

**WILSON INLET MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 19 APRIL 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, Jason Froud, Basil Schur, Colleen Donnelly

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Chris Gunby, Adrian Stratico

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1.10pm

**1. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

In lieu of an open forum session prior to the meeting, Dave Rushton tabled a paper on Case Koning's behalf. Members were asked to read and consider concerns raised for discussion at the next meeting.

**2. APOLOGIES** Geoff Findlay, Phil Shephard

**3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

- Brad Kneebone clarified that the statement regarding his discussion with John Watson, as per item 7, focused on the possible creation of a community based management group for the Morley Beach area only.
- Basil Schur suggested that in future the group should hear member reports prior to agenda items to ensure adequate time is devoted to this part of the meeting. George stated that WIMAG meetings could be conducted in this way if it was agreeable to the other members. However, Dave raised the point that a change of this nature is likely to create a situation whereby the time remaining to discuss agenda items is insufficient. Dave also explained that the purpose of members reports is simply to inform other members of general interest items and is not intended to invite discussion. If a member wishes to bring an item to the groups attention and the item or issue requires discussion and/or input from the group then members have a responsibility to ensure the item is included in the agenda.

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

- 4.1 Pat Gill from the Denmark Bulletin will arrive later during the meeting to take a photo of the group.
- 4.2 Chris Gunby, Pascoe Durtanovich and George Ebbett will interview 3 candidates for the vacant community position on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April.
- 4.3 Following his discussion with John Jamieson just prior to the WIMAG meeting in February, Mr Jerry Jenke forwarded a submission to the Denmark Shire Council and the Department of Environment concerning the state of Wilson Inlet and requesting that an alternative to the current 'bar' opening protocol be considered. This matter is to be discussed at item 5 on the agenda.
- 4.4 The Department of Fisheries has approved Zak Launay's application to vary his aquaculture licence following recent consultation with the Department of Environment, WIMAG and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).
- 4.5 The Shire of Denmark will contribute \$5000 towards the Wilson Inlet Groundwater Nutrient Investigation. This will cover the cost of the drilling program, which will commence on the 1st May and aim to construct 14 bores along the inlet foreshore from Paddyshot boat ramp to the Denmark River (proposed location map tabled). In addition to coordinating this initiative and providing technical expertise, the DoE will contribute an additional \$5000 to cover the cost of water sample analysis for the first year.

Groundwater samples will be collected from the bores and tested for Nitrogen (N) and Phosphorous (P) on a monthly basis. Furthermore, because the focus is on groundwater impact from septic systems, this project will also incorporate regular testing of relevant microbiological parameters, namely *Presumptive Thermotolerant Coliforms* and a bacteria called *enterococci*. It is expected that additional funding will be sourced to ensure monitoring can continue beyond April 2007.

- 4.6 Consideration by the Trails Committee of the proposal to establish a dual use path along Ocean Beach Road between Lights Road and the Ocean Beach Surf Club resolved to use fill to widen the shoulder of the road. Discussions also concluded that some realignment of Ocean Beach Rd would be required and that the section between the Surf Club and the Ocean Beach Caravan Park would be assigned the highest priority.

The Committee suggested the option of constructing a boardwalk for the purpose of safer pedestrian and bike access to Prawn Rock Channel and Ocean Beach would be too expensive.

Also, in an endeavour to make this section of Ocean Road Road safer for pedestrians during the Easter period, the police reduced the speed limit.

- 4.7 Correspondence received from Shire of Denmark in relation to management of Reserve 23579, mouth of the Hay River.

Brad recommended improvement of existing boat launching facilities north of the South Coast Hwy bridge to reduce recreational pressure at the river-mouth site. Basil also recommended that camping not be permitted at the site to try and minimise degradation although Dave suggested that this would not significantly reduce the impact of recreational activity as day 4WD use would still occur. It is also important to consider that if you restrict recreational activities at one location you potentially increase the impact on other foreshore areas.

One management approach may be to close the 4WD access track into this area during periods of inundation using bollards and erecting signage that states reasons for doing so. It was also suggested that a sub-committee of WIMAG attend a site meeting with Shire of Denmark and City of Albany officers to try and address this issue.

Also, Brad confirmed the entire length of foreshore south from the Hay River to approximately 1.5km beyond the mouth of the Cuppup Creek is unallocated crown land managed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) through MOU with DOLA.

- 4.8 DoE recently issued dredging licence to the City of Albany for works associated with the construction of a public boat ramp and finger jetty for the Nullaki.
- 4.9 During May 2006 the Shire of Denmark will seek tenders to develop a Boating Strategy for Wilson Inlet and the Denmark River. The strategy will focus on the immediate and long-term requirements of commercial and recreational boat users, including the subject of access and moorings, and the subsequent management of relevant issues. All plans and documents that already exist for the subject area, including foreshore management and protection plans and the Wilson Inlet Aquaculture Strategy will be taken into account during the development stage. It is expected the strategy will take two to three months to complete.
- 4.10 Phil Shephard will attend some WIMAG meetings as representative of the City of Albany on planning matters.
- 4.11 Letters notifying WIMAG members of new terms of appointment.

