

**WILSON INLET MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 15 FEBRUARY 2006 AT THE SHIRE OF DENMARK RECEPTION
ROOM AT 1.00PM**

PRESENT: George Ebbett, Brad Kneebone, John Xanthis, Tony Fitzpatrick (proxy for Geoff Findlay), Diane Harwood, Zak Launay, Pascoe Durtanovich, John Jamieson, David Rushton, Danny Burkett, Basil Schur (arrived at approx 2:30pm).

IN ATTENDANCE: Chris Gunby, Annabelle Bushell, Adrian Stratico, Case Koning

APOLOGIES: Colleen Donnelly, Geoff Findlay

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1.10pm

PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

- Regina Blieberger is concerned about the Denmark rivermouth development, in particular the effect it may have on waterbirds in the area. Regina expects that the increased boating activity as a result of the development will have a detrimental impact on pelicans and other birds that utilise the eastern river foreshore.

George responded to Regina's concerns explaining that the needs of all stakeholders/user groups need to be catered for. Pascoe added that the purpose of WIMAG is to manage Wilson Inlet development appropriately but this issue is not considered significant as the wildlife coexist with the current activity and the works are designed to improve the currently degrading shoreline around the current boat ramp.

Also, many initiatives by the Shire of Denmark and the City of Albany, for example establishment of foreshore setbacks and no development zones below 2.5AHD, demonstrate adequate consideration of all environmental factors in planning schemes and strategies.

- Case Koning again raised the subject of inadequate communication of WIMAG and WINRAP activities, in particular the need for regular reporting and a community forum. He also requested that the proposal to remove sand and sediment at the sandbar and mouth of the inlet as a means of increasing water exchange with the ocean be reconsidered.

Dave Rushton referred to previous discussions with Mr Koning regarding the recently finalised WINRAP Communication Strategy and reiterated commitments identified in the strategy document. Mr Koning has been provided a copy of this. Dave also advised that a WINRAP website is in the process of being created, which will be primarily dedicated to WINRAP progress updates. Also, the site could potentially accommodate the provision of minutes from these meetings and other general WIMAG news. In addition, planning for an appropriate communication event later this year will be undertaken as a requirement of the Communication Strategy. This will be preceded by a public consultation process to determine the subject matter for the event, ie. what aspect/s of the Wilson Inlet environment and its management does the Denmark community wish to be informed about.

There was also some group discussion regarding the need for dredging near the mouth of the inlet. The general consensus of the group that this is not an immediate priority remains the same. Furthermore, a recent investigation by Neville Boughton indicates that channel development at this location varies from year to year quite significantly due to a number of climatic factors and therefore any costly attempt to manipulate it is likely to be quickly nullified by wave action and other natural forces.

Mr Koning also requested that he be allowed to attend the closed session of the meeting. George, as Chairman of the group, stated that this was permissible on this occasion. However, he also explained that this is not a permanent arrangement and that any future requests by Mr Koning or other non-members to attend WIMAG meetings need to be considered on their merit. For requests of this nature, or any issue he wishes to raise during the open forum, Mr Koning was asked to give prior notice to the Chairman, preferably a minimum of 24 hours.

- A representative from the Denmark Police attended briefly in support of a proposal to address pedestrian safety along Ocean Beach Road.

Open forum closed 1:40pm

Round table introductions and welcome to John Jamieson (Councillor, City of Albany), Danny Burkett (Service Delivery Manager Great Southern, Water Corporation) and Adrian Stratico (Catchment Management Coordinator, Water Corporation).

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Diane Harwood requested that her report be amended to state that only one complaint was received regarding weed removal activity in the foreshore reserve, otherwise minutes of meeting held on 8 December 2005 were accepted.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- 4.1 Following collation of all responses received during the consultation process for the draft Terms of Reference, letters were sent thanking all parties who provided comment. Correspondence was accompanied by a copy of the agreed Terms of Reference.
- 4.2 Correspondence received from the City of Albany advising that the Council nominated Cr John Jamieson as its WIMAG representative.
- 4.3 Correspondence sent to the EPA on the 17th January in relation to Mr Launay's application to vary his aquaculture licence. The letter stated that WIMAG had no objection to the licence variation on the basis that consolidation of the leases will reduce the number of navigation lights on the inlet and therefore minimise the aesthetic impact on residents living near the inlet foreshore.
- 4.4 Letter of endorsement from the DoE for Green Skills application to the Global Nature Fund to register Wilson Inlet with the Living Lakes Network.
- 4.5 Correspondence to Bill North regarding the outcome of the review and formally terminating his membership. To date no response has been received.
- 4.6 Other relevant correspondence – DoE advice issued to the City of Albany in relation to a public boat ramp and finger jetty development proposal for the Nullaki foreshore.

