

**Minutes of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council Meeting  
March 26, 2008**

Natural Resources Building, Room 172  
1111 Washington Street SE  
Olympia, Washington  
9:40 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.

**Approved: October 22, 2008**

Voting members present: Alan Black, Janelle Downs, Elizabeth Gray, Roger Hoesterey, Cherie Kearney, Bob Meier, Merrill Peterson (by phone), Wade Troutman. Ex-Officio members present: Steve Saunders for the Department of Natural Resources, Rob Fimbel for the State Parks and Recreation Commission, Jeanne Koenings for the Department of Ecology, Elizabeth Rodrick for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Jim Eychaner for the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation

Members absent: Cheryl Schultz

DNR staff present: Pene Speaks, John Gamon, Curt Pavola, Marsha Hixson, Anna Jones, Rex Crawford, Joe Rocchio, Dave Wilderman, Deborah Nemens, Joe Arnett, Bonnie Bunning, Janet Kearsley, Stan Kurowski, Allison Hitchcock

Guests present: Mickey Newberry, Fayette Krause, Heidi Eisenhour, Peter Bahls

**I. Introductions**

Chair Black called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. and participants introduced themselves. Pavola introduced Deborah Nemens, a new natural resource scientist in the DNR Natural Areas Program, and Alison Hitchcock, the new full-time natural areas manager in DNR's Northwest Region. Joe Rocchio, DNR's westside ecologist, was also introduced.

**II. Minutes of the March 14, May 31/June 1, and October 24, 2007 Meetings**

*It was moved by Troutman and seconded by Gray that the Minutes of the Meetings of March 14, May 31/June 1, and October 24, 2007 be approved as sent to the Council. The motion carried unanimously.*

**III. Old Business**

**Progress on Past Recommendations: Acquisitions Report**

No report was given on this agenda item.

**Proposed Trombetta Canyon Natural Area Preserve Map Update - attached**

Speaks explained that the Council had asked staff to define a boundary that was easier to describe legally and that would include the ecological features boundary. The revised map was sent out to the Council prior to the meeting. There was a brief discussion of the new boundary as presented. Staff is unaware of any controversy with other landowners. Speaks said that there will be a boundary hearing before the proposal is sent to the Commissioner of Public Lands.

*Chair Black called for a motion of approval of the proposed Trombetta Canyon Natural Area Preserve boundary as presented. Kearney so moved; seconded by Downs. Meier indicated he had voted against the boundary last time, but would abstain this time. The motion carried, with Meier and Troutman abstaining.*

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **Camas Meadows Status Report**

Gamon presented a Camas Meadows NAP status report. The primary features at the site are the Wenatchee Mountains checker-mallow (Priority 1) and the Wenatchee Mountains larkspur (Priority 2). A parcel of state trust land was recently approved for transfer to the NAP through the Trust Land Transfer program. This parcel contains populations of the priority species also found on the NAP. Field work to determine if other lands should be included in a boundary expansion will be conducted in late June through mid-July. There was a suggestion that the June Council field trip be in this area, or that a field trip be planned for late summer / early fall. Staff will likely bring a boundary expansion recommendation to the Council in October.

##### **Dabob Bay Natural Area Preserve Proposed Expansion**

(Peterson joined the meeting via conference call.) Gamon introduced the proposal and explained that since the late 1980s Dabob Bay NAP has been in DNR management. TNC also has a conservation easement that is included in the natural area. He also reminded the Council about a presentation given at the March 2007 Council Meeting by Peter Bahls from the Northwest Watershed Institute and Jacques White from The Nature Conservancy regarding the conservation values of the larger Tarboo Creek/Dabob Bay area. Since that time, DNR staff have met with several stakeholders in the area to discuss protection needs and roles of partners. The NHAC field trip was held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, 2008, attended by Council members Kearney, Meier, Grey; Fimbel, Koenings, and Rodrick; and led by DNR staff Crawford, with Speaks, Gamon, Wilderman, and Kearsley also in attendance. Peter Bahls also attended.

Speaks reviewed with the Council the criteria for designation as a natural area preserve, a natural resources conservation area, or for an NAP/NRCA combination. Gamon also reminded the Council of the process of bringing the boundary proposal to the Council, and upon favorable vote, then taking the proposal to public hearings before presenting the proposal, the hearing comments, and the staff recommendation to the Commissioner of Public Lands for a Commissioner's Order. Speaks said that there would be a public hearing regarding a proposed expansion of Dabob Bay NAP in Jefferson County. There was discussion about public use on NRCAs and what constitutes "low impact" use.