## **5. REQUEST FOR A REVIEW OF BAR OPENING PROTOCOL**

The group discussed the request from Mr Jerry Jenke to the Shire of Denmark that an eastern opening of the sandbar at the mouth of the inlet be considered this year. Mr Jenke's submission contained his interpretation of factors relevant to the 'bar' management issue, including water flow and channel efficiency. The submission also suggested that an eastern opening near Dunskey Reef would be a low cost option and referred to data from previous eastern openings as an indication that greater water exchange with the ocean is achieved with an east channel than for the west channel.

An analysis of the merits of bar opening strategies as a means of managing water quality in Wilson Inlet was undertaken several years ago, incorporating simulation of marine exchange through the bar under a number of channel scenarios. The simulations concluded that an east opening did produce increased marine exchange to a western opening however it was also shown that differences between east and west openings were small compared to year to year changes in ocean wave climate so that the putative advantage of an east opening in terms of marine exchange was negligible. Also, further simulations using data collected from eastern openings in the early 1990's found that an east opening potentially has greater marine exchange than previously calculated, up to 40% over a west opening. While this may seem significant it is still well within the range of natural variability which has been calculated at up to 400%. Put simply, the differences between east and west openings are already seen through natural variability.

Also, while the Wilson Inlet Management Authority (WIMA) made decisions in relation to the inlet in the past, WIMAG simply provides advice to decision making agencies, including the Water Corporation and the Shire of Denmark, which is the decision making authority on this issue. Primarily, this advice takes into account the potential environmental benefits of the location of the sandbar opening on the overall health of the inlet. However, because studies have concluded that the location of the bar opening has negligible influence in this regard, WIMAG's current

view is based on wider social factors, including the amenity of Prawn Rock Channel. WIMAG recognises there is a wide divergence of views on the community preferred location but unless there are changes either in terms of scientific opinion or levels of community support, WIMAG will continue to endorse the Sandbar Opening Protocol which favours a western opening.

Put simply, before WIMAG can consider any change to the current sandbar management approach the Shire of Denmark needs to formally request it.

**Action:** A response to the Shire of Denmark is to be compiled outlining WIMAG's position. Also, given the recent conclusion of the WIMAG review, it is proposed to table the Sandbar Opening Protocol document at the next meeting for the purpose of updating it.

## **6. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

In recent months, the Department of Environment has developed a Communication Strategy for the Wilson Inlet Nutrient Reduction Action Plan (WINRAP) with input from Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee personnel. The primary purpose of the Strategy is to ensure the timely provision of information to the community using a variety of tools to increase public awareness of issues threatening the health of the Wilson Inlet and the waterways within its catchment and to ensure WINRAP objectives are achieved.

The Strategy also recognises the need to increase community understanding of the role WIMAG play in assisting management of Wilson Inlet and therefore will contain recommendations on how this might be achieved. Following a brief discussion regarding this the group raised a number of points to be considered for inclusion in the strategy document. These were as follows:

- How much of a profile for individual members?
- Avoid duplication of Terms of Reference
- Addition of other relevant groups, eg. commercial fishermen's association, Green Skills, Denmark Weed Action Group, other industry groups
- Ensure broad focus
- Incorporate WIMAG activities in Shire newsletters

Additional feedback will be provided by individual members in coming weeks.

## **7. WILSON & NENAMUP INLETS – REGISTRATION WITH THE NATIONAL ESTATE**

Wilson Inlet is currently recognised on the National Estate database as an 'indicative place' which effectively means that following assessment of relevant factors the Australian Heritage Commission might consider the inlet for inclusion in its National Estate Register. This would formally identify Wilson Inlet as an area of regional and/or national importance.

Discussion focused on the merits of progressing this matter further and it was agreed that such an initiative is compatible with the objectives of WIMAG. However, the group resolved that further information is required regarding implications for access, benefits versus impediments, etc. To facilitate this it was suggested that an approach be made to a representative of the Australian Heritage Commission to possibly discuss this matter further with the group.

## **8. QUALITY ASSURANCE MONITORING FOR WILSON INLET AQUACULTURE**

Zak Launay provided a status report in relation to his mussel and oyster operation. He also gave a brief overview of the water quality and product monitoring aspect of his business as required under the WA Shellfish Quality Assurance Program (WASQAP). Zak also posed a number of questions about how information obtained from this monitoring and other monitoring programs undertaken in Wilson Inlet can be shared equitably between the industry, government and other management authorities and other interested parties.

Firstly, consideration needs to be given to the fact that sample collection methods across all monitoring programs must be consistent to avoid the potential for conflicting results. Dave Rushton will endeavour to discuss this further with the Department of Environment's Phytoplankton Ecology Unit, however it is important to note that WRC/DoE water quality monitoring has been conducted in Wilson Inlet for 10 years and to ensure continuity of previous and future data, any proposed change to current methodology would undergo thorough scrutiny.

