

**Minutes of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council  
June 9, 2010**

Lacey Community Center  
6729 Pacific Avenue SE  
Lacey, Washington  
Banquet Room  
9:45 A.M. – 3:55 P.M.

Voting members present: Len Barson, Al Black, Bob Meier, Peter Dunwiddie, John Banks, Cherie Kearney. 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: Janelle Downs, George Rohrbacher, Wade Troutman, Jeanne Koenings (Department of Ecology)

DNR Staff: John Gamon, Dave Bortz., Curt Pavola, Heather Kapust, Rex Crawford, Pene Speaks, Joe Arnett

Guest: Mark Sheehan, Whidbey Camano Land Trust

**I. Introductions**

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

**II. Minutes of the January 27, 2010, Meeting**

Minutes from the January meeting were not distributed but will be sent to the council and approved at a future meeting.

**III. Old Business**

**Progress on Past Recommendations: Acquisitions Report**

Heather Kapust presented the latest acquisition activities of the Special Lands Acquisition Program (see power point presentation). Purchases at Natural Area sites included:

- Stavis NRCA – several parcels of 5-10 acre size and one larger (Manke) 74 acre parcel;
- Mt. Si NRCA– Allen in-holding of 10 acres;
- Washougal Oaks NA – Dade property of 20 acres;
- Bone River NAP – TNC’s 10% interest in the 1991 purchase at the site.

She also reviewed the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grant projects for which DNR anticipates submitting grant applications: Admiralty Inlet NAP, Bone River & Niawiakum River NAPs, Dabob Bay NA, Dyer Haystacks & Two Steppe NAPs, Kennedy Creek NAP, Klickitat Canyon NRCA, Methow Rapids NAP, Mima Mounds NAP, North Bay NAP, Upper Dry Gulch NAP, Stavis NRCA, Middle Fork Snoqualmie & Mt Si NRCAs, Rattlesnake Mt.

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Scenic Area, Wannapum NAP and White Salmon Oak NRCA. These will be submitted in various categories for acquisition of land. The department is also requesting funding for restoration or development at Camas Meadows NAP, Woodard Bay NRCA, Trout Lake NAP, Chehalis River Surge Plain NAP, Cypress Island NRCA, Middle Fork Snoqualmie NRCA and Washougal Oaks NA.

#### **Overview: Interagency Strategy for the Pacific Northwest Natural Areas Network**

Curt gave an overview of the recently completed “Interagency Strategy for the Pacific Northwest Natural Areas Network”. The strategy was developed through a collaboration of federal and state natural area management agencies including the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. Curt distributed hard copies of the Strategy. The document was published last fall and was the subject of a session at the Natural Areas Association Conference in Vancouver, WA. As part of the implementation of the outreach strategy recommendations, the first NA Appreciation Day will be held June 19. The document is intended to be a workplan for natural areas agencies.

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

The council had a discussion about the Washington Biodiversity Council (WBC), which will sunset at the end of June 2010 (this month). A table was handed out to the council regarding WBC/NHAC duties. Council members expressed an interest in pursuing the NHAC taking on some of the responsibilities of the WBC. There was concern expressed about the NHAC maintaining the operational focus of working directly with the Natural Heritage and Natural Areas programs on implementing program objectives. A course of action to pursue a potential role for the NHAC in the WBC strategy implementation was considered. Len Barson, Cherie Kearney, Elizabeth, Rob Fimbel, and Al Black volunteered to participate in an *ad hoc* group.

*Len Barson made a motion to direct staff and possibly a council sub-committee to consider the potential areas that the NHAC could take on to bring back to the October meeting; Cherie Kearney seconded; motion passed unanimously.*

Pene Speaks will consult with DNR’s Executive Management about support for a potential NHAC role. She will convene the group to develop options.

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

##### **Presentation of the Completed Puget Sound Pocket Estuary Restoration and Stream Re-channelization Project at Stavis NRCA**

Michele Zukerberg gave a presentation on the restoration work at the Stavis NRCA to recreate a pocket estuary on the site. (see power point presentation)

##### **Proposed Expansion of Admiralty Inlet (“Naas”) NAP**

Rex Crawford and Mark Sheehan, representing the Whidbey Camano Land Trust, presented a recommendation for an expansion of the existing NAP – the council was sent a draft proposal in advance of the meeting, a final recommendation document was handed out at the meeting. A

power point presentation was given by Sheehan with input from Crawford. (See recommendation and power point documents.)

The presentation included information about golden paintbrush (*Castellja levisecta*) and older Douglas fir- western hemlock/oceanspray – swordfern forest habitat found in the expansion area. The parcel being considered for expansion is subdivided into five lots and is at risk of being sold by the university for revenue to build a conference center adjacent to the proposed site.

Discussion: Some questions arose about adding a different habitat type (forest) to the existing preserve and whether the expansion proposal was comprehensive enough. Other potential prairie restoration sites on the island which are now in pasture were mentioned. There was also some discussion about potential funding for acquisition.

