

Meeting Minutes

San Juan Islands National Monument Advisory Committee Meeting

Sept 14, 2021

Meeting was held via Zoom.

9:00 a.m.: Welcome from Tom Reynolds, the MAC Chair. An introduction to Zoom and best practices given by State Office employee Matt Christensen. Introduction of MAC members, all were present. The BLM members also introduced themselves. There was a review of the agenda and a review and approval of last meeting minutes which did happen with a small edit. There was then a review of terms of current MAC members whose terms were about to expire.

9:30 a.m.: Jeff Clark gave a status of open MAC positions and stated that we've been assured the vacant positions will be filled and we'll have a full MAC very soon. There is also a call for nominations from the BLM scheduled to be released this week. Michelle Brown gave a status of SJINM BLM positions. She assured the MAC that the Monument Manager position is the top priority for the district. The State Office Human Resources office is severely understaffed, but will be meeting with Michelle to shore up the package and get the position announcement released soon. Jeff Clark then confirmed the State Director and District Manager visit scheduled for late September has been postponed due to non-essential travel being discontinued by the BLM until COVID 19 cases start dropping. Both Barry and Kurt are very motivated to get out to the Monument as soon as possible. Skeet Townley, Tracey Cottingham and Erin Corra all talked about the importance of seeing the islands firsthand and were really happy Kurt was able to visit in early summer.

9:45 a.m.: Skeet Townley reported on visitation and monitoring data from the last 12 months. There has been an increase in visitation (to include cyclists) and unauthorized camping in vehicles at trailheads and parking lots. People are coming onto the ferries without having a place to camp. So we are continuing to do out reach and education to the public to make sure they understand that dispersed camping opportunities are not as plentiful on the Monument as in other BLM areas. Our volunteer monitors are invaluable and have really helped us to identify problems out on the landscape. Skeet showed numbers from different years and compared numbers from specific summer months over the last three years. Skeet said he will send the MAC the full 2021 numbers once the fiscal year is over. The MAC members wondered if the BLM works with the visitors bureau to ensure people know about our camping and availability and we do. There was also a question about whether or not we have any kind of postings at the ferry terminal and while we do not there are the notifications of which state campgrounds are full and those are really helpful. We can change signs that say no camping to include that overnight parking is also not allowed.

10:00 a.m.: Rich Bailey gave an update on Cultural or Archaeological activities. Once the fiscal year is over we plan to continue cultural inventories on Iceberg and other locations this fall.

Monitoring and maintenance of cultural sites is forecasted for the fall and winter this year as needed. There could be maintenance needed on the light stations or there could be a reseeding if necessary all of these things will be done on a case by case basis. Rich also mentioned the BLM and Tribal governments having a meeting scheduled for Sept. 22 to discuss many of the same issues and topics being discussed here today. This meeting will help guide and shape future involvement of the Tribes regarding management of the Monument. Then Skeet Townley talked about vegetation or other mapping activities. He said manual weed control will continue but that is running behind because the Lopez crew could not keep staffed appropriately. He also mentioned a strawberry study and tree coring project. Other than that just some standard trail clearing work for the fall. As far as closures, there are none planned. The only right-of-way is the power line at Watmough Bay. Still hoping to secure legal public access from the county road to BLM at Iceberg Point. As for signage changes, the BLM has finally got the signs for out at Iceberg Point and those should be in place within the month.

10:15 a.m.: Michelle Brown introduced the additional deer hunting season topic. She and Skeet spoke with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to understand the issue. This is not a BLM topic, but we will continue to work with WDFW and they have assured us they are open to hearing comments from the public. Skeet put the contact information for WDFW so the public can ask questions about this topic. Amanda Wedow from the Land Bank was the invited speaker from Lopez to talk about limiting the hunting season on Land Bank lands to see if there are lessons for the Monument to use. Carla Chalker, our volunteer monitoring coordinator stated the volunteer monitors have not encountered any hunters so far while monitoring.

10:28 a.m.: Lauren Pidot gave a history review of SJINM and RMP process and MAC members involvement.

10:38 a.m.: Break

10:45 a.m.: MAC Charter revision for a post-ROD world – MAC members and BLM staff went over what portions to keep, change and remove. Jeff Clark will forward these to the BLM HQ.

11:41 a.m.: Opportunity for comments and discussion from any Tribal members. Shirley Williams spoke followed by Patti Gobin. No elected officials spoke.

Noon: Working Lunch and Public Comment Period. Stephanie Buffum spoke first, then Janet Alderton, then Mary Firm(?), then Cynthia Dilling, then Rhea Miller, then Carla Chalker coordinator volunteer, then Asha Lela, then Wendy Mickel(?), then Elizabeth Kilanowski, then Tom Reeve, then Tim Clark, then Madrona Murphy, then Sally Reeve, then Tracey Cottingham listed the MAC's list of requirements for the Monument Manager and Roseamber Rain Summer and Asha Lela added additional requirements. Everyone agreed that getting the MAC positions and the BLM Monument staff positions filled and to have greater tribal involvement are all crucial items going forward.

1:05 p.m.: It was decided to await the new members being appointed before deciding on when the next MAC meeting should be.

1:10 p.m.: Adjourn.