



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources
Peter Goldmark - Commissioner of Public Lands

Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Implementation Committee Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2015, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Ecology Bellingham Field Office

PARTICIPANTS: Elizabeth Kilanowski, Bert Rubash, Austin Rose, Steve Irving (Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee), Wendy Steffensen (ReSources), Amy De Vera (ERM), Michael Kyte (Cherry Point Marine Biologist/Consultant), Fred Felleman (Friends of the Earth), Kyle Loring, Bill Beers, Marie Hitchman, Lyle Anderson (Cherry Point Citizen Stewardship Committee), Cat Curran (Nautilus Environmental), Gary Stoyka (Whatcom Public Works), Dan Eisses (Birch Bay Water and Sewer District), Chad Yunge (Department of Ecology), Melinda Gray (AMEC, SSA Marine), Lesli Higginson (BP), Raina Clark, Kathryn Mitchell, Chase Carter (Alcoa-Intalco Works), Birdie Davenport, Dennis Clark, Betty Bookheim, Jamie Kilgo (Washington State Department of Natural Resources [DNR]), Baxter Sequin (DNR/Puget SoundCorps)

INTRODUCTIONS:

1. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) opened the meeting with introductions followed by the purpose and agenda for the meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS:

2. Aquatic Reserve Puget SoundCorps Update, Baxter Sequin
 - *Forage fish beach spawn surveys* – ten samples are collected monthly from each reserve, with results submitted to WDFW. 230 samples collected with surf smelt spawning confirmed in 30 samples since October 2012. No sand lance eggs have so far been observed at Cherry Point. [Data is entered into WDFW database. Online map available at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/research/projects/marine_beach_spawning/]
 - *SeagrassNet* – monitoring protocol used globally to assess the health of seagrass habitats. One transect is located in Birch Bay and is sampled quarterly. Ongoing.
 - *Ephemeral Sediment Sampling* – Sediment sampled at 3 locations (Birch Bay, Point Whitehorn, Gulf Road). Tested for 58 petroleum based compounds. No concentrations at levels of concern.
 - *Marine debris removal* - an estimated 307 lbs of trash have been removed from Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve beaches during 14 clean-up events.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Comment: The site near Point Whitehorn Marine Park is not located on an accretion beach. Consider relocating site to accretion beach, possibly Neptune Beach.

3. Management Action Implementation Work Plan Progress

- a) *Herring* – 2015 Age Structure and Biomass Assessment Study Discussion, Betty Bookheim
- DNR organized the Cherry Point Herring Science Panel in response to the Committee’s request for the formation of a technical working group focused developing a research plan to study Cherry Point herring stock declines. Panel was composed of research scientists. The study selected will determine spawning stock age composition, size class structure and verify stock identification of fish collected. Adult Cherry Point pre-spawning/spawning fish will be collected at 3-4 separate sample times during spawning season between April 26 and May 30. Sampling will be completed using lampara net to minimize mortality. Fish will be processed for length, weight, sex, maturity stage, scale and otoliths for age determination. A subsample of collected fish will be used for genetic sample analysis to verify stock identification. Other proposed studies were very expensive.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Question about how this study will help
 - Response: It will give us current age class structure of the spawning herring population and captures the full spectrum of potential ages of fish that spawning. Builds our base of knowledge and gives present-day status report. Will also give comparative benchmark to other Puget Sound stocks.
- Discussion of how the Cherry Point herring stock is grouped in the new status report.
- Concern about the process by which the study was selected. Comment that other studies may have provided more information.
 - Response: It is a first step and since the program is small with limited funding, this was the study that was most appropriate.

- b) *Stormwater/outfalls* – Cherry Point Shoreline Assessment, Jamie Kilgo
- January 2013 - committee prioritized management actions relating to stormwater and outfalls, and recognized the need to determine current status of stormwater management and identify opportunities to reduce impacts.
 - August 2013 Initial Shoreline Assessment - Comprehensive survey of existing outfalls, tightlines, and other stormwater discharges within and adjacent to the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve shoreline
 - March 2014 - Wet Season Assessment and Stormwater Sampling
 - September 2014 - Shoreline characterization follow-up – clarify classifications of drainages, seeps, other inputs
 - December 2014 - Wet Season Assessment and Stormwater Sampling
 - 6 stormwater outfalls sampled for Metals (As,Cd,Cr,Cu,Pb,Hg,Mo,Ni,Se,Zn), fecal coliform, Gasoline, diesel, heavy hydrocarbons

