

**San Juan Islands Monument Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes ~ 6-5-2015 ~ Natural Resources**

**In attendance:**

MAC members:

Mike Jonas, Gene Helfman, Barbara Marrett, Rhea Miller, Tom Reeve (Chair), Tom Reynolds, Jamie Stephens

BLM staff:

Marcia deChadenedes (Monument Manager), Nick Teague (Recreation Planner), Lauren Pidot (Planner), J A Vacca (wildlife biologist), Mark Williams (forestry and invasive species/noxious weeds), Molly Boyter (botanist)

Members of the public (not all present the whole time):

Kevin Sloan, Madrona Murphy

**Opening remarks from Tom Reeve**

Today we'll be addressing habitat and ecological issues the BLM should consider as it starts engaging alternatives; next week we'll cover cultural issues, and rec and special designations will be in July.

Agenda changes:

- We will move the approval of minutes, discussion of next meetings, and taking votes on recommendations until after 1:55
- Delay lunch until 1:30, half hour lunch
- Before lunch break, have public testimony time so that the specialists can hear it (around 1:15)

**Remarks by Lauren Pidot, NM lead planner**

At the last meeting the MAC helped the BLM refine the draft planning issues that the BLM interdisciplinary team developed. Today we will be exploring management approaches that the BLM should be considering as it works through the planning issues related to natural resources. We have interdisciplinary team members here to provide some information on the resources they'll be addressing and the kinds of decisions we'll make about those resources in the plan.

- Remember that we're at the "could" stage of the planning effort and should be looking for all of the different things we could do, not the one thing we should do.

- Interdisciplinary Team members will have a two day meeting at the end of June to begin working through the range of alternatives for the planning effort.

**MAC and Interdisciplinary Team members all introduced themselves.**

**Mark, Molly, and JA gave a presentation (see posted PowerPoint)**

- Overview of ecological objects and values identified in the proclamation designating the SJINM.
- Brief overview of ecological communities and special status plant of the SJINM.
  - Molly discussed the Washington Natural Resource Program (DNR) national heritage plan that identifies priority ecological communities that are considered rare in the state. SJI has 15 of these communities.
  - Molly also described the BLM special status species program and touched on the idea that some species may be rare on the islands or special to local communities but wouldn't be on the list because they aren't rare or under threat in a more general sense.
  - BLM draws information of locations of special status plants from staff reports and the Washington Natural Heritage Database. Citizen scientists are encouraged to report rare plant sightings using the Washington Natural Heritage Program's rare plant sighting form.
  - There is a Golden Paintbrush study plot on Iceberg. This is not, however, an attempt to start a new population and can be removed at any time.
    - Should we consider reintroduction of endangered species on the BLM lands? We can explore in this in an alternative.
- Gene: asked about culturally sensitive plants, e.g., Camas
  - The BLM can design management around culturally and locally important species and systems
- Mark gave overview of precipitation and moist and dry forest communities on the SJINM; also discussed invasive species on the SJINM.
  - Gene: asked about how we consider standing deadwood as a fuel vs. as a bird habitat.
    - Larger standing dead trees that are great wildlife habitat often aren't really a big fuels issue. Debris on the ground is usually much more flammable. However, where there would be tension between two resource objectives we would explore our options and consider our

management objectives. There are often trade-offs that have to be acknowledged and mitigated.

- JA: sometimes management is focused on a specific species, however the objects and values include the diversity of the habitats
  - Many species may fit the proclamation criteria but are not technically special status species

