

## WILSON INLET MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

### MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 22 OCTOBER 2008 AT THE SHIRE OF DENMARK MEETING ROOM AT 1.00PM

**PRESENT:** George Ebbett (Chairman), Kirsty Alexander (DoW), Mark Parre, Craig Carter (WICC), John Xanthis, Melinda Lyons (Green Skills), Kim Stanton (CoA), Tony Fitzpatrick (DPI), Phil Shaw (DoF), Basil Schur, Ben Chuwen, Ian Osborne, Yvette Caruso (Shire of Denmark), Daniel Endacott (DoW – minutes).

#### 1. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

##### Case Koning

Case asked for confirmation of the date of the public report to community and was provided with the flyer by Craig Carter. Case asked whether he can get a copy of the results from the dissolved oxygen loggers currently in place in the inlet. Daniel Endacott offered to send the results to Case. Case was interested in WIMAG's perspective on this year's bar opening and suggested that dredging be looked at for next year.

Case then requested if he could sit in for the entire meeting. George Ebbett stated that the rest of the meeting is generally closed, but because this agenda does not have any particularly sensitive items, took the request to a vote and the request was approved with no objections.

##### Zak Launay

Zak gave a presentation to WIMAG members on his views of the sandbar opening issue. Zak said his reason for addressing the meeting was because of the very poor marine exchange this year again despite the very high water level of 1.15. The main points of Zak's presentation were:

Increase in marine exchange benefits:

- aquaculture operation (the low marine exchange while the bar is open is the reason why the native oyster can no longer live in Wilson Inlet)
- export of nutrients
- reduced stratification

This is the reason why the WINRAP recommends maximising water levels at opening. We know today that on its own, it simply does not work.

A second option is the dredging of the western channel that has been coming back for more than a decade but never eventuated due to the cost (\$1M), and the fact that it would almost certainly fill in within a year.

The third option which I am advocating, is the eastern channel (the one that was described by the first explorers) which considerably increases marine exchange due to existing channel and steeper gradient. Neville Bougton who was contracted by the DoW showed that we could expect at least a 5ppt increase in salinity.

Since Prawn rock channel is the only reason to have western openings and since prawn rock channel has not been used for the last 2 years and is unlikely to be used this summer again, and if we take into account that it requires maintenance to prevent it from returning into its natural state of wetland it could be a good option to connect it to a large eastern opening.

This option would satisfy everyone, benefit the environment, and be the most cost effective.

Zak then asked WIMAG to consider endorsing a 5 year trial of eastern openings. It was agreed that this could be added as an agenda item at the next WIMAG meeting to allow more detailed discussion. A copy of Zak's powerpoint presentation will be sent to WIMAG members (technical difficulties prevented Zak's presentation from displaying on the projector).

**AI: Daniel to send DO logger results to Case.**

**AI: 5 year eastern opening trial to be added as an agenda item for next meeting.**

## **2. APOLOGIES**

John Dibble (Water Corporation).

## **3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes from the previous WIMAG meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2008 were confirmed as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

Moved: Kim Stanton

Seconded: Basil Schur

Carried.

## **4 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES & CORRESPONDENCE**

Tabled: correspondence from Shire of Denmark to WIMAG calling for nominations to the Shire of Denmark Cultural Plan Reference Group. No further matters arising.

## **5. 2008 SANDBAR OPENING**

Kirsty Alexander presented the most recent salinity and nutrient data for Wilson Inlet since the sandbar opening on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008. Surface and bottom salinities and nitrogen levels were compared to previous “typical” years 1995 and 1998. It showed that this year the salt wedge took approximately 30 days to reach site 6 (near Zak’s mussel farm) where in 1995 it took 20 days and in 1998 it took 10 days. This salt wedge effect only lasted for approximately 1 month before surface and bottom salinities equalled out. This is compared to 3.5 months in 1995 and 5 months in 1998. This year once the water column became mixed, the salinity settled at about 18ppt, which is significantly lower than in 1995 (23-26ppt) and 1998 (31-34ppt).

In terms of nutrients (TN and NH<sub>3</sub>-N), trends are higher now compared to after the openings in 1995 & 1998. This is especially the case for bottom TN & NH<sub>3</sub>-N which is currently at levels between 1.0-1.4 mg/l, compared to being barely detected at similar times in 1995 & 1998. This is likely due to reduced marine exchange, but the effect of higher recent rainfall could also be a factor. There was a significant algal bloom recently, but there were no toxic species identified.