Clarification was also provided in relation to last years toxic shellfish public health warning for the Wilson Inlet, concluding with confirmation of the public awareness obligations of the Department of Health (wild shellfish), Department of Fisheries (commercially produced shellfish), Department of Environment (toxic algae/blooms). It was suggested that a representative from the Health Department attend the community forum later in the year to provide information about this issue. It was also suggested that further investigation be undertaken regarding the validity of mussels as an indicator species of water quality.

Also, Zak announced the recent establishment of the WA Oyster Company and notified the group that the arrival of his new boat (approx 7m x 2m) is imminent. The boat will require a mooring at a site suitable for loading and unloading and Zak requested permission to temporarily moor the boat at the old proposed marina site on Inlet Drive. A permanent mooring is to be determined by the Shire of Denmark and the DPI in consultation with WIMAG following receipt of an application.

## **9. OCEAN BEACH CAUSEWAY**

A request has been made to the Shire that there be a review of Policy W9 Provision of Vehicular Access – Prawn Rock Channel. Some members of the community are concerned that installation of the causeway leads to an unsafe volume of traffic and causes significant damage to the surrounding beach environment.

Observation by the shire ranger over the Easter long weekend suggests that vehicle access via the surf club was not a significant issue. WIMAG resolved to defer any decision regarding the causeway until after the Easter weekend in future years. Currently there is still a significant channel traversing the sandbar that will postpone any attempt to install the causeway this year.

Any review should be a Council decision and does not require formal recommendation from WIMAG, although the group can support the proposed policy review and will no doubt be given further opportunity to provide comment during the review process. The general consensus of members was that the issue of beach access warrants careful consideration and necessitates the involvement of both the Denmark and Albany Councils and that it is important to consider appropriate and sustainable activity on popular beaches despite pressure from 4WD users and other opposing groups.

## **10. DENMARK WEED ACTION GROUP – 2005 REPORT**

Diane Harwood tabled a report providing details of weed control work undertaken by the Denmark Weed Action Group (DWAG) in Wilson Inlet foreshore reserves during 2005. WIMAG members agreed that Council should maintain its financial support for DWAG to continue to undertake weed control activities.

Shire to circulate foreshore protection brochure to private landowners directly adjacent to Wilson Inlet foreshore reserve.

Further discussion regarding the need to review the Wilson Inlet Foreshore Management Plan 1996. General consensus is that this document continues to be relevant and is merely in need of some minor updates.

**Action:** Dave to locate electronic copy of Wilson Inlet Foreshore Management Plan document for minor amendments.

## **11. FISHERIES RESEARCH**

Murdoch University's Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research recently conducted a series of workshops to describe the results of past south coast estuarine fish research, identify knowledge gaps, inform the community of the direction of current research and invite community members to discuss any concerns for the future of the south coast estuarine fishery.

At the workshop Professor Ian Potter conducted a power-point presentation about the life cycle of different estuarine species and Ben Chuwen explained how he will undertake his research, providing information regarding fish netting methods.

An additional study is proposed in Wilson Inlet looking at sea-grass (*Ruppia*) and cobbler stocks. Information regarding this is likely to be provided by the Department of Fisheries at future meetings.

## **12. WILSON INLET NUTRIENT REDUCTION ACTION PLAN**

In the absence of Annabelle Bushell, Dave tabled a WINRAP implementation progress/update report, primarily focusing on land care initiatives throughout the Wilson Inlet catchment area during February, March and April 2006.

### **13. MEMBERS REPORTS**

Jason Froud – Reports of reasonable salmon catches by recreational fishers over the Easter weekend.

Diane Harwood – Nil

Brad Kneebone – Albany Bird Group currently looking at nomination for Wilson Inlet as important area for bird habitat. Brad will possibly elaborate on Important Bird Criteria for Australia and provide relevant documentation at the next meeting.

John Xanthis – general foreshore management issues, progress of Denmark rivermouth development, etc. John will arrange a meeting with Rob Whooley to discuss maintenance requirements of a number of inlet facilities and provide a list of relevant assets to Pascoe (Shire CEO).

Zak Launay – rubbish bin required at old proposed marina site to accommodate his business activities.

John Jamieson – concerned that City of Albany doesn't give adequate consideration to Wilson Inlet. In his capacity as a member of the Tourism Advisory Group John will endeavour to raise the profile of Wilson Inlet in Albany. Also, as a surveyor working in the Nullaki and other private properties near the inlet there are opportunities to promote the objectives of the group during his regular interactions with local landowners.

Tony Fitzpatrick – Nil

Basil Schur – Currently WICC is focusing on the upper Hay Salinity Project. Tabled document regarding Gondwana Link West. Funding for 25 volunteers to work in Wilson Inlet catchment? Feral animal initiative incorporating Wilson Inlet catchment. Confirmation of successful listing on Living Lakes Network. Sub-committee of Biosphere proposal met recently and Basil discussed some of the outcomes from the meeting. Annabelle Bushell (WICC Catchment Project Officer) recently gave notice and her replacement will be finalised in coming weeks.

Danny Burkett – Nil

Dave Rushton – Nil

Colleen Donnelly – Nil

Pascoe Durtanovich - Nil

### **14. NEXT MEETING – 21<sup>st</sup> June 2006**