

Minutes of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council

October 20, 2010

Revised Location & Teleconference

Natural Resources Building

1111 Washington Street Se

Olympia, Washington

Room 461

9:35 A.M. – 11:10 A.M.

Voting members present: (on phone) Len Barson, Al Black, Bob Meier, Janelle Downs, Peter Dunwiddie, Cherie Kearney, Wade Troutman (participated for agenda item I. and II.). Ex Officio members: Jed Herman (Department of Natural Resources), Jeanne Koenings (Department of Ecology), Elizabeth Rodrick (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), and (on phone) Rob Fimbel (State Parks and Recreation Commission)

Members absent: John Banks, George Rohrbacher, Jim Eychaner (Recreation and Conservation Office),

DNR Staff: John Gamon, Curt Pavola, Pene Speaks

I. Introductions

Chair Black called the meeting to order. All present introduced themselves or identified themselves as they joined the conference call.

II. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the January 27, 2010, meeting

Minutes of the June 9, 2010, meeting

Note: The scheduled March 10, 2010 meeting was cancelled

Minutes from the January and June meetings were distributed prior to the meeting.

*Chair Black called for a motion regarding the Minutes of the previous two meetings:
(Voting was accomplished by members on the teleconference stating their names for “aye” votes.)*

Troutman moved, Dunwiddie seconded that the Minutes of the January 27, 2010, Meeting of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council be approved as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Kearney moved, Dunwiddie seconded that the Minutes of the June 9, 2010 Meeting of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council be approved as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Old Business

Progress on Past Recommendations: Acquisitions Report

Pavola presented information on a single acquisition of 15 acres at the Chehalis River Surge Plain Natural Area Preserve (NAP) (see Holbrook-Anderson map).

DNR application status for Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grants

Pavola summarized the evaluation rankings of grant applications submitted by the department to the Recreation and Conservation Office for funding in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. He provided a chart of the projects and indicated which would receive funding at different budget appropriation levels (see the Natural Areas Report).

IV. New Business

Future meetings and travel for the Natural Heritage Advisory Council

The council discussed the format and frequency of future council meetings. There is a prohibition on spending state general fund money to reimburse per diem costs for members of boards, commissions and councils. Therefore the Natural Heritage (NH) and Natural Areas (NA) Programs cannot pay council member costs to attend meetings. The prohibition established through legislation (ESSHB 2617) expires at the end of June 2011. It is unknown if the prohibition will be extended beyond that date. Per diem also cannot be reimbursed for time spent on field trips to review new or expansion natural area projects. Several points were made during the discussion including the goal of substantive participation by council members; consideration of time spent by staff to organize meetings; the accountability provided by the council, especially the field review for new site recommendations; the need to reserve time on members calendars for meeting in anticipation of actions the council needs to take and having the motivation of set timelines for staff to complete projects.

The council decided to set meetings for the year, as they have traditionally, with some variation. Meetings will be planned for January as a teleconference, for March(or April) as a combined in-person or remote (for those unable to travel) meeting in Olympia, for the summer meeting in July with an option for a field trip if funding is available, and for an October meeting with the format to be determined. DNR staff will identify the best days for each meeting by sending out an on-line "Doodle Poll" for council members to fill out.

Chair Black asked for a motion to set the council meeting dates for 2011 as indicated above. Barson moved, Kearney seconded that the meetings of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council for 2011 be scheduled to comply with the agreed on dates and formats. The motion passed unanimously.

Natural Heritage Plan Update

Gamon brought the topic of updating the Natural Heritage Plan to the council for discussion. The Natural Heritage Program is directed by statute to update the plan every two years. Gamon used the hard copy of the 2009 update as an example for updating the plan for 2011. He suggested doing a primarily web-based document using the same format as the 2009 update. Much of the information included in the 2009 document does not need to be changed. Updating the priority status of NH features tracked in the database would be limited to those species and ecosystems for which program scientists have already gathered information. The updated list of all natural heritage features would continue to be available through the program's website. The 2011 update document would include only those species and ecosystems whose status has changed since the 2009 update was produced. There would be new information added about NH priority projects and any areas that have been added to existing and new natural areas.

The council advised the program to keep revisions to the "absolute minimum" considering reduced staff capacity and funding cuts for this type of program activity. The council also encouraged staff to use the update to highlight how the NH program is contributing to several

cutting edge statewide projects such as the Arid Lands Initiative and the Biodiversity Scorecard (these could be topics to discuss at future NHAC meetings, too). The update can also be used for marketing purposes. Delivery of the plan should include hard copies for each legislator.

Gamon proposed and the council agreed that NH staff would revise the status of NH features with the whole list being accessible on-line; the update document will contain information on features whose priority status has changed and other new information in the same format; the revised document will be submitted to the council in December and the January council meeting will include an agenda item for approval of the document.

V. Agency Reports

Recreation and Conservation Office – not available

Department of Ecology

Koenings announced that DNR's Dabob Bay Natural Area project ranked number one in the nation for a federal conservation grant under the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. The project grant request was for \$ 3 million. The grant application was a collaboration between The Nature Conservancy, Northwest Watershed Institute and the Natural Areas Program. She also mentioned that a DFW project in Oakland Bay was ranked 13th in the same program.

State Parks and Recreation Commission

Fimbel referred council members to the written report (see State Parks Agency report).

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Rodrick indicated that the DFW was in the process of updating the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with DNR regarding natural area preserves. The internal review of the MOU is complete and it has been sent to executive staff. The document will be coming to DNR for review soon. The natural area preserves language is not being incorporated into a larger MOU between the agencies as part of the natural resources agency reforms directed by the Governor's office. It was determined that this should be a stand-alone MOU. It includes a provision for review of management plans and a dispute resolution process. The MOU regarding NAPs has not been updated since before the Departments of Wildlife and Fisheries were merged into the present Department of Fish and Wildlife. Rob Fimbel, State Parks, requested a copy as well.

Department of Natural Resources

Herman mentioned that the department is preparing for the coming legislative session. He indicated that it will likely be a very tough budget year again. The NA and NH programs likely will need to find support to maintain the status quo.

VI. Natural Areas Program Report: See written report

VII. Natural Heritage Program Report: See written report (sent to council members after the meeting)

VII. Other Business

Bob Meier indicated that rule making was underway for the DNR Riparian Open Space Program to allow the state to purchase permanent easements from forest land owners. This will provide more opportunities for conservation. The rules are now open for public comment and are available on DNR's Forest Practices Division website.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 am PDT.

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Approved: January 27, 2011