## Discussion

- MAC: How is this data used? For management on the ground? For how we handle visitors and prevention?
  - Data may be used to design plan alternatives, to design more specific implementation-level projects, and to analyze the impacts of alternatives or proposed projects.
  - The range of alternatives may look at more and less aggressive strategies to addressing fuels.
  - We can apply different types of management to different ecological communities.
- Gene: Is there a standard BLM projection for handling climate change?
  - Uncertainty will be discussed rather than choosing a specific model for the analysis—the range of potential effects and how they play into our analysis will be looked at.
- Marcia: How will the MAC be contributing to the alternatives process?
  - Lauren: Starting today—we're asking the MAC to give us input on what should be included in the range of alternatives. This is an iterative process so there will be additional opportunities to review the BLM's work and provide feedback.
- What kinds of decisions should we be looking at now?
  - What should the specific objectives be that the BLM is trying to achieve through its management? What tools should the BLM have at its disposal in achieving these objectives? What uses/management approaches should be restricted or prohibited?
  - When implementing the plan you design the specific projects that will apply those tools to a specific piece of the landscape (e.g., specific invasive species treatment for a specific area).
- Rhea: monitoring # of people visiting the NM lands

- get a feel for how the prominence of being a NM has affected visitor numbers
- for parking planning, trail planning etc.
- how much increased impact for people is going to have on all of these issues
- Jamie: Will the plan address resource categories or will it be site specific?
  - The plan will discuss how different types of resources should be managed, but this can vary across the landscape.
- Items the MAC would like to discuss today:
  - Adaptive management approaches and what is required to amend the RMP
  - Relationship to lands/habitats/species beyond NM boundaries
  - Proclamation declared one of our features being the “diversity of habitats” what does this really mean? How should we address in the plan?
  - Historical inventories for sites
  - Alternatives
    - Forest management (fuel loads, thinning) should and how manage for forest health
    - Wetland management
    - Intertidal/near shore management
    - Meadow management/restoration
      - Invasions/conversion onto meadows
      - Quality of meadows/degraded grasslands
    - Small rocks (mammal haul outs etc.)
  - climate change and fire (touch on today, maybe address more in fall meeting)
  - visitor dynamics (address this during July meeting)
    - what kind of methods for visitation on Patos or Turn Point?
  - overpopulation of rabbits? Deer?
- MAC also needs to discuss whether it/some members want deeper involvement with particular issues and for the IDT to understand what the MAC needs/wants from this.
- Lauren: based on discussion there is potentially lack of clarity about what we’re trying to accomplish today.:
  - Constructing alternatives is a messy and iterative process. It will take the next few months to construct this range of alternatives. Right now we’re just trying to get ideas out on the table.
  - Today = first opportunity to give the IDT and Lauren a sense of what you want to see in the range of alternatives
  - Right now we should be in brainstorming mode

- Maybe it would be helpful to use the planning issues to structure the conversation?
- Adaptive management vs. amendments to the RMP
  - Some ability to allow changes without amendments, but there need to be clearly defined thresholds and descriptions of how exactly management would change if thresholds are reached, otherwise we can't meet our obligations to analyze the impacts of our actions under the National Environmental Policy Act.
- Plan amendments can take different amounts of time depending on how narrow or broad the change.

### **Forestry:**

- Alternatives: from hands off to actively managing for healthy forests
  - Alternative that included thinning or selective harvest (for diseased trees) active management
    - Consider no chainsaws
    - Treating traditional/cultural trees different than other diseased/unhealthy trees
  - Objectives around extent of forest cover
  - Dry vs Moist forest classification/definition and different treatments
  - Specific forest/vegetation types that we want to shift toward
  - No change alternative (no action) natural succession and changes

**MAC comment:** let's just provide our ideas about alternatives and let the BLM try to put them in their framework. Discuss concerns and desires, can be site specific

### **Forestry: cont'd**

- Alternatives cont'd
  - Trees encroaching on meadows
  - Property where there is only the necessity to manage for a healthy forest
  - Some areas where containment is most important

### **Dealing with fire, managing for fire safety (planning issue 6)**

- Range of alternatives around fuels treatments
  - Collaboration with neighboring properties to help minimize risk
  - Prescribed fire to deal with fuels