Crawford and Wilderman presented the Dabob Bay Natural Area Preserve (NAP) proposed expansion. The report is attached. There was discussion of many of the features, including bluffs, spits, streams, and drift cells. There was discussion of the proposed ranking of various polygons in the overall boundary proposal.

The Council discussed the priority for conservation, and the ownership of various areas, especially as related to access and use. Dabob Bay historically has been one of the most important areas in the Hood Canal for oyster production.

The order of priority parcels was discussed. Crawford said that the boundary was drawn at the customary high water mark. The area north and east of the proposal was discussed, as well as a

small section on the west, including the Preserve Creek drainage, which Gray proposed would be important to protect over time. There was discussion of which priority elements are being protected in which areas, and the need to have buffers. Working forest options were discussed. There was further discussion of which sections might be eligible for low impact public use. Koenings said that everything she has been reading indicates that Tarboo and Dabob Bays are very important, and the estuary as a whole should be in NRCA status. There was discussion about the role and potential use of conservation easements. There was discussion of additions to the proposed expansion area. Peterson proposed that today a vote be taken on NAP or NRCA or the design, recommending the priority 1 (P1) area indicated on the map as NAP or the whole area in NRCA.

Black asked if there was consensus that it be a NRCA/NAP combination. After some discussion, Black asked to resume the meeting after lunch.

At the resumption of the Council Meeting, Peterson rejoined by phone. Crawford gave a DNR staff recommendation that areas identified as Priority 1 on the map be proposed as an addition as NAP; and the designation of the rest of the proposed addition could be determined as part of the public process. There was also discussion about the Preserve Creek area to the northwest and an additional area to the northeast that Council members were also interested in conserving that would be included for the public input process as areas included in the Council discussion.

Kearney suggested the Priority 1 area on the map as NAP and the remaining red line as Natural Area. There was further discussion about the boundary, and how to present it in the public process.

*Peterson moved that the Council add P1 on the map to the [existing] NAP and P2-5 in a Natural Area, [with further] designation to be determined. Kearney seconded.*

Troutman suggested a separate motion for direction to staff. Peterson stated that in the general case, he favors NAP status, to elevate the area to a high priority for acquisition. Speaks indicated that the NAP should be first, but direction to the staff is standard practice, or implied.

*Black called the question. The motion passed with Bob Meier and Elizabeth Gray abstaining.*

Staff demonstrated on the map the portions under discussion for additional inclusion. Gamon asked for clarification of the motion: Is staff to take two choices to the public, or if there is an approved expansion, take that to the public?

*Troutman, with friendly amendments, moved that the Council agrees that the general outline, especially in the south and east, be preserved, and that the northeast and northwest boundary be determined after further staff and public input, then brought back to the Council. Hoesterey seconded the motion. Gray clarified with a friendly amendment that staff would put red dotted lines on the map going out to the public to indicate the areas the Council proposed to include.*

*The motion carried 6 ayes, 0 nays, with Elizabeth Gray and Bob Meier abstaining.*

## **VIII. Other Business**

### **Decide on Spring Meeting location**

The agenda order was changed so that the full Council could decide on the June meeting location. Speaks indicated that staff options were to include a Natural Areas / Natural Heritage Programs combined staff meeting the day before the Council meeting. Some options for meeting location are: 1) Wenatchee to see the Camas Meadows proposed expansion; 2) Olympia – more staff would be able to participate, and field trips could be arranged to Woodard Bay NRCA, Mima Mounds NAP, or the Chehalis River Surge Plain (management plan to be presented at the fall meeting); or 3) Suggestions from the Council. The consensus was to go to Camas Meadows with the meeting being in either Leavenworth or Wenatchee.

## **IV. New Business, continued**

### **Biodiversity 30-Year Conservation Strategy Overview**

Sarah Gage was introduced to the Council. She gave an overview of the history of the Biodiversity Council and the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. She mentioned that Gamon was lead author on the status and threats report published in January 2007. The Biodiversity Council defines biodiversity as “the full range of life in all its forms.” It has three broad initiatives: guiding investments on the land – a new tool for ecoregions; improving incentives and advancing markets for landowners; and engaging citizens to work with scientists. The Biodiversity Council has also completed two pilot projects and is planning a biodiversity “score card.” By Executive Order 08-02, the Biodiversity Council has been extended until June 30, 2010.