- Stormwater outfalls – nothing of concern. Slightly elevated copper and zinc concentrations at outfall in Birch Bay. Consistent with road runoff.
- 10 tightlines sampled for fecal coliform
 - Tightlines – fecal concentrations generally low. Slightly elevated fecal concentration south of Point Whitehorn.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Question about location of outfalls and difference between an outfall and tightline
 - Response: Tightlines are typically a continuous length of pipe down a steep slope, at Cherry Point they are often used to drain residential properties and are generally smaller diameter [showed picture]
- c) *Education and Outreach* – Citizen Stewardship Committee (CSC) work, Wendy Steffensen
- Overview of CSC outreach programs and citizen science projects [presentation attached]
 - Citizen Science projects:
 - *Intertidal biota surveys* – transects located at Sea Net, Point Whitehorn, Intalco Beach and Neptune beach are monitored annually. Surveys include beach elevation and slope, substrate type, percent cover and biota identification. [reports are posted on DNR aquatic reserve program website and aquaticreserves.org]
 - *Bird surveys* – survey sites at South Cape, Neptune Beach, and Gulf Road. [reports are posted on DNR aquatic reserve program website and aquaticreserves.org]
 - *Sea star surveys* – survey site at Point Whitehorn. Document species, size and presence of disease.
 - Community outreach:
 - *Cherry Point Forum* – annual forum held most recently in November 2014 and open to the community. Presentations on vessel traffic and status of Cherry Point herring. Forum was well attended and well received.
 - *Signs* - Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve wayfinder sign installed at Gulf Rd. and hope to install additional signs at Birch Bay State Park. Plans to develop interpretive sign for Point Whitehorn Marine Park.
 - *Stormwater education* – Planning “Don’t drip and drive” events, interested in discussing possibility of holding events at adjacent industries. Alcoa expressed interest.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Recommended wayfinder sign at Neptune Beach access

d) *Next steps*

- Accomplishments:

- Shoreline assessments
- Outfall and tightline wet weather sampling
- Cherry Point herring study underway
- Creosote removal
- Sponsored Mussel Watch cages
- Marine debris removal
- Seagrass Net surveys quarterly
- Forage fish beach spawning surveys monthly
- Ephemeral sediment sampling
- Wayfinder sign installation
- Ongoing citizen science projects (Intertidal, bird surveys, sea star surveys)
- Education and outreach – CSC events, forum, signage in development

DISCUSSION OF NEXT STEPS:

- Sediment sampling – Consider that fine sediments at lower tidal elevations may exhibit greater oil accumulation in the case of a spill. -10 is where you might find accumulations. Discussion of the role of industries in sampling. Add sample site at Neptune Beach.
- Stormwater monitoring – discussed repeating this monitoring every 2 years. Contact Birch Bay WARM group that samples in this area and coordinate with them.
- Anthropogenic characteristics need to be monitored more closely. Outlined in management plan. Summary reports of vessel traffic, spills, booming etc.
- Mussel watch expansion – would like for this to continue
 - Response: We will sponsor a cage if the Mussel Watch expansion project continues in 2015

4. *Alcoa-Intalco Works Partner update* - Kathryn Mitchell, Chase Carter, Cat Curran, Raina Clark

- Discussed the Cherry Point facility and role in aluminum production
- Discussed use of renewable resources, such as wind energy, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Outlined how the facility has reduced water consumption since 2004 and described natural stormwater management system.
- Described the annual herring bioassay testing of effluent
- Discussed community engagement and grant opportunities

DISCUSSION:

- Comment: Committee would like to hear more about the connection between operations authorized by DNR (such as the leased marine terminals) and the goals and objectives of the reserve. General suggestion that understanding the relationship between the industries and DNR would help the committee feel more informed. Include examples in regular updates.
 - Response: In the case of Alcoa-Intalco, DNR has worked with the lessee to set conditions for upgrades/repairs to the pier. The pier is a treated wood structure that can't easily be replaced and thus is maintained over time. To reduce introduction of toxics to the marine environment immediately adjacent to the reserve, DNR now is requiring that future wooden pilings must be encased to

avoid leaching from treated wood. This is an example of how DNR finds ways to reduce the environmental impact of leased operations on the environment and the Cherry Point Reserve in particular while still fostering water-dependent uses.

5. *Herring and nearshore habitat in Puget Sound - spatial variation in herring egg survival and the search for habitat-related drivers*, Dr. Ole Shelton, NOAA Fisheries

- Dr. Shelton discussed current herring research. His recent paper will be distributed with this summary.

Shelton, A.O., T.B. Francis, G.D. Williams, B. Feist, K. Stick, P.S. Levin. 2014. Habitat limitation and spatial variation in Pacific herring egg survival. *Marine Ecology Progress Series*: Vol. 514: 231–245. doi: 10.3354/meps10941

CLOSING: The next meeting will be held in late fall.