- Need community involvement with active management of any BLM lands
  - Suppression with natural starts
    - Community wildfire protection plan
- Allowing cultural value and cultural use of specific plants
- Allowing tribal use
- Need to consider how/whether to use pesticides and herbicides and the effect on native pollinators
- Addressing issues and effects on species diversity
- Easier and healthier to manage the entire expanse of land
  - However we don't have large parcels and locals are often aware of small critical zones
- Basic alternative structures:
  - Maintain as it is
  - Let nature do what it wants
  - Manage to restore or for a particular objective

### **Shoreline:**

Issues affecting the wildlife there:

- too much public use (disturbing the habitats) or just a confusion between party beach or quiet beach
- public education surrounding wildlife concerns
  - talking more about this on recreation day
- discourage anchorage on eel grass beds – discuss access issues with promoted recreation on land
- fuel load treatment affects washing into the water – minimal is desired, needs analysis
- Rule sets for where certain things apply (rocks, shore areas) so that the management prescriptions can change as the landscape changes.
  - Process for how things become no-go zones without a RMP amendment

### **Wildlife:**

Canadian geese/rabbit/deer population control in SJC

- If BLM worked on controlling geese, would it be the only manager on the landscape doing this?
- Dealing with rabbits and geese together – exclusion rather than extermination
- Deer population control? Hunting and fencing etc.
- Translocation of pests (trap and transfer)
  - Coordinate species control with neighboring properties (SJC park service)

Objective: Prevent the introduction of invasive species to BLM lands

**Future discussion:** more public engagement before the draft is published—get feedback from the public on alternatives?

### **Wetlands:**

Issues that communities are sensitive too about the wetlands

- Maintained unchanged, not allowed to succeed to forest
  - Federal, state, and local laws governing what you can do to wetlands based on type and service
    - Recreation? Hunt, fish, bird, gather etc.
    - Cultural uses
    - Invasive species control in wetlands
  - Different rules for invasive species in wetlands than in other areas

### **Invasive Species:**

How should we define invasive? Do we work to prevent natural succession?

- Save the current size/extent or manage for a new size/extent
- Different classifications of invasive species
  - Native invasive
  - Non-native invasive
    - Some classification from state level management
    - Ability to deal with critical threat immediately without amendment
- Slugs
  - Banana slugs and white slugs vs. black slugs

**Question:** What does “the diversity of habitats” mean? – in the proclamation

- We have an array of habitats currently and we should make sure that this array persists. We don’t think it necessarily means the exact size and extent as of designation, but at least all of the types.

### **Meadows:**

- Social trails contributing to the spread of invasive species and affecting the meadows
- Roses and snowberry natural succession
  - Are we going to control the spread of roses/snowberry at Iceberg?
    - Needs to be in the range of alternatives with maintaining the grasslands
- Management hinged on what the desired future conditions/outcome of the site specific area

Restoring the grasslands to a more native state

- Invasive grasses
- Camas gardens? (Cultural and heritage issue as well)

**Discussion:** If there are projects that the MAC would like to see undertaken during implementation, they should make sure that they would be consistent with at least one of the alternatives developed (and later the proposed plan—but that’s down the road).

**Discussion:**

- Should think about whether it makes sense to have an objective to eradicate all non-native invasive species and prohibit the use of herbicides in the same alternative. Objectives and management action/prohibitions should be consistent within any particular alternative (should obviously vary across alternatives).
- Could use prescriptive grazing as a tool to control a species on the meadow
  - We don’t need to allow permitted grazing for its own sake just because we allow grazing as a prescriptive tool.
- Could the RMP prohibit GMO plants/seeds on BLM lands? How much would we want to limit the sourcing of seeds for replanting?
  - What do we mean by native?
  - How expensive would it be to get very local seeds? Is it possible for the projects we would want to do during implementation?