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

Craig Carter tabled an updated report on WINRAP on-ground sub-catchment works and related projects. Craig also presented a powerpoint presentation on some of the WINRAP project works to date within the Wilson Inlet Catchment. The presentation gave an overview of WINRAP objectives – to reduce nutrients and to encourage sustainable farming. Project examples were provided in areas of intensive rural land uses such as dairies, feedlots, horticulture (intensive animal), viticulture and potato farms. Drainage management included fencing drains, riparian zones, remnant bush and planting perennial pastures (example was Stanley Rd). Funding required for fencing activities works out on average as \$2,500/km and planting as \$450/ha. Funding agencies include SCNRM, DoW, WICC, WINRAP funds, Shire of Denmark, Landcare, Watercorporation, Greencorp assistance and the landholder. Craig’s role also incorporates providing workshops and education to the broader community.

Basil commented that we need to ensure the improvements in fencing levels are actually making a difference, and that there should be a collation of GIS data on currently protected foreshores and of the information collected from foreshore surveys.

John suggested that the posters for the Report to the Community be displayed at some of the focal points around town.

George Ebbett left the meeting at this point (approx. 2.00pm) and Kirsty Alexander took the position of Acting Chairperson.

## **7. WILSON INLET FORESHORE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Basil presented the final draft copy of the *Shire of Denmark Wilson Inlet Foreshore Reserves Management Plan 2008* (October 08) to WIMAG for endorsement from GreenSkills on behalf of the Shire of Denmark. The Plan is in finalisation stages with only incorporation of a preamble from indigenous community members to still be included – preamble being orchestrated through the Wilson Inlet Cultural Mapping Project concurrently in finalisation stage co-ordinated through Dept of Indigenous Affairs. WIMAG endorsed the Plan in principle subject to the inclusion of the preamble and any amendments brought to the attention of a WIMAG sub-committee by WIMAG members to be presented to Shire of Denmark prior to Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2008. WIMAG resolution reads as follows:

*“WIMAG endorses the final draft Wilson Inlet Foreshore Reserves Management Plan 2008 in principle subject to amendments to be presented to the Shire of Denmark by the WIMAG subcommittee comprised of George Ebbett (WIMAG Chairperson) and Basil Schur (Project Manager) by Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2008.”*

CARRIED.

**AI: WIMAG members to send any additional comments on the final draft Wilson Inlet Foreshore Reserves Management Plan 2008 to George Ebbett & Basil Schur by 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008.**

## **8. MANAGEMENT OF WILSON INLET (IN PARTICULAR MORLEY BEACH) AS HABITAT FOR MIGRATORY SHORE BIRDS**

Following on from the action from the last WIMAG meeting, Basil Schur (GreenSkills) tabled policy recommendations and a background report on the migratory shorebirds on Wilson Inlet with particular emphasis on Morley Beach. The following policy recommendations were tabled:

- That the unallocated public land reserves bordering the mouth of the Hay River, and Morley Beach be vested in the State Government for purposes of nature conservation (for action by the Department of Environment and Conservation, City of Albany,)
- That all policy decisions which may involve elevated water levels at Morley Beach over late summer, take into careful account the importance of this area as a habitat for migratory wader birds (for action by the Department of Water, Water Corporation and other organisations).
- That the City of Albany recognise the importance of the Morley Beach to Mouth of Hay River and take this into account with planning or subdivision decisions affecting adjoining lands. The City of Albany will be encouraged to adopt policies which minimize the possibility of development encroaching on Morley Beach. (for actions by the City of Albany)
- That ongoing contact with neighbouring landholders be maintained to provide information about the value of Morley Beach, discussion on issues of common concern such as maintenance of fire breaks and control of weeds (for actions by local community groups).
- That public access to Morley Beach be reviewed, as per the recommendation of the Management Plan (Wilson Inlet Management Group, 2002). It may be that it is time to move to a process of appropriate to institute an access system through a locked bollard, but with local farmers and local people provided with keys for the purposes of emergency or strategic access (for actions by local community groups, state and local agencies).
- That support be provided to allow ongoing bird surveys to be conducted on at least an annual basis at Wilson Inlet (Birds Australia, Albany Bird Group, State and local agencies).

- That Morley Beach to mouth of Hay River area be nominated for listing under 1) Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia and 2) the Ramsar agreement. (for actions by the Department of Environment and Conservation and the WA State Government).