5. WIMAG REVIEW

- 5.1 Chris Gunby provided an update regarding endorsement of the new terms of reference for the group from member agencies. Require signature from Water Corporation and Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee for official record keeping purposes. This was followed by clarification of existing members and associated revision of tabled membership document, including confirmation that Pascoe Durtanovich will permanently fill the position of Shire of Denmark Officer and David Rushton will be the DoE representative on the group. Chris Gunby will continue to attend meetings that require his direct involvement.

The City of Albany Officer is yet to be appointment pending further discussion with Robert Fenn. Chris will advise in relation to this matter at a later date (**Action**).

Chris and Pascoe will initiate a recruitment process in coming weeks to fill one vacant community position (**Action**). Members agreed that tourism was not adequately represented on the Group and therefore emphasis should be placed on relevant knowledge and/or experience when considering expressions of interest.

\$17,000 + GST was provided to the Shire of Denmark from the DoE as a contribution towards administration expenses for the new group. Dave explained to Pascoe that a small portion of this (approx \$200/year) will be required to cover meeting advertising costs.

Chris will ensure members receive written confirmation verifying terms of appointment (**Action**). Also, Dave Rushton will compile a brief media statement, incorporating a group photo, as soon as possible following the recruitment process (**Action**).

6. FORESHORE SAFETY

- 6.1 John Xanthis proposes the Shire address the lack of pedestrian and cycle tracks along Ocean Beach Road between Lights Road and the Denmark Surf Lifesaving Club at Ocean Beach. John also recommends that WIMAG write a letter to the Denmark Council, the Denmark Police and the Surf Lifesaving Club regarding this issue and that the Shire allocate money in the 2007/2007 budget to research, plan and construct appropriate walkways or cycle paths as a means of improving the safety of residents and tourists utilising this area.

Pascoe advised that \$36,000 has been allocated for infrastructure of this nature, although options are limited in regard to the location of a path in this area due to land availability restrictions.

Seasonal inundation also occurs in this area therefore the proposal requires careful consideration of drainage management issues. In addition, the need for an adequate setback from the road may necessitate clearing of existing paperbarks which is a concern. The group discussed the idea for a board walk to alleviate the need for fill, although these are generally more expensive and therefore may not be achievable with available funds. Suggest modelling on existing Albany board walk, Middleton Beach.

The section between the lookout and the surf club also poses a problem with steep gradients directly adjacent to the road on either side. Possibly the Surf Lifesaving Club could be approached for assistance with this project during proposed work to extend clubroom facilities, although this is also problematic with the proximity to steep cliffs and any access over sand dunes in this area requiring potentially significant clearing.

Pascoe will seek Green Skills advice and refer this matter for discussion at the next Council meeting. He will also refer it to the Trails Committee for further consideration (**Action**).

7. UNALLOCATED CROWN LAND ALONG THE INLET FORESHORE

- 7.1 Brad Kneebone provided details regarding a proposal to reclassify sections of the Wilson Inlet foreshore from UCL to reserve status to ensure adequate protection, including Morley Beach and areas west of the Hay River. He also tabled a document summarising the conservation values of Morley Beach and some of the issues threatening the future of this area as important shorebird habitat.

Wilson Inlet is registered with Wetlands International as one of 125 sites Australia wide that is internationally important for migratory waders. The federal Department of the Environment and Heritage is currently preparing a Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Waders in recognition of the growing need to protect and minimise threats to migratory shorebirds. This Plan will aim to protect and conserve wetlands on which those birds depend and there is an expectation that sites of national or international significance should have management strategies in place or at least in the process of being developed.

WIMAG members resolved that the Shire of Denmark and the City of Albany should write to the Dept of Conservation & Land Management (CALM) requesting consideration of the upgrade of these areas to reserve status during its imminent review of the Albany coastal reserve system. Discussions with John Watson (CALM) centred around the idea that a community group could be formed to assist with management, possibly through a MOU with the relevant authority.

The group also conceded that a workshop or similar event needed to occur prior to any formal approach to CALM in order to canvass support for the proposal from adjacent landowners. Previous approach in November 2004 resulted in concerns about how access rights might be diminished.

Prior to any initiative regarding the subject area there is currently some vesting discrepancy which requires clarification. John Jamieson will consult with City of Albany planners in relation to current vesting of Nullaki foreshore (**Action**).

Also, Shire of Denmark management issues exist for the reserve at the mouth of the Hay River. As a consequence of unrestricted camping activity in this area there has been significant degradation of foreshore vegetation requiring immediate attention. Suggest that Shire Councillors undertake a site visit of the site to demonstrate this issue and request a review of current management and use of the area. Dave Rushton will also discuss this issue with regional DoE clearing officers (**Action**).

