



Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve

Implementation Committee Meeting Summary

Prepared by Birdie Davenport

November 7, 2019, 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Civic Center Building, Garden Room, 322 N Commercial Street, Bellingham

Participants: Birdie Davenport, Betty Bookheim, Dave Palazzi, Erica Bleke, Ross Zimmerman, Dennis Clark, Christina Maginnis (Department of Natural Resources); Lyle Anderson, Diane Hollands, Kim Clarkin, Steve Colson, Marie Hitchman, Rick Hann, (Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Citizen Stewardship Committee); Elizabeth Kilanowski (Whatcom County MRC); Derek Vilar (Natural Resources, Lummi Nation); Mike McKay, Bert Rubash (citizens); Michael Kyte (Cherry Point Lead Naturalist); Andrew Gamble, Travis Linds (Petrogas); Eleanor Hines, Heather Conkerton (ReSources for Sustainable Communities); Todd Sandell, Brendan Brokes (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife); Kurt Baumgarten (Port of Bellingham), Dan Eisses (Birch Bay Water and Sewer District); Fred Felleman, (Friends of the Earth)

1:00 p.m.

Welcome & Introductions, Meeting Agenda

Birdie Davenport, Aquatic Reserves Program Manager, *Department of Natural Resources*

- Focus of the meeting is a presentation about recent Cherry Point herring research, updates on DNR work in Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve, and the upcoming Management Plan Update

1:15 p.m.

Background on original Cherry Point management plan and work group

Dave Palazzi, Aquatic Resources Planning Program Manager, *Department of Natural Resources*

- The Aquatic Reserves Program was established under Doug Sutherland as a settlement to litigation regarding the earlier establishment of the six Reserves by previous Commissioner Belcher.
- The Cherry Point Implementation Committee started as “The Work Group” tasked with determining if CP should continue to be a Reserve or have measures integrated into the Whatcom County SMP revisions. The work group met monthly and developed the elements of the current Plan that was adopted by DNR under Commissioner Goldmark in 2010.
- The Implementation Committee spent a lot of time developing the management elements of the plan. It was suggested that the current CPIC consider some of the elements from the 2010 plan when working on the plan update.

1:30 p.m.

Report: Cherry Point Herring Research, Next Steps

Todd Sandell, Senior Forage Fish Biologist, *Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife*

- There was a 2019 decline in Puget Sound herring stocks largely due to Quilcene Bay (Hood Canal) returning to normal levels. Quilcene Bay stock is still the largest stock in Puget Sound.
- This was a highly erratic year for Pacific Herring spawn with timing of most spawning being late. There was a spawn at Point Whitehorn in late March in 2019; this has not happened in more than 20 years and was captured thanks to aerial photos taken by Mike McKay. Huge numbers of the nudibranch *Melibe leonina* found on eelgrass/spawn in Birch Bay. Genetic results have not come back yet to determine which stock this spawn was from, but may be back by Christmas of this year. There was a spawning event at Sandy Point in early April with tide so high, eggs were found in lawns. With the heavy spawn came heavy grazing by predators.
- Future and ongoing projects:
 - 1) Proposal will be turned in tomorrow (11/8/19) for a Predator Exclusion Study 2020-2021 to test avian exclusion devices to lower egg mortality. Three separate enclosures will be installed at Birch Head: one enclosure with and one without netting (control) and an enclosure with no frame or netting (second control). A deeper enclosure may also be tested to try to encourage herring to spawn deeper to deter gulls, etc. They are hoping to do concurrent dive surveys to measure egg density and survival, and bird surveys to determine number of birds.
 - 2) Kathryn Sobocinski, WWU; Scott Pearson, Kyle Spragens of WDFW; Tessa Francis, UW - Avian predator-associated egg survival.
 - 3) Larval fish surveys – there is a major data gap here. Hoping that the use of light traps for forage fish/herring larvae will help fill gap.
 - 4) 2019-2020 Megan Russel and Brady Olson, WWU - elevated pH and temperature on larval smelt by examining yolk exhaustion rates and feeding behavior at lower pH and temperature. Her temperatures are set as high as 18 and 20 degrees Celsius since we are already seeing 16 degrees Celsius in Birch Bay when herring are spawning.
- Information from questions: 2019 herring spawn was up 9% from 2018. WDFW would like to start implementing drone footage to track spawning, but lacks sufficient funds at this time.

