

WILSON INLET MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 19 JANUARY 2005 AT THE DENMARK ENVIRONMENT CENTRE AT 1.00PM

WILSON INLET MANAGEMENT GROUP MEETING HELD 19/1/05

PRESENT: George Ebbett, Chris Gunby (proxy for Brett Ward), Diane Harwood, Brad Kneebone, Matt Thomson, Jason Froud, Tony Fitzpatrick (proxy for Geoff Findlay), Zac Launay, Colleen Donnelly (1.35pm)

In attendance: Dave Rushton, Murray Gangell

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1.05pm and welcomed Mr Gunby to the meeting as Acting Regional Manager.

1. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

Case Koning - stated that he was a member of WIRG and everything he said was independent of that organisation. He referred to the Nutrient Reduction Action Plan and noted that it was dated April 2003 and some items that were to be reviewed after 12 months had not happened. An explanation was provided that some of the actions had been initiated well before the launch of the plan with various actions having between a 1 – 5 year time frame and it would be reviewed in 2008. In addition, each year, items will be assessed against the time frame.

Mr Koning referred to Section 4, Para 3, whereby an annual operational plan would be prepared. He had requested a copy from the office and noted that it was not available. He asked if it existed and if not, why not and when could he access a copy. It was explained that together DoE officers and Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee develop an operational plan and a copy can be made available.

Mr Koning stated that at the community speech forum it was stated that the Plan may not be wholly implemented as it was dependant on available funding, therefore it was imperative to have the plan to see the funding DoE had and what they are going to do with it.

Mr Gunby stated that at the community talk he referred to the Action Plan as being a guide to stretch people and it was accepted some of the actions would be a challenge. Success in implementing the plan depended on attracting funds from a number of sources, and a current priority would be utilising the plan to attract funds using the recently developed regional strategy.

Mr Koning noted that Annual Reports on Achievements were to be reported to the community and the Shire of Denmark and asked when the next was to take place. Mr Gunby advised that presentations had already been provided in response to requests, but that it would be valuable if an annual presentation was organised in place of these in the future. It was suggested this could be held around August 2005, and include a report on the Inlet's condition as well as an update on the plan's implementation. Mr Koning stated that he had a major problem with WIMAG as members of the public could not sit in the meetings to find out what was going on and then had to wait 2 years for a presentation. He stated that as a member of the community he thought it was disgusting. Mr Koning was advised that as a member of the community he could ask questions at any time. To clarify the situation Mr Koning was further advised that WIMAG was a sub-committee of the Water & Rivers Commission Board and the group provided information to the Department of Environment. This role would not be assisted by opening the full meetings to the public.

Mr Koning stated that in the absence of an operational plan and not being a part of the presentations he had no idea what was going on and the minutes of the last meeting were vague, unclear and unsatisfactory. The Chairman explained that the minute taker was not available for the last meeting and given the circumstances he felt that staff had carried out a reasonable job. It was explained to Mr Koning that the minutes were not a comprehensive record and mainly recorded vital issues.

The Department of Environment undertook to provide a present copy of the operational plan to Mr Koning.

Ms Bobby Wilson. Advised that she lived on Inlet Drive with a view over the inlet and expressed concern as to the intensity and pulsing of navigational lighting on the inlet at the site of mussel leases and also at the vicinity of Jumbo Rocks and indicated the areas on a map of Wilson Inlet. She gave a summary of the various people she had spoken to including Dept for Planning & Infrastructure (DPI), Fremantle and had received information that Wilson Inlet rated as having the lowest possible use and was classed as a closed system, therefore it may be possible to not have the area marked. The Navigational lights DPI had installed were equivalent to requirements for Cockburn Sound. Lights had not been installed in the upper Swan River to discourage use. Discussion continued on the intensity and pulsing rate of the lights. Mr Fitzpatrick advised that the pulsing rate on 3 white lights could not be changed under international standards however the frequency rate could be changed on the mussel lease. The Chairman advised that light intensity was an issue between Fisheries, DPI and Ms Wilson and WIMAG could not contribute to the debate. Ms Wilson queried whether the lease area could be changed. The Chairman stated that the mussel lease area was determined by the Wilson Inlet Aquaculture Strategy and could be reassessed when the

Strategy is next reviewed, however he was not sure it would be changed. He invited Ms Wilson to participate in the next review.

PUBLIC FORUM CONCLUDED 1.50pm.

2. APOLOGIES: Emma Huxley, Geoff Findlay, Brett Ward. The Chairman noted that this was Sandra Shakespeare's last meeting, however she has not attended.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES (24 november 2005)

Recording suggestions. Mr Gunby noted that this issue had been raised in previous meetings and the level of detail required in the minutes. He was concerned about spending a large amount of time on minutes and requested guidance from the committee.

