closing are 4.9 undeveloped acres at Stavis NRCA, and 90 acres (with the Trust for Public Land) at Woodard Bay NRCA. There was discussion of the use of the fields, weed control and possible tree planting in the Woodard Bay acreage. It was mentioned that widgeons and bay ducks frequenting the area like open fields next to water.

## **V. Agency Reports (attached)**

All agency reports (Recreation and Conservation Office, Department of Ecology, State Parks and Recreation Commission, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources) were available in writing and handed out to participants.

## **III. Old Business**

### **Natural Heritage / Natural Areas Strategic Planning**

Gamon led a discussion about strategic planning for the Natural Heritage and Natural Areas programs (see outline attached). This discussion was precipitated by previous Council meetings at which Council members expressed uncertainty regarding how protection priorities were established. In particular, there was interest in a better understanding of how particular places were identified for our conservation efforts.

Eychaner suggested that people want assurance that we're working where we're needed most. There is also interest in knowing and understanding the methodology used to identify the places where conservation actions are needed.

Fimbel asked what the RCWs say with regard to the responsibilities and authorities of the programs. Speaks replied they are very broad. Natural areas are for research, reference, scenic value.

Kearney raised the issue of using tools in addition to acquisition, including incentives or cooperative agreements in lieu of acquisition – even as natural area augmentation. There was some discussion of conservation easement awareness.

There was discussion of the information gaps for both species groups and ecosystems. There was recognition of the need to fill those gaps as our capacity to do so increases.

Troutman expressed support for the value of what Natural Heritage provides, but stated that there is still a lot to be learned, using making better use of soils information to help protect our native biodiversity.

There was discussion of the processes used in determining where and when to go look at an area to establish needs for protection. Elements (species and ecosystems) are the basis for the protection/conservation priorities established by the Natural Heritage Program. Risk to those elements is critical in determining action. Funding and staff capacity are limiting factors.

Meier suggested developing our own (Natural Heritage Program/Council) 30-year plan (a reference to the Biodiversity Council's 30-year strategy). Fimbel indicated that the Natural Heritage Program raises the issues, but others help carry out the plan. Fimbel said it is critical to have a foundation of information; strategic planning is an important step for Natural Heritage. He suggested the Council have more meetings to devote to this. There was general agreement.

Gamon suggested taking another look at notes on strategic planning generated at the May meeting, sorting the list and continuing dialogue. Council members felt that more discussion is needed, including regarding the sideboards to a strategic plan and how that might differ from the Natural Heritage Plan. More explicit definition of terms (e.g., protection), and agreement on those terms, would also help. Another topic for discussion would be how to characterize the level of protection provided by various land use designations, such as wilderness area.

Black asked for a charge for the future. Gamon said that next meeting staff would bring some variety of approaches so we could have a more focused discussion on this issue and also the longer list from the Moses Lake meeting for long range. Rodrick suggested looking at the WDFW Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy criteria.

#### **VII. Natural Areas Program Report**

Pavola mentioned the addition of Jenifer Zarnoch to the Natural Areas Program staff.

#### **VII. Natural Heritage Program Report (attached)**

Gamon said the Natural Heritage Program is part of a pilot project between NatureServe and the National Geographic Society. It is a conservation guide to America's natural places. There have been some meetings already on the South Puget Sound landscape as one of the first landscapes to be featured on this website.

#### **VIII. Other Business**

Speaks said that as of June, there is a vacancy on the Council. She asked for nominations for the at-large position formerly held by Daniel Schindler. Roger Hoesterey, of the Trust for Public Lands, has been appointed by the Commissioner of Public Lands to serve on the Council as of June 1, 2007.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m. The next meeting is January 30, 2008, in Olympia.