2:10 p.m. Break

2:20 p.m.

[Aquatic Reserve Program Reports](#)

Birdie Davenport, Aquatic Reserves Program Manager, *Department of Natural Resources*

- Recent staff changes: Caleb Dobey took a new position with the DNR in geoduck leasing, which resulted in the hiring of Erin Stehr, Puget SoundCorps Team Lead, in addition to hiring the new PSC team. Jamie Kilgo has moved on to the National Parks Service. Her position was advertised and interviews will be completed in November.
- Light trap update – Petrogas & BP will possibly provide funding. Along with WDFW, DNR would also like to partner with Lummi Nation to make this a multi-partner project at Cherry Point in the future. Light traps would be buoy based, as opposed to attached to piers as the piers are too far from spawning areas. (Perhaps BP pier is appropriate, but not the others.) The project will take more funding than we initially thought, so Birdie is readjusting and looking into a pilot

project in 2020, followed by starting the actual project in 2021. This would align the project to be paired with the bird exclusion project.

- Nisqually Reach Aquatic Reserve expansion proposal will add 4500 acres to the reserve and connect county parks and land trust areas to the aquatic reserve.
- Cherry Point Management Plan Update – There will be at least two more meetings of this group to gather new information from the past 10 years: science, restoration, creosote reduction, protection, cultural use, outreach & education, leasing changes, etc. Adjusting vision for next ten years and reviewing the vision and goals to tighten up the document and make it more usable. The next meeting will be a working meeting and the second meeting would be to review and refine the draft. (Perhaps a third meeting in 2020 due to the amount of work anticipated.) Birdie will make a personal attempt to make sure include tribes and industry are represented in these meetings. The next meeting will be in January or February. Birdie will send out a Doodle poll to follow-up. (Goals and Objectives from the 2010 plan were posted on the walls with an opportunity to make initial comments.)

2:50 p.m.

Ross Zimmerman, Aquatic Land Manager for Whatcom and West Skagit Counties, DNR Orca-Straits District

Ross summarized the following DNR land management activities in and adjacent to the Reserve since the last CPIC meeting in June:

- Petrogas, BP, and Phillips 66 compliance visits: Petrogas upgraded their fender system which is now composed of steel rather than rubber, installed grated walkways which replaced wooden walkways, and quickly removed plant material from the pier and covered holes in the alumina ore conveyor. They are making continued efforts to replace creosote pilings with inert pilings. BP has made seemingly successful use of bird deterrents and provided DNR with their most recent pier inspection report upon DNR's request. Phillips 66 is working to remove plant growth on wood causeway and the causeway is to be replaced, in segments over the next five years, for the first time since 1964.
- Birch Bay buoy tagging: Only four buoys and one boat were tagged this time. DNR is hoping that means that previous outreach has been working. Steve Colson, a community member from Point Whitehorn, brought up the fact that he thinks that there needs to be more public outreach about WHY buoys are no longer allowed on this aquatic land. Staff noted that prior to the initial compliance efforts, DNR had sent letters to all waterfront property owners abutting the Reserve and had had extensive communications regarding the reasons with those neighbors who have expressed concern previously.
- Petrogas dredge proposal: Sediment has been accumulating at the face of the pier to the point where vessels now have to leave the dock at certain low tides, and re-berth once incoming tides allow them to do so. Historically, there were two mooring buoys to the west of the pier with concrete sinkers attached to their rode. Over time, wave action raised and lowered these sinkers from the bottom, causing sediment plumes, which have created depressions about 15 feet deep (found with bathymetry surveys). Petrogas has proposed to dredge the sediment that has accumulated at the pier and use that sediment to fill the holes created by the concrete sinkers. The sediment must be sampled and meet Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) requirements for open water disposal prior to being placed in the depressions. The

area has not been dredged since 1966 and they are hoping that this will be the only time they will have to do this as water flow has been improved with the replacement of part of the pier, which should decrease sediment deposition in the area in the future.

3:10 p.m.

Partner Updates

- The Cherry Point Science Forum is this Saturday Nov. 9th (follow up note– science forum had 50+ attendees)

3:30 p.m. Adjourn