The committee agreed that to maintain efficiency the format would be to provide more detail into the agenda, record the decisions made and for recording of discussion to be kept to a minimum.

Discussion continued as to the proposal from the previous meeting whereby a list of suggestions and recommendations are recorded prior to bar openings. It was agreed that proposals are recorded in minutes of each meeting and open forum and followed up in business arising. Relevant suggestions will be forwarded to the appropriate authorities and then crossed off the list.

Voting Rights. Arose when Emma Huxley attended meeting and confusion as to her voting rights. As there were vacancies available, members supported the appointment of Ms Huxley as a community rep to WIMAG. Mr Gunby undertook to investigate membership to see which positions were vacant.

City of Albany Representation. It was noted that the City of Albany had rescinded the motion to allow councillors to become members of committees. Discussion took place as to the benefit of an officer or councillor as a representative.

It was agreed that Mr Rushton and Mr Gunby approach the City of Albany for a councillor to attend WIMAG.

Channel Scouring. It was reported that the DoE and the Denmark Shire had no objection to the removal of pinch points along the existing channel, and WIMAG could consider such a proposal if it was suggested by a group with the associated funding and appropriate research prior to consideration. Discussion continued and it was noted that the action plan referred to options of channel scouring, however, it was not seen as value for money because of the water regime and other factors. It was suggested that further investigation should be conducted before a proposal of this kind is implemented.

Mr Gangell advised that two new Councillors were requiring information on bar opening positions and also referred to scouring work at Prawn Rock Channel. Mr Gangell requested that Mr Gunby provide background and DoE point of view to them at a future meeting to be arranged in the office with Mr Gangell and Mr Rushton.

Weed Strategy. Matt Thomson, Emma Huxley, Diane Harwood and Dept of Agriculture representatives looked at sites and discussed what Council needs to do to control watsonia. Ms Huxley is writing up a report and emphasised that Council develop an environmental weed strategy. Depending on time and resources the strategy may have to be outsourced. The report will be completed in approximately 2 weeks.

Morley Beach Wetland. Brad Kneebone, Mike Coote from CALM Perth, Dave Rushton and Murray Gangell carried out a site visit and discussed the possibility of Morley Beach becoming a RAMSAR site. Mike Coote is interested on behalf of CALM, Perth and prior to submitting a RAMSAR nomination a management plan is to be developed and surrounding landholders informed as to the meaning of RAMSAR. Mr Coote is drawing up program of process and Mr Kneebone has undertaken to supply him with records of bird accounts over last 18 months – 2 years. It was noted that the process would be slow and there was no guarantee as the criteria had to be met.

Further information was provided that the area could be registered as a known flight path destination and maybe a pre cursor to RAMSAR later on.

Mr Gunby noted that it was an issue across the region as there were approx 300 conservation wetlands within national state wide registers with RAMSAR attracting resources. A key element to the regional strategy was a better classifications of wetlands.

Wilson Inlet was not listed as a wetland of international or national significance whereas Broke Inlet and others were listed. Mr Gunby stated that Wilson Inlet was a high priority on the SCRIPT strategy and would check on Wilson Inlet as a wetland.

Other Business. Nil.

4. WIMAG REVIEW

Mr Gunby tabled a paper on the Review of WIMAG and gave back ground history as to its formation. The 3 year partnership document was at an end and it was timely to review the arrangements. He recommended the establishment of a steering group to lead the review and to provide an outcome to WIMAG within 6 months and requested nominations. The review committee to consist of the Chairman, a representative of WICC, DoE officer and nominations received from Ms Colleen Donnelly and Mr Brad Kneebone.

Mr Gunby highlighted that WIMAG needed to position themselves to maximise funds from the regional strategy and to confirm the structure.

5. NRM UPDATE

The Chairman provided an update on the NRM process that commenced with the strategy and many had the opportunity to provide input. Submissions were received and action targets condensed, ending with a water theme. A criteria matrix is to be established to allocation a scoring system for targets and each target allocated a score to allow prioritising of targets. Each theme is following the same procedure and at the end of the process will be tied to an investment plan to allow spending. Following the prioritising of action targets there will be a formal integration of the 5 groups into one major assessment. The financial result will be prioritisation of resources. The Chairman stated that the process had been carried out in a transparent and objective way.

The Chairman went on to say that currently his group were reviewing action targets and also assessing the skills required to act on the actions. Also associated was the formulation of a data base comprising a regional researchers data base to ascertain skills within the region and WIMAG would be visited by a SCRIPT officer for members to fill in details of their skills and experience into the register.