**Small rocks:**

- Maintain plants, pollinators, marine animal haul out

**Data and inventories**

- What surveys are taking place before we make decisions?
- What don’t we know that we will know so that we can make decisions?
  - Revisit rare plant populations for trends
  - Mapping nature serve classifications (knowing acreage of habitats)
  - Forest inventory
  - Wetland parcels (current status/ranking)
    - Continued analysis of existing data
  - **Moss and lichens** – species of concern?
    - Asks the specialists to return to inventory



- Make inventories publically available
  - Curious and knowledgeable public
  - Could add to the inventories
- Splash zone species
  - Small island surveys looked at plants and pollinators along the intertidal
  - Invertebrates and insects and other animals affected
  - Managing impacts on tidal zones
    - Oil spills – readiness, preparedness
- Tom: hard to know what needs protecting in certain areas without knowing what is there
- Lauren: Remember that we're making overarching decisions in this plan, not planning site specific projects. We won't have site specific data for all of our lands. As is the case with RMP-level planning, we'll rely primarily on current data (some from partner groups) and fill holes so we can make reasonable generalizations. When we get to doing more site specific planning there would be additional analysis (e.g., if we eventually put in a dock somewhere—we would need to partner on this—and there would be additional analysis about what is actually in the specific spot being considered for the project).

**MAC:** Discuss process for dealing with debris washing up on beach, e.g., oil barrel, telephone pole, etc. Make sure that restrictions built into the alternatives don't prevent important removal projects.

**First round of public comments:**

- Kevin Sloan: knows Patos and other small rocks  
Native Plants Society – focused on removing invasive species to preserve native plants. SJIC has many plants that are disappearing elsewhere, but NM lands are minimally altered by humans – opportunity to learn about natural succession. Invasive species should be actively controlled on NM lands and priority should be given to maintaining habitats that are home to critical species and rare species. Should limit camping, hiking, and boats to certain areas.
- Madrona Murphy: botanist for KWIAT  
There are lots of volunteers available for helping to hand pull invasive grasses, have an opportunity to control invasives without pesticides. KWIAT is a resource for the MAC—the MAC can get information from them.

- Restoration of these lands to what period/status
  - Don't go species specific (charismatic species)
  - But NM is home to some rare species that may require species specific planning to keep diversity of rare plant populations alive and well in the SJI
  - Don't follow fads (dissertations etc.)
- The term grasslands is pretty inaccurate. It may be that the plants we want to encourage aren't grasses at all.
- Deer population
  - Second largest impact on the islands
- Small island surveys
  - Identifying certain islands that are more at risk for change due to sea level rise due to climate change
- Revisiting and mapping weeds in the NM
  - Can look for specific things if there are specific things the MAC wants them to look at/for
    - Including insects

### **Deeper diving in subgroups:**

Give a list to Lauren of people who are interested in doing the deeper dives, have more to share after the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>

- Gene would definitely like to be involved.

### **Lunch**

#### **MAC business:**

- Approve Minutes
- Make BLM recommendations
- Questions about upcoming meetings
- Next Tuesday @ brickworks
- July 8<sup>th</sup> @ Lopez?
- August 11 – invite elected individuals and staff on the field trip to the outer islands

### **Barbara:**

It was confusing this morning. Perhaps better if the leader for a particular topic from the MAC came with a set of potential alternatives.

- Did the BLM IDT get what they needed this morning even with the communication issues?
  - Yes. Got objectives/tools we can incorporate into the alternatives.
- At some point the MAC would like to see a high level summary of each alternative – what was allowed and what wasn't allowed
- Mike Jonas will develop a range of alternatives for maritime heritage areas and will share with the MAC via email.

### **Upcoming meetings:**

Next meeting Tuesday @ Brickworks starts 9:30

July 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting on Lopez: ferry conflicts – is a 5 hour meeting enough on Lopez?