### **Chehalis River Surge Plain NAP Management Planning**

Davenport reported that a consultant was hired to help with the plan, and that a public meeting was held on November 14, 2007, where they introduced a timeline and took ideas. There was a stakeholder meeting later. She indicated that Representative Blake had attended both meetings. Davenport indicated that the draft plan is nearing completion, then it would be available for internal and stakeholder review. She asked if the Council desired to see it ahead of time. One of the issues is ongoing use, with a large group of hunters and fishers wanting access. There was discussion of not banning hunting or fishing, but acting on a case-by-case basis, and having an agreement with WDFW. Davenport is anticipating bringing the management plan to the Council in June. Meier asked to be informed of any future public meetings. Davenport said that she has also been working with the Tribes. There was more discussion of the kinds of fishing available, and the boating (canoe and kayak) use.

Meier complemented Kearsley and Davenport for their attendance at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (DNR) in Aberdeen, and that he “really appreciates your working with the public. Relations have improved tremendously over the years.”

### **Trust Land Transfer Process**

Anne Sharar explained the Trust Land Transfer process that coincides with the budget development for 2009-11. The Legislature is looking at lands suitable for NAPs and NRCAs, open space, or recreation. The Trust Land Transfer program will be sending a stakeholder

outreach letter from the Commissioner to contact Legislators, local government officials, organizations and individuals for recommendation of eligible/suitable lands.

After the DNR regions sort the suggestions, they send a list to Olympia to inform us of properties they would approve and their rejections because of timber value to stewardship significance. Common school trust lands are eligible for the transfer. The timber value is deposited in the common school construction account, while the land value is used by DNR for purchasing replacement land. They pay attention to land/timber value ratio, with a balance of 80% timber, 20% land on the aggregate list. The trust likes to get similar ecological properties. If someone would like to receive a nomination form, contact the Trust Land Transfer Program. The program wants to have signed agreements with recipients by mid-June.

Staff present indicated that properties with low timber value could be advanced with properties that had a lot of timber, in order to balance the list (*e.g.*, Upper Dry Gulch and Charley Creek).

## **V. Agency Reports**

### **Recreation and Conservation Office - oral**

Eychaner said that RCO retained a consultant to examine issues related to grantees' timeliness in completing projects. The issues include impacts to re-appropriations and staff work load. WDFW, DNR, and State Parks have a copy of the report. Pavola asked about the Legislative arena and Eychaner replied to Pavola's question that the Legislature is taking RCO's agency request legislation very seriously.

### **Department of Ecology – written**

Koenings reported that Ecology has received three National Coastal Wetland Grants for FY 08: \$1,000,000 for Pilot Point, a 35-acre acquisition on the Kitsap Peninsula; \$1,000,000 for the third phase of Tarboo/Dabob Bay in Hood Canal; and \$1,000,000 for the Queets River Estuary on the Quinalt Reservation. For FY 09, Ecology will be submitting six applications, all for acquisitions. We expect NOAA to announce in early to mid-May the opening of the CELCP (Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program) round of applications. Ecology is the state agency that submits applications on behalf of other state and local governments for coastal acquisitions. Projects can request up to \$3,000,000.

### **State Parks and Recreation Commission – written and oral**

Fimbel reported that State Parks is trying to complete vegetation community and rare plant surveys on all its lands that are greater than 100 acres by the end of the biennium. This effort was initiated several biennia ago with help from the WNHP. This information will be used to inform: a) park planning; b) identify priority species and plant associations needing protection and/or restoration; and c) identify areas containing large numbers of exotic species that may warrant restoration efforts. This information will be captured in a strategic protection and restoration plan that will be complemented by a similar effort addressing salmonid habitat issues across the park system.

The State Parks Commission is considering wetland restoration opportunities in the parks supported by wetland mitigation dollars through a mitigation bank. This is in the early stages of discussion. There is some concern associated with restoration efforts funded by large "box stores" mitigation monies and how the public might view this.

State Parks is going through a major reorganization, where regional operations managers will be assuming responsibility for regional capital staff. The new positions will be called district managers. The agency is also reinstating the Operations Assistant Director position that was removed several biennia ago. Finally, a number of other programs in headquarters may be going through realignment as a part of the reorganization process.