The Chairman continued with information on the Bio Regional Marine Plan and stated that a marine working group was being established to deal with the issue and will feed heavily into this plan.

Mr Gunby stated that WIMAG and WICC needed to establish priorities within the Wilson Inlet Nutrient Reduction Action Plan , as implementation of the plan was expected to be a significant priority within the regional strategy's investment plan.

6. MEMBERS REPORTS

Jason Froud. Review of research priorities is ongoing and no decision made as yet.

The Chairman commented that at the request of W.I.S.E. Mr Rod Lenanton from Fisheries would address Council., on fish stocks in Wilson Inlet, possibly in April. All are welcome to attend the presentation. Mr Froud undertook to invite Mr Lenanton to the WIMAG meeting if the dates coincided.

Diane Harwood. Investigated the foreshore with Emma Huxley and Ian Dunne from Shire, as a landowner had dug a pond on the foreshore reserve and planned to plant with reeds and rushes. Advised landowner to contact the revegetation nursery manager from Shire and to delay planting until rain had commenced.

Looked at areas to be slashed for fire break as some landowners want it to be on their land. Mr Dunne assessed and agreed it would be sensible as some areas were in narrow stretch.

Boundary and management of foreshore at Rivermouth Caravan Park. Ms Harwood stated that owners were mowing reeds on the foreshore and suggested a walk trail to delineate the boundary. WIMAG had previously provided formal advice to the Shire re demarcation of foreshore and to include into lease arrangement. Mr Thomson to follow up with Shire CEO to progress a foreshore management plan with owners.

Brad Kneebone. Poddy Shot Boat ramp has large quantities of algae and weed washed up and is an obstacle in getting boats into the water.

One of the potato farmers at Lake Saide is extending his operation and carrying out further clearing. Around Lower Denmark Road acres of new ground is being established for potatoes. Area around Bornholm beyond W.I. catchment area. Mr Gunby noted that if City of Albany represented on WIMAG information could be provided as to planning proposal requirements for the area.

Mr Kneebone spoke of a project to look at benthic fauna at Morley Beach as migratory waders feed in mud and preserving the feed is fundamental to birds for the return trip to the northern hemisphere. Aim is to look at nutrient changes i.e. physical and chemical e.g. an eastern opening may create a volume of marine exchange but would make a difference to tides and mud being inundated for a long time and not available to the birds. Increased salinity may also impact. He suggested that the study could be undertaken by University or other tertiary institutions if DoE and CALM not receptive. It may be possible under Southern Prospects to link catchment action identifying significant habitats for water dependant fauna including migratory birds and could also fit with RAMSAR. Benthic fauna study could provide baseline data to water change in the inlet and could be linked to the nature of the opening. Mr Kneebone requested support in principle for such a study. If there was an advantage enquiries could be made through the Albany Bird Group to see if institutions could put up a project for funding and whether funding could be placed within Southern Prospects. Mr Gunby suggested that Albany Bird Group take lead role and DoE could provide technical support.

WIMAG supported the project in principle..

Matt Thomson. The Shire of Denmark is presently considering a motion to review its management plans and policies in relation to Wilson Inlet..

Further, Mr Ebbett (Chair) advised councillors that he would ask for a DoE representative to address Council on the relevant policies and management plans. Mr Ebbett has provided a list of concerns that councillors have to Mr Gunby for him to address at a future meeting.

Zac Launay. Has received reports of oysters found in Prawn Rock Channel and has also found shells whilst fishing. Received a grant of \$7,000 from GSDC in addition to scholarship, to use hatchery to create a batch of 10,000 oysters to put in the inlet. Requires a special type of rope for oysters to attach themselves and no use of platforms.

Tony Fitzpatrick. Tabled copies of application from City of Albany for recreational boating scheme for a boat ramp near Pelican Island and in City of Albany boundary. Request for concrete ramp to replace existing sand ramp and a finger jetty to replace existing at Nullaki. No navigational or flashing lights, only fixed lighting. Would service the Bibbulmun track and residents from Nullaki to access Denmark and avoid 35km drive.

George Ebbett. A proposal has been received from WIRG to develop the Poison Point area and establish wheel chair access and a finger jetty (platform). The proposal will not go to DPI as it can be included into the Country Pathways Scheme and Council to provide approval.

David Rushton. Environmental Officer taking over from Ms Kirsty Alexander. Reminded members that meetings are held the 3rd Wednesday of every second month. Next meetings 16th March and 18th May 2005.

NEXT MEETING: 16 MARCH 2005 AT DENMARK ENVIRONMENT CENTRE.

Meeting closed 4.05pm.