- Recreation and Special Designations
- Field work on Lopez? Potentially interisland folks there also
- pick up at the marina at 9:45 on Lopez for SJI folks
- Possible: 10:30 – 5:30 on Lopez @ Library

### **Marcia:**

- How should we deal with attendance and participation
  - Offered to contact MAC members who are not here
- No information about open slots that need to be filled, end date on the current open slots if on July 25<sup>th</sup>

### **Is it time to doodle for the fall? Sept 1-Sept 31 - Yes**

- To set up meetings in the fall
  - 'Things that don't fit into the other buckets' (rights of way, reality, climate change) meeting
  - preliminary alternatives discussion
  - Meetings only until Dec 4<sup>th</sup> (NM Xmas party) and a whole week off around Thanksgiving
  - public outreach for preliminary alternatives and route designation
    - For public meetings: Multiple venues for public meetings with breakout groups for route designation meetings

\*Discuss this more on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July to finalize

- Try for 1 meeting in September, 1 in October, public meeting in November

### **New member orientation procedure**

- Packet ‘congratulation’ packet and binder
- Buddy up to get filled in to the stage in the process? There are two people per position for most positions (not Ed/Interp)
- Change the description from “2-3 meetings a year” to something more accurate

### **Public outreach issues:**

- Press releases don’t do much in this community
- FB is doing well
- Newsletter about the NM is going to be monthly

### **Website is being updated**

- All Powerpoints will be added on the website
- All minutes

### **MAC votes:**

- MAC approved minutes from last meeting
- MAC Recommendations to the BLM:

Rhea: In the alternatives it is recommended that BLM addresses the preservation of the natural setting, with a concomitant baseline site specific study including visitor population impacts, landscapes, soundscapes, light. Furthermore I move that we utilize this same baseline site-specific data to address visitor experience in the recreation section.

  - Discussion around recommendation:
    - Survey now so that there can be adequate alternatives proposed
    - Does the MAC comprehend the scope and scale of these studies?
    - Hasn’t been done before by the BLM, a nudge to think more along the lines that we heard during scoping including spiritual connection to the land
    - What is the ‘natural landscape’? What is actual being measured?
  - MAC passed recommendation
- Gene: Put the word “spiritual” back into the vision statement
  - Change to: “The San Juan Islands National Monument provides an awe-inspiring experience, connecting people to a place where its landscape is

intact, flourishing and rich in natural, cultural, **spiritual**, and historical components.”

- MAC voted on change to vision

### **Second round of Public Comments**

- Madrona Murphy: Be careful when using the term “natural.” People have been here almost as long as there have been plants here, and the landscape has been transformed and impacted by people for years. Need to think about cultural landscapes
  - Data collected on sound during bird surveys
- Written public comment: Cedarbough Seji

“I request that these lands be managed with the utmost care for their environmental preservation, keeping in mind that excessive visitors hiking through these lands will disturb the natural breeding, nesting, and feeding patterns of birds, bats, and native mammals. Boats anchoring in Watmough Bay damage the bottom dwelling organisms with their anchors and pollute the water surrounding their boats with fuel residue and other waste products. Iceberg Point's sensitive mosses, lichens, and other plants unique to that very special environment, especially on rocky outcrops, are not going to flourish with all the clambering and trampling caused by excessive visitors. These lands should not be managed to maximize visitors, and if they are, they become a finite resource soon to disappear. I also request that these lands be managed keeping in mind their important spiritual meaning to locals. These sites are part of important ceremonies and spiritual seeking for locals with a much deeper connection to these lands than any tourist can ever have. Watmough, Iceberg, and Colville Point have all been the site of weddings that I have attended -- not exotic destination weddings, but those of locals. People have completed vision quests and fasts on these lands. That these places continue to serve as a site for connection with a higher power must be reflected in management plans.”

**Question:** If groups have collected data, is there a way for BLM to use it or does it have to be BLM collected data?

- BLM can accept and use data from all types of sources but must meet whatever standard the subject matter individuals require.
  - Scientific studies can be recommended in scoping comments and should be assessed during the RMP process
  - Send attachment to the RMP box to be considered
  - The BLM may not use everything, but cannot arbitrarily ignore information.

- If there is data you think should be considered, please send to the RMP email box and it is automatically part of the record
- If you think the BLM has arbitrarily ignored information submitted this can be grounds for protest or legal action.