

## **Minutes of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council**

**January 27, 2010**

Office Building 2

1111 Washington Street Se

Olympia, Washington

Lookout Conference Room

9:30 A.M. – 2:50 P.M.

Voting members present: Al Black, Janelle Downs, Peter Dunwiddie, John Banks, George Rohrbacher, Wade Troutman. Ex Officio members: Jed Herman (Department of Natural Resource)s, Elizabeth Rodrick (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Jim Eychaner (Recreation and Conservation Office), and Rob Fimbel (State Parks and Recreation Commission)

Members absent: Len Barson, Bob Meier, Cherie Kearney, Jeanne Koenings (Department of Ecology)

DNR Staff: John Gamon, DeAnn Johnigk, Curt Pavola, Rex Crawford, Pene Speaks, Joe Arnett

Guest: Peter Goldmark, Commissioner of Public Lands; Sarah Gage, Recreation and Conservation Office

### **I. Introductions**

Chair Black called the meeting to order. All present introduced themselves.

### **II. Minutes of the October 21, 2010 Meeting**

A minor correction was made to the RCO Agency report prior to the final draft being distributed.

*Chair Black asked for a motion to accept the Minutes of the October 21, 2010 meeting. The motion was made by Peter Dunwiddie, seconded by Janelle Downs. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **III. Old Business**

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

DeAnn Johnigk reported on recent acquisitions made by the Special Lands Acquisition Program (see power point presentation). Purchases at Natural Areas included:

- Klickitat Canyon NRCA – Ladiges property of 128 acres;
- Mount Si NRCA – Stevenson and Allen properties of 31 and 10.3 acres respectively.

#### **Status of Registry Program**

John Gamon gave a brief update about the natural area registry program reminding the council about previous discussion on the subject. The Lummi Island Preservation Trust is interested in requesting natural area registry status for a parcel in their ownership. The parcel had been part of a NAP recommendation brought to the council by WA Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Gamon indicated that the NH program will likely bring a proposal to the next council meeting.

## **Status of Natural Resource Agency Reorganization**

This discussion was deferred. The council requested a copy of the Governor's Executive Order 09-07 Washington's Natural Resources Reform Initiatives be sent to them electronically.

### **IV. New Business**

#### **Introduction of the Commissioner of Public Lands**

(This agenda item occurred just after progress on past recommendations.)

The Commissioner of Public Lands (CPL) joined the NHAC to introduce himself and thank the council for their work. He specifically mentioned Dabob Bay NA, and Klickitat Canyon and the Middle Fork Snoqualmie NRCAs and the scientific information that went into those site designations. The Commissioner and the council had a discussion about the Natural Heritage and Natural Area Programs' budget with particular discussion about the NH Program. Other topics that were discussed included the recent legislative efforts toward reform of the natural resource agencies and the fate of the Washington Biodiversity Council. The council asked what would make the Commissioner's job easier. He responded by complimenting the science coming from the council and mentioned the need to do outreach to find support for the NH program. He indicated that he would welcome any creative ideas the council might have.

#### **Biodiversity Council Sunset/NHAC Role and Future Priorities**

Sarah Gage, Executive Administrator for the Washington Biodiversity Council (WBC) of the Recreation and Conservation Office, presented information about the Biodiversity Council, the council's accomplishments and the WBC projects that are in progress. The projects include developing a "Biodiversity Scorecard", developing a viewing tool for the Conservation Opportunity Framework maps, developing county planning information tools to support biodiversity conservation and management of the WBC website. She also talked about the WBC goals, focus and member composition.

The NHAC had a discussion about the role of the WBC compared to the NHAC and if potential existed to take on some the WBC responsibilities should that council be disbanded. There was some discussion about the scientific focus of the NHAC and that its scope is narrower than that of the WBC. There was concern voiced about wanting to maintain that focus and not jeopardize what has been so effective in the past. There was also mention of the WBC's focus on incentives and private land ownership, that it had more of an outreach and coordination role to a broader stakeholder group. Staff was asked to explore potential overlap of roles indicated in the Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the next NHAC meeting.

#### **Natural Heritage Budget/Charging for Data – Legislative Bill Request**

Gamon and Speaks gave an overview of the potential reductions to the Natural Heritage Program included in the state's supplemental 09-11 budget. The Governor's budget eliminated all of the general fund-state funding which would have a huge impact on the program. State funds are needed to match many of the federal grants the program uses to fund projects and staff. Speaks indicated that the Office of Financial Management suggested that the department pursue using NH information user fees as a way to help support the program. The agency developed a legislative bill that would give DNR the authority to charge fees for the delivery of NH data. There was some discussion about the concept of charging for ecological information that the program is trying to promote. Requiring payment could discourage entities, such as counties, that we want to use the data from doing so. The legislative session is in progress and the

outcome of the bill is unknown. Staff will keep council members apprised of the progress of the bill and the budget and let them know about any new developments.

## **V. Agency Reports**

### **Recreation and Conservation Office**

Jim Eychaner indicated that the Boating and Non-highway and Off-road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) grant programs will not be funded for the rest of the biennium due to the accounts being swept to fund other activities. He also indicated that the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program and Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account grants will have new requirements to comply with the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda priorities. He also mentioned a new report out from RCO, "Conservation Tools: An Evaluation and Comparison of the Use of Certain Land Preservation Mechanism" is available.

### **Department of Ecology**

Jeanne Koenings indicated that the notice of grant awards for federal programs administered by the department had been (were about to be?) released. She mentioned the National Coastal Wetland Conservation (NCWC) program and that five of the six Washington proposals had been funded.

### **State Parks and Recreation Commission**

Rob Fimbel indicated that the State Parks 2013 (anniversary) Plan has been guiding the department's operations. They are beginning to consider post 2013 planning. Natural resources stewardship is likely to get more emphasis. He will be developing criteria to help identify sites that need protection and may ask the NHAC for some review. The department is reviewing potential land parcels for disposal with the intent to shed some unwanted lands and raise revenue.

### **Department of Fish and Wildlife**

Elizabeth Rodrick discussed the agency's budget and indicated that the anticipated cuts for the biennium were not as high as feared. She mentioned that the agency will be implementing the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy from 2005 through a series of internal workshops. The intent is to incorporate the priorities from the strategy into agency work planning and help identify key partners. Downs and Dunwiddie asked to receive information about the workshops.

### **Department of Natural Resources**

Jed Herman introduced himself as the new DNR representative on the council. He is the Division Manager for the Forest Resources and Conservation Division, which includes the NH and NA programs. He indicated that he had a background in biology. He explained the supplemental budget process to the council indicating how mid-biennium cuts could be made. He is supporting the efforts to keep the Natural Heritage Program funded. Speaks mentioned that the department is working to finalize its Strategic Plan for 2010-2014.

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

See hand out

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

John Gamon talked about recent priority projects of the program including responding to the legislative issues regarding budget. The Natural Areas and Natural Heritage are developing outreach materials to help in messaging and defining the value of both programs. He also talked about the program's involvement in the Arid Lands Initiative which is a collaboration of several

public and private entities to develop conservation strategies for the shrub-steppe area of eastern Washington.

**VII. Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 PM PST