DRAFT

Minutes of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council
JUNE 19, 2013
IN PERSON and TELECONFERENCE

NATURAL RESOURCES BUILDING
1111 WASHINGTON STREET SE
OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON
ROOM 432
JUNE 19, 2013
10:00 A.M. – 11:15 A.M.

Voting members present (on phone): John Banks, Len Barson, Al Black, Janelle Downs, Cherie Kearney (chair), Wade Troutman;
Ex Officio members present: Sarah Gage for RCO (in-person), Chris Hempleman (phone), Jed Herman (in-person)
Members absent: Peter Dunwiddie, Robert Meier, Rob Fimbel, Eric Gardner

DNR Staff: John Gamon, Heather Kapust, Curt Pavola, Pene Speaks,

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Kearney called the meeting to order at approximately 10:07. All attending introduced themselves, including those on the phone and present in-person. Remote on-line access was provided along with teleconference facilities.

II. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Minutes of April 16, 2013

The minutes of the April 16, 2013 council meeting were presented for approval. (The draft minutes had been distributed to the council prior to the meeting.)
A motion to approve the minutes of the April 16, 2013 meeting of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council as presented was made by Len Barson, seconded by Al Black. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Old Business

Progress on past recommendations

Kapust reported that during this reporting period of approximately two months, the Department acquired 6 properties at three natural areas totaling 39.52 acres and successfully spent $753,000 on land value, using grant funds (see handout). The sites were Dabob Bay Natural Area, Ink Blot Natural Area Preserve (NAP) and Stavis Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA). There was some brief discussion about differences in purchase prices. Kapust indicated that issues like access or zoning can influence final values of properties.

NH Plan update – Status Changes

Speaks provided the council with a status report on the update of the 2013 Washington Natural Heritage Plan. She reminded the council that they had approved a minimal update to the priorities listed in the plan which was intended to be submitted to the Washington Legislature. She explained that the process of review of the priority changes by the department's Executive Management had not been completed and that there has been discussion about not submitting the simplified list changes at this time. Meetings with Lenny Young, the department supervisor, and Kyle Blum, deputy supervisor uplands, have resulted in a proposal to wait to submit anything until a full revision of the NH Plan (similar to the 2007 publication) can be completed.

The council had some questions about when a plan revision might be completed. Herman and Gamon suggested it could take one to two years for completion. Speaks stated that the NH Program would need funding to support staff to complete a full update and revision of the plan. Executive Management has acknowledged that. If the full update proposal moves forward, staff will work with the council to identify the scope of changes and additions and any policy issues that should be included in a rewrite.

IV. New Business

Council Member Nominations

Speaks presented the list of nominations for council vacancies and acknowledged the work of the Nominations Committee. Council members received materials submitted by existing and potential new members prior to the meeting. Len Barson told the council he was stepping down due to changes at work. He also strongly supported Cathy Baker of The Nature Conservancy to fill the at-large position he was leaving. Dr. Heida Diefenderfer has submitted materials requesting appointment to the vacant scientist position. The committee suggested that Bob Meier be appointed to the vacant at-large position. His retirement from Rayonier makes him ineligible for continuing in the private forest land representative position.

The council considered the recommendations of the committee for each of the four vacancies in question.

John Banks: *A motion to recommend approval of reappointment of Dr. John Banks to another four year term, scientist position, was made by Len Barson, Al Black second. The motion passed unanimously.*

Cathy Baker: *A motion to recommend approval of appointment of Cathy Baker to a four year term, at-large position, was made by Al Black, Wade Troutman second. The motion passed unanimously.*

Heida Diefenderfer: *A motion to recommend approval of appointment of Dr. Heida Diefenderfer to complete the one year term, science position, was made by Len Barson, Al Black second. The motion passed unanimously.*

Bob Meier: *A motion to recommend approval of appointment of Robert Meier to complete the two year term, at-large position, was made by Al Black, Wade Troutman second. The motion passed unanimously.*

The private forest landowner representative position remains vacant. Speaks said she is doing some outreach to find candidates. She also indicated that the council's recommendations would go to the Commissioner of Public Lands at a meeting scheduled with him that afternoon.

Formalizing Council Recommendations

Council members discussed formalizing council recommendations in a letter format to send to the Commissioner of Public Lands. Members agreed it would be a good way to communicate the council's major actions. Chair Kearney asked staff to develop a template and begin using it as a way of providing the Commissioner with council recommendations. The letters will be signed by the council chair.

V. Agency Reports

Recreation and Conservation Office

Sarah Gage is filling in for Nona Snell. She mentioned that the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board is meeting Tuesday, June 25. The board's agenda includes approval of the funded grant projects in RCO's various grant programs. Since the Legislature has not passed a budget, the board will likely delegate approval authority to RCO Director, Kaleen Cottingham.

Department of Ecology

Chris Hempleman mentioned a number of grant projects the agency is submitting to the US Fish and Wildlife National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant Program. The projects include Ellsworth Creek (TNC) and Chehalis River Basin (Chehalis River Basin Land Trust). She is hoping that the NOAA Coastal and Estuary Land Conservation Program grant application process will start soon.

State Parks and Recreation Commission – No report

Department of Fish and Wildlife – No report

Department of Natural Resources

Jed Herman mentioned that the agency is waiting to see what the state legislative budget will include. Other department topics of likely interest were covered in discussions above.

VI. Natural Areas Program Report

Pavola brought attention to the Natural Areas Research Projects Report sent to council members. The report lists the number of research projects, both past and present, carried out on DNR managed natural areas (see handout). More than 400 projects have been under taken and at present there are 51 projects active on 28 natural areas. Pavola noted the memo heading "Future Research Interests" and suggested that the council keep these topics in mind as they interact with students and potential researchers since these are the topics that the program would pursue if funding was available, or through partnerships.

VII. Natural Heritage Program Report

Gamon told the council that the Natural Heritage Program was notified by EPA of a successful grant application for Phase 4 of the update of NHP wetlands data. This phase will include developing web-based products/methods to deliver NH wetland data to land use planners, consultants and others. Staff are working on a mobile app to allow access to rare plant information online. He also mentioned that the program received notification of an increase in USFWS funding for rare plant work.

VIII. Other Business

The next meeting of the council will be October 16, 2013 at the DNR "compound" in Olympia. A hearing for the proposed expansion of the Upper Dry Gulch NAP is planned for July. Council members will be notified.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:16