Sheehan also gave a brief overview of the management of the existing Admiralty Inlet “Nas” Preserve. The Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT) manages the site to support the golden paintbrush population. The land trust planted a thousand paintbrush plants when the initial preserve property was purchased and they have continued to augment the population over the past several years. The seeds of plants grown to be added to the existing population are from the site. A full prairie restoration has happened at some areas of the existing site and is continuing including the installation of 8-10 species of other native plants.

The Natural Heritage Advisory Council is being asked to approve a boundary expansion of the existing site to include the areas presented today: the population of the golden paintbrush and the older forest area.

*Cherie Kearney moved to approve the proposed expanded boundary; Len Barson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **Lummi Island Registry Nomination**

John Gamon gave a presentation (see power point presentation) regarding a request from the Lummi Island Heritage Trust to the council to approve the registration of a natural area on Lummi Island. Gamon reviewed the Natural Heritage registry program (see 79.70 RCW) and how registry sites were identified and recognized when the program was active. The program has been dormant for about 10 years and no sites have been registered in that time. The council received information at a previous meeting regarding a potential registry request and indicated their desire to review registry sites for possible approval. Gamon reviewed the previous conservation history of the site including that it was part of a NAP designation request from WA Department of Fish and Wildlife. The land trust wants recognition of the site having “natural area” value. Natural Heritage scientists visited the site to confirm that conditions are appropriate for natural area designation.

There was some discussion about the registry program and the potential to use it as a tool for conservation and to recognize the role of private landowners in ecological protection. The program has been used successfully in the past to move important sites into long term conservation.

*Bob Meier made a motion to add the Lummi Island Baker Mountain Ranch site to the registry of Natural Areas; Peter Dunwiddie seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **Natural Heritage Plan Update**

The Natural Heritage Plan is scheduled to be updated for the 2011-2013 biennium. There is a statutory requirement in 79.70 RCW to update the plan every two years. There was a discussion about what approach to take to the plan update given the recent budget and staff reductions to the NH program. Concern was raised about program capacity and appearing to produce the same amount of work with reduced resources. There was also some discussion of the continuing need to find support for the program. Further discussion will be included in the October NHAC meeting and an approach decided for the program to proceed.

## **V. Agency Reports**

### **Recreation and Conservation Office**

Jim Eychaner indicated that the RCO is unique in the country at the state level. No other state has an agency focused solely on grant funding distribution. He also stated that grant evaluation season is now in full swing. Some grant processes have been changed from in-person grant presentations to paper-only evaluations to save money. RCO is rewriting the acquisition policy manual (#3). It will be available for review in the fall. Some of the changes being considered include what appraisal standards to use and allowable secondary uses of purchase properties. He is working on a sustainability effort for recreation in the state and considering what is sustainable from a recreation perspective. The boating program is under scrutiny to look at funds coming in and services going out and to consider the future need for those programs.

### **Department of Ecology**

See handout/e-mail from Jeanne Koenings.

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

Rob Fimbel indicated that the agency is recruiting for a new director. He also mentioned that he is working on an agreement for a “sustainability forester” for forest health management on State Parks lands with Center for Urban Horticulture.

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

Elizabeth Rodrick indicated that the department is working hard on their WWRP proposals. They have eight proposals for \$17.8 million in Critical Habitat, \$8.6 million in Riparian Protection and \$4.7 million in Urban Wildlife Habitat categories. Letters of intent were just received for the Federal Endangered Species Act, Sec. 6 program. There are 10 project proposals asking for about \$30 million. The final applications are due at the end of July. She is working on updating DFW’s MOU for natural area preserves with DNR. The MOU has not been updated since 1987. The proposed revision is with DFW Executive Management. The MOU for natural areas may be wrapped into a master MOU that the agencies are working on for a number of other issues. DFW is also trying to take a look at the six NAPs they manage to update the management plans for them. Rodrick indicated that she will be working on that.

## **Department of Natural Resources**

Jed Herman gave an overview of the recently published DNR Strategic Plan which will guide agency priorities for next 5 years. He reviewed a summary of goals and tasks. Strategies for developing a shrub steppe conservation strategy, funding the NH/NA programs, and the aquatic reserve program were particularly highlighted. The focus is on newer initiatives in the strategy though the core work of forestry and revenue production are assumed to be priorities of the department. Herman also mentioned the legislative wrap up and the bill to charge a fee for NH data. The approach was suggested by OFM but the bill was defeated. The agency is waiting to see if there will be any specific direction for this coming legislative session. We will be strategizing for the upcoming budget cycle.

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

See handout – update of projects and other information

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

John shared information about the end of the legislative session: the program lost \$150,000 in GF-S but the funds were replaced by the using NRCA Stewardship account funds. The program still needs to raise money to support existing staff and to fill in existing gap in funding that was there at the beginning of the biennium. Gamon indicated that he is pretty confident that the program will fill the gap with help from St. Parks, WDFW, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Defense and others. NH has more than two dozen grants that staff are working on at the moment. He mentioned two EPA grant requests that are pending, a grant to update NH wetland information and doing an ecological integrity assessment for Puget Sound.

### **VIII. Other Business**

Speaks mentioned that there was a bill passed that would prohibit agencies from paying per diem for board and council members. There will be more discussion about potential impacts to the NHAC and what options we might have for future meetings.

She also mentioned that we are recruiting for a vacant scientist position on the council.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55pm PDT.