This generated discussion as to any consequences for management of endorsing these positions, such as alternate pressures being directed elsewhere along the inlet, and whether the nearby community would object to decreased access. Kirsty also stated that the migratory bird information is already being fed into the drainage review. Ben raised the issue as to what ramifications will be brought about by a RAMSAR listing for decisions like when to open the bar. Kirsty suggested that the RAMSAR legislation may specify issues with water levels.

WIMAG supported the recommendations and DoW Environmental Officer Daniel Endacott was tasked with assisting Basil in actioning the recommendations.

**AI: Daniel to work with Basil in actioning Morley Beach recommendations on behalf of WIMAG.**

## 9. LIVING LAKES NETWORK

Melinda Lyons (GreenSkills) provided a powerpoint presentation on her recent attendance (with Basil Schur) at the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Living Lakes Network held at Lake Tresimeno in Italy. Melinda stated that GreenSkills has put in an expression of interest to host the 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference in Denmark. They are appealing to a number of agencies and organisations, community groups for support in preparing to host the conference in 2010. There is also the possibility of hosting a regional conference aimed at the state in lieu of or in conjunction with the International Living Lakes Conference.

## 10. DISCUSSION ON PUBLIC ATTENDANCE AT WIMAG MEETINGS

The issue of public attendance at WIMAG meetings for the entire duration of the meeting was discussed with varying opinion on the subject. It was noted that this used to occur in the past but there were problems with people interrupting the meetings, so the public open forum section was introduced instead. Problems were also raised that people's views at WIMAG may be taken to the wider community and misrepresented by community members who attend the meetings. It was also expressed that WIMAG members did not want undue public or political pressure put on them when discussing sensitive issues at WIMAG. A number of different models were discussed, including having open meetings but with Chairperson authority to close it; having open and closed sections of the meeting; adjust the agenda to extend public open forum session; and keeping the same format.

After discussion, it was decided to defer to the current terms or reference (ToR) which state "*Requests to attend the full meeting, or parts of the meeting need to be made to the Chairman. A decision on attendance will be made on the request's merits. Any such attendance will be conditional on silent participation unless otherwise agreed by the Chairman.*" This was agreed upon, except for members Basil Schur and Ben Chuwen, who wanted their preference for open meetings noted. It was also decided that the time allocated for public open forum should be increased to allow presentations that are informative and interesting to the community to be included here. This will require a review of the terms of reference.

**AI: Daniel to draft a review to the ToR to facilitate the extension of public open forum in accordance with the above agreement. A general review of ToR will be presented as an agenda item at the next meeting.**

## 11. MEMBERS REPORTS

**Mark:** Rivermouth Caravan Park work is progressing well, including the stabilisation of kikuyu on the eastern side.

**Basil:** None

**John:** Recreational fishing has been good with good catches of Snapper and King George Whiting.

**Craig:** None.

**Tony:** None.

**Ben:** Reported on the recent International Estuary conference, and noted that Wilson Inlet is currently behaving similarly to Wellstead. Species richness has decreased. Ben then asked what the process was for providing a proxy if people are unable to attend? Daniel said he will provide advice on this and can include this in the review of the ToR.

**Yvette:** Thanked GreenSkills for the work they had done on the Foreshore Management Plan. Also there are some new grants available for Wilson Inlet and looking at the drafting of a Coastal Management Plan.

**Kim:** None.

**Phil:** None.

**Kirsty:** Welcomed Daniel to new Denmark Environmental Officer position and organiser for WIMAG. Let members know that a few DoW officers will soon be trained by Neville Boughton to do the survey work of the channel. The ecological values project is near finalisation for Denmark River. The Drainage Review is still ongoing and has been extended to February 09.

**Melinda:** None.

**Ian:** None.

## **12. NEXT MEETING**

Next WIMAG meeting will be held Wed 17 December 2008 (third Wednesday).

Meeting closed 3:45pm.

### **ACTION ITEMS FROM WIMAG MEETING (22/10/08):**

- 1) AI: Daniel to send DO logger results to Case.**
- 2) AI: 5 year eastern opening trial to be added as an agenda item for next meeting.**
- 3) AI: WIMAG members to send any additional comments on the final draft Wilson Inlet Foreshore Reserves Management Plan 2008 to George Ebbett & Basil Schur by 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008.**
- 4) AI: Daniel to work with Basil in actioning Morley Beach recommendations on behalf of WIMAG**
- 5) AI: Daniel to draft a review to the ToR to facilitate the extension of public open forum in accordance with the above agreement. A general review of ToR will be presented as an agenda item at the next meeting.**