8. MONITORING TO INVESTIGATE IMPACT FROM SEPTICS

- 8.1 Currently, there is little measured information pertaining to nutrient export into Wilson Inlet from urban sources, particularly on-site effluent disposal. A preliminary investigation on nutrient discharge to Wilson Inlet from groundwater was conducted in 1998 which identified some potential nutrient sources and recommended site specific investigations. Subsequently, the need to monitor groundwater flow and nutrients discharged into Wilson Inlet from urban sources, in particular the residential areas of Weedon Hill, Little River and Minsterly Road, is identified by the WINRAP as a priority action.

A groundwater monitoring project is proposed to investigate the extent of nutrient loads into Wilson Inlet from urban septic systems via groundwater flow. The findings of this project will help provide the impetus for these areas to be considered for the Water Corporation's Sewer Infill Program. The project will be jointly funded by the DoE and the Shire of Denmark with administrative support from the Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee.

This project is currently in the early planning phase however timing for bore construction is likely to be April/May 2006. Dave will provide details of bore locations and sampling regime at the next meeting (**Action**).

9. WILSON INLET NUTRIENT REDUCTION ACTION PLAN

9.1 Annabelle Bushell from the Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee tabled a progress report of WINRAP implementation.

Other initiatives currently being considered include a small rural landholder workshop (George requested that Council be notified at the preliminary planning stage).

Also, outcomes of meetings with WINRAP partnership agencies, eg. AgWA, Water Corporation to be reported at the next meeting (**Action**).

10. MEMBERS REPORTS

- Basil Schur Requested review of meeting dates to avoid clash with WICC meetings. Some revegetation proposed for the Wilson Inlet foreshore as a component of the Denmark to Nornalup Rail Trail Project. Proposal to extend Wilson Inlet Heritage Trail to include a section along Crusoe Beach Road. News regarding Wilson Inlet inclusion into Living Lakes Network pending. Gondwana Link meeting planned in Kendenup to discuss proposed increases to corridor connectivity. Biosphere proposal for Wilson Inlet catchment. Compost toilet for Crusoe Beach proposal – Helen Heydenrych and Annabelle Bushell to progress application for funding.
- Diane Harwood Questioned current status of Foreshore Management Plan Review. Pascoe Durtanovich advised that the Shire is proposing a formal management strategy for the Denmark River in collaboration with the DPI, subject to funding from Southern Shores (potentially \$10,000). Members discussed the possibility of developing a foreshore management plan for the entire Denmark area, including Wilson Inlet, as part of this process. This matter requires the compilation of a project brief as a first step. George & Pascoe to investigate further (**Action**).
- John Jamieson Tabled document and photos from Jerry Jenke regarding poor state of Wilson Inlet. Concerns include above average winter rains resulting in increased nutrient export from the catchment and lower than average salinity, water levels indicate limited tidal exchange, increased incidence of macroalgal growth (*Enteromorpha*), and prolonged shellfish health warnings. John stated that future management of this issue should carefully consider oceanic influences and also suggested a comprehensive bathymetric study of the inlet be undertaken to update existing knowledge.
- John Xanthis Raised concern regarding jet ski activity near the mouth of the inlet. Tony Fitzpatrick advised that he can be contacted on 0429900923 regarding complaints of this nature. John also raised the issue of thick algae beds near the bottom of the Irwin Inlet and attributes this to an increase in light filtration when large volumes of sea water enter the inlet. Apparently reports of oyster deaths coincided with this algae growth. George is aware of similar incidents in the Irwin Inlet in previous years and believes the cause is probably due to a range of factors some of which are natural functions of estuarine systems and climate variation.
- Danny Burkett Danny explained that Adrian Stratico will attend WIMAG meetings on his behalf unless an agenda item necessitates his direct involvement.
- Brad Kneebone Nil
- Chris Gunby Nil
- Tony Fitzpatrick Paddyshot to receive Recreational Boating Facilities Scheme funding. Subject of commercial ferry mooring to be addressed. Excessive boat speed complaint received from eastern inlet resident.
- Dave Rushton The owner of Rudgyard Holiday Chalets (Doug) is concerned that the activities of some commercial fishermen operating in the inlet may not be lawful, eg. extensive netting. Also, an elderly man staying in one of his chalets reported to him that while on the inlet fishing from a boat in early January 2006 a fisherman was verbally aggressive toward him to the point where he feared physical attack. Doug intends writing a letter of complaint to the Tourism Board/Minister regarding this incident.

Zak Launay Zak advised he has finally commenced mussel harvesting following intensive QA monitoring in January. He proposes to provide members with details of his operation, including ongoing Dept of Health monitoring requirements, at the next meeting.

George Ebbett Nil

Meeting closed 3:55pm

Next meeting 19 April 2006.