

WILSON INLET MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 15 AUGUST 2007 AT THE SHIRE OF DENMARK RECEPTION ROOM AT 1.00PM

PRESENT: George Ebbett, Ben Chuwen, Zak Launay, Brad Kneebone, Phil Shaw, Geoff Findlay, Helen Heydenrych, Dave Rushton, John Jamieson, Craig Carter, John Xanthis, Stephen Bondini

IN ATTENDANCE: Chris Gunby

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1.00pm

1. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

Open forum session was not required.

2. APOLOGIES

Adrian Stratico & Melinda Lyons

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20th June 2007 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES AND CORRESPONDENCE

- 4.1 Strategic Boating Plan – correspondence to Shire of Denmark advising of WIMAG response to draft document.
- 4.2 Hovercraft proposal – correspondence to Shire of Denmark in response to referral.
- 4.3 Correspondence to Ben Chuwen and Melinda Lyons formally notifying them of their membership to the group. Application received from Stephen Bondini (confirmation of his appointment to be forwarded in due course).
- 4.4 Seaplane proposal for Wilson Inlet has been withdrawn.
- 4.5 Denmark River Allocation Planning - hydrological models constructed and awaiting rain for calibration, social values survey of relevant interest groups nearing completion.
- 4.6 Water Corporation still to provide advice regarding legal position
- 4.7 Aquaculture Strategy review – status (Zak Launay). Letter required from WIMAG suggesting a review of the strategy in light of Zak's request, however the group must first adopt a position regarding the proposed extension to the lease area.
- 4.8 Wilson Inlet Foreshore Management Plan review – status (Helen Heydenrych). A meeting will be held tonight at Youngs Siding attended by relevant City of Albany staff, including Graeme Bride and Alison Raleigh-Bishop, to discuss reserve management issues. Need to reinforce CoA participation in pro-active reserve management.
- 4.9 Coastal Conference – Catchments, Estuaries, Coast tour of Wilson Inlet is finalised with guest speakers to be confirmed.

5. INDIGENOUS STUDY FOR WILSON INLET

An upcoming project initiated by South Coast NRM (formerly SCRIPT) will identify indigenous cultural heritage places and values associated with Wilson Inlet. The project will be coordinated by the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA), with support from Restoring Connections and Department of Water, and will involve consultation with traditional owners who would like to see more strategic management of the area's unique cultural values.

The project will involve archaeological assessment and will possibly incorporate an ethnological survey with the traditional owners as part of an anthropologic study to document the specific indigenous values for the area.

The project should also be community driven and provide additional outcomes (such as training workshops in NRM and/or heritage management). The idea is to develop management actions at the local and regional level and ensure there is follow-up implementation of actions led by the community. The project work will involve several planning sessions with community and relevant project partners. The field work is expected to commence in September, although this is dependent on funding which is yet to be confirmed.

This project is interesting on a number of levels, not least of which is how the project outcomes may influence the Department of Water's responsibilities under the *Waterways Conservation Act* which applies to Wilson Inlet and its waterways. For example, aspects of the Denmark River mouth development, namely the foreshore reclamation and proposed channel dredging, not only needs to consider the potential environmental impacts, particularly in regard to the potential acid sulfate soils risk, but also the need to be sensitive to the indigenous cultural heritage of the site and surrounding area.

6. SHIRE OF DENMARK PLAN FOR THE FUTURE 2007 TO 2011

The Shire of Denmark is preparing a document to help guide management during the next 4 years. It will provide an inventory of existing plans and strategies applicable to the Shire's management area, as well as identify priority subject areas for future planning documents and management strategies. A brief discussion centred on how the Plan might cater for areas currently not subject to management strategies.

Preliminary feedback – some concern regarding the breakdown between the Shire and community working/management groups due to regular staff turn-over, eg the current level of the finger jetty at the Denmark River mouth not accessible for all community people (apparently the DPI has raised this issue with the Shire). Also, need to include reference to the Denmark to Hay foreshore Management Plan (Dave to provide Helen with a copy of this plan document). Helen will provide advice in relation to the status of 'Plan for the Future' document at the next meeting.

7. SPRINGDALE DEVELOPMENT (SUBDIVISION)

The approval conditions for the proposed special residential subdivision and tourist development on Lot 1935 South Coast Highway include the preparation and implementation of a Foreshore Management Plan (FMP) for the inlet foreshore reserve area abutting the development area.