There were questions about the opportunity for public input on mitigation banking, and potential funding sources. Fimbel indicated that there will be public meetings regarding procedural guidelines. Fimbel also indicated that there were funds for monitoring and restoration work, and that State Parks may work with the Department of Transportation.

### **Department of Fish and Wildlife – written**

Rodrick reported that WDFW submitted a list of the 2008 proposed WWRP acquisition projects to the Recreation and Conservation Office in early March. There are ten projects in the Critical Habitat category totaling \$38.2 million, eight projects in the Riparian Protection category totaling \$10 million, two projects in the Urban Wildlife Habitat category totaling \$3.7 million, and one project in the Natural Area category for \$3 million. Several of these projects are being submitted for federal funding as well. WDFW will share this list with WADNR so we can coordinate on any projects that are of common interest to both agencies.

### **Department of Natural Resources – written**

#### Results of the recent legislative session

The department had several bills it requested or was following closely during this session. A couple of examples of particular interest are:

- HB 2472 - The agency asked for funding and direction to establish a recreation work group to help develop recommendations to improve recreation on state trust lands, aquatic lands and other lands managed by the department. The recommendations may include access on natural areas, though the primary intent is to help better manage recreation occurring on trust lands.
- HB 2844 – The “evergreen cities” bill was a collaboration with the department and environmental groups and will, among other things, include inventorying urban forests in several cities and counties throughout the state, establish an “Evergreen City” certification program, which will give eligible jurisdictions access to grant funds provided in the legislation and help develop model ordinances aimed at encouraging cities to retain trees and green space.

#### DNR Asset management strategy development

The department has been developing an asset management strategy for the uplands it manages throughout the state. This has included working with stakeholders and gathering landscape level information about maintaining working forests and agricultural lands. The work will result in identifying high priority areas for spending \$70 million, appropriated by the legislature for this biennium, to buy working forestlands that are at risk of conversion to development or other uses and will help the department determine what landscapes are priorities for maintaining working forests for the long-term.

#### DNR Recreation WAC update

The department has been working on revising its rules addressing public access and recreation on department-managed lands. The new language and format is much easier to read and understand.

The rules have been brought up to date to include some recreation activities that have gained popularity since the rules were first written in 1972. The department is expecting to have draft language for public review and comment in July.

#### DNR Aquatic lands HCP

The department is developing a habitat conservation plan for the state-owned aquatic lands it manages. The HCP will cover 22 animal species and address activities such as docks, marinas, log booming and storage, and aquaculture. The HCP will cover all 2.6 million acres managed by the department. The plan will identify good conservation measures that will be required for the activities addressed and may include recommendations to withdraw some areas from leasing in high priority habitat areas. An initial draft is in development for review by the authorizing agencies by the fall.

### **VI. Natural Areas Program Report – attached**

Pavola said that in addition to the scientist (Deborah Nemens) introduced earlier, the program has a new eastside scientist, Keyna Bugner, who will be working under Eastside Ecologist Priya Shahani. Upcoming events are the Mima Mounds Prairie Appreciation Day and the Columbia Hills Wagons and Wildflowers event, both on May 3.

### **VII. Natural Heritage Program Report**

Gamon reported that the Natural Heritage staff are in the middle of shrub-steppe inventory on trust lands with fragmented ownership. Staff has looked at the initial 200,000 acres of 400,000 acres of DNR lands. This has been a rapid assessment with at least one more field season needed. They are beginning to weigh in on trust land decisions, with positive interaction with other DNR land managers.

Gamon reported on the Natural Heritage Program's progress on Important Bird Areas (IBAs) work. Don McIvor has been hired as a half-time employee. The goal for this biennium is to establish IBA designation criteria and bring two IBAs to the Natural Heritage Advisory Council for approval.

Gamon mentioned that Natural Heritage is engaged in Landscape America, a project with NatureServe and National Geographic intended to inspire conservation on the local level. The website that will result from this effort is not meant to be natural heritage-centric, but as encompassing of other efforts as it can be.

Gamon provided Council members with copies of the Natural Heritage Plan. Kearney remarked that it was different from the old plan, accessible, easy, and beautiful.

### **VIII. Other Business**

Speaks said that some people have terms expiring at the end of June, so we need to know if they are interested in continuing on the Council. There is also still one at-large position on the Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.