It is interesting to note that the recently completed Boating Strategy does not recommend any infrastructure for this area despite the likely future increase in foreshore access in this area due to this development. Subsequently, the FMP should address the issue of boat access to Springdale Beach. George, Dave and Geoff to further discuss this issue with Phil Shephard (Planning Manager, Shire of Denmark).

Also, while it may not be achievable as the approval process for this development is more or less complete, it is recommended a series of monitoring bores be established down gradient from the development area to enable the nutrient impacts of on-site effluent disposal to be determined. This should be undertaken as soon as possible in order to collect adequate baseline data prior to the commencement of subdivision works.

Stephen Bondini offered to contact the developer to discuss the possibility of establishing monitoring bores down gradient from the development area adjacent to the foreshore reserve.

8. SAND BAR MANAGEMENT

Given the growing community concern in relation to the future health of Wilson Inlet, Zak Launay raised the matter of inlet management and bar opening location as an important issue for discussion. Zak recommended that the relevant authorities consider alternatives to the current management approach, taking into account factors such as climate change and population growth. Zak tabled the following abstract as a summary of the discussion.

For the last 15 years Western openings have been occurring due to a push that appears to be more political than scientific.

The scientific attitude was adopted to justify that there was negligible difference between east and west openings. However this has never been verified. Many scientists and experts argue to the contrary. Now it is evident that conditions have deteriorated enough to call for a reassessment or, at the very least, to challenge the basis on which the current decisions are made.

The current state of the Inlet has serious environmental, social and economic consequences. So much so that it seems clear that a large portion of the population – both long term and recently arrived residents – is looking at what they believe is the only option left: a permanent opening.

From an aquaculture point of view, this year is a disaster that could well repeat itself if we take climatic changes into account. Deaths of both mussels and oysters lead to the conclusion that low marine exchange, coupled with last summer's conditions, are clearly directly involved. These current conditions are therefore detrimental to the social, economic and environmental benefits that aquaculture could offer to Denmark.

The conditions including foul smell and poor visual aspect have been unpleasant for swimming and boating activities as well as residences and businesses around the Inlet. Furthermore this could be problematic for fish recruitment.

These negative impacts could be reversed with an eastern opening. A trial period of 5 years, following the 2008 review of the Wilson Inlet Nutrient Reduction Action Plan, would allow for a judgement to be made based on scientific facts, instead of going for a less attractive option.

Regarding the WINRAP review, it was proposed that WIMAG could coordinate the review process, including a comprehensive consultation component (social survey).

It is probable that the inlet will be significantly below the preferred opening level of 1m AHD in October when the potato grower on the eastern floodplain requires the bar to be breached.

John Jamieson emphasised the importance of undertaking a thorough bathymetric survey of the inlet, incorporating a coastal geomorphology study, and accurately quantify the existing sand bar before deciding on the best investment for the future health of the Inlet. It was suggested that there is an urgent need for a referendum and/or a review of all contributing factors to resolve the debate surrounding appropriate management.

Following discussion in relation to the issue of bar management the group resolved to send a letter informing the Water Corporation that WIMAG opposes a bar opening below the preferred (Shire policy) level.

Zak will provide details of pathology lab results as they become available.

9. WILSON INLET NUTRIENT REDUCTION ACTION PLAN

Craig Carter tabled a WINRAP implementation progress update report primarily focusing on initiatives throughout the Wilson Inlet catchment area during June, July and August 2007. Copies of the report are available from Craig at craige@southcoastnrm.com.au

10. MEMBERS REPORTS

Chris Gunby – involved with the appeal regarding a proposed subdivision of Lot 77 Inlet Drive (the outcome will potentially have implications for future residential expansion in unsewered areas); fish kill in Stokes Inlet (14/08/07); European Heritage Study for South Coast estuaries to incorporate Wilson Inlet.

Helen – Nil

Craig – Nil

John Xanthis – dredging for hospital at Prawn Rock Channel, unhappy with the way the channel was left; Poddyshtot, spoil remains and is impeding flow (has approached the Shire regarding this issue).

John Jamieson – City of Albany increased Development Exclusion Zone in coastal and estuarine areas by an additional 0.5 m AHD to accommodate predicted sea level rise.

Zak Launay – Nil

Dave Rushton – provided results from groundwater monitoring (urban septic nutrient investigation), nitrogen concentrations are consistently high across most sites which is significant because ATUs generally reduce phosphorous but do nothing to decrease nitrogen leachate.

Stephen Bondini – Nil

George Ebbett - Nil

11. NEXT MEETING – 17th October 2007 (rescheduled to the 24th October 2007).