

WILSON INLET MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 21 OCTOBER 2009 AT SHIRE OF DENMARK, RECEPTION ROOM AT 1.00PM

PRESENT: George Ebbett (Chairperson), Chris Gunby (DoW), Melinda Lyons (SoD), Ben Chuwen, Warren Miller, Mark Parre, Basil Schur, Phil Shaw (DoF), Gerard Healy (DoT), Jennie Carey (DEC), Daniel Endacott (DoW – minutes).

1. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

Case Koning – At the last meeting I suggested that the opening was the best I had seen for a number of years, that was true at the time. However the significant front, with associated high seas and 6m swells that came through on the 22-23-24th August swept across the bar and the eastern channel was closed off and is still closed off.

Subsequent to that date, serious further erosion has occurred along the western edge of the channel adjacent to dog island. However of concern to me is that no significant salt water intrusion beyond the delta has occurred subsequent to that date. As we're also aware we have had significant rainfall this year with associated high inlet levels and significant outflow through the bar opening has maintained that at a reasonable depth and width. The current situation is that we have a brackish inlet and I am concerned that the status of the inlet as a major fish nursery will be seriously compromised by this situation.

As the members of this Group are aware I have promoted, over the years, that the lack of saltwater intrusion should be addressed by dredging a channel through the delta and also a more effective opening. I have referred on many occasions to the WINRAP document Action DC1, with the lead agency being the Shire of Denmark, WIMAG, DoW. Nothing has been done during the duration of the plan and I strongly believe that the current situation the inlet is in is a reflection of the lead agencies lack of foresight and not been able to foresee the obvious. You have been reminded often enough, but when are you going to do something about it? Time has already run out to do something this coming season.

Also, a WINRAP completion report should be done that shows whether targets have been met. Should be in one report.

Chris Gunby – Water Corp are looking to form a group to look at dredging possibilities. There hasn't been a level of community support for one option. Not just one agency is involved. There has been in principle support from SoD and DoW.

Case and Owen McIntosh requested to stay for the rest of the meeting. There was no objection from members.

2. APOLOGIES

Sandra Maciejewski, Elissa Stewart, Kim Stanton, John Dibble, John Xanthis, Ian Osborne, Kirsty Alexander.

New members – George welcomed new members Jennie Carey from DEC and Gerard Healy from DoT.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Confirmation of minutes from the meeting 19 August 2009 were confirmed as true and correct.

Moved – Warren Miller

Seconded – Melinda Lyons .

Carried.

4. CORRESPONDENCE & MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Actions from last meeting:

4.1.1 - Daniel to finalise ToR and circulate to relevant agencies for final sign-off.

Daniel explained that he adjusted the ToR to include DEC as a member. They will now be finalised and signed off, unless any members raise concerns with this.

It was explained by George that the idea for DEC to be a member came about from the proposal to change the vesting of the Hay River reserve to DEC.

Jennie – great for DEC to be a member. Would be great to have more involvement in Denmark area.

Basil – I think it would be great, subject to staff being available from DEC's perspective.

George – DEC attendance can be on as an needs basis if preferred.

4.2 Correspondence In:

4.2.1 – Denmark Sportsperson of the Year Awards

Members were advised of the letter and can contact Daniel if they want to see it.

4.2.2 – Email from Albany Bird Group Re: Morley Beach horse riding tours

This email outlined Albany Bird Group's strong concerns about a proposal to conduct horse riding tours at Morley Beach, and their dissatisfaction with WIMAG's advice on the issue. The question was asked whether we should respond?

The issue was discussed by members. It was mentioned that WIMAG did not give formal advice on the issue; there was just general discussion and a range of views were expressed.

Basil mentioned that the environmental impacts on waders is not well known, and should be further pursued.

Daniel mentioned that the DoW's advice to State Land Services was that more information was needed, and the applicant should liaise with the Albany Bird Group. The letter also raised the possibility of a trial. The Bird Group has since advised that they do not support it. We could then update our advice to reflect this.

It was noted that there is nothing to stop individual persons riding their horses there now, but a business being set up on this basis is a different issue.

Some members also raised whether the original plan for a trial was viable from a commercial point of view. An impact assessment should be done for a trial.

Members agreed that a response to Albany Bird Group was required, explaining that WIMAG has further discussed and is no longer in favour of a trial in light of other agency comments. The correspondence could also mention that the Heritage trail is available for horse riding.

The DoW will also send updated comments to the State Land Services.

Melinda mentioned to members that there was currently an application to the Shire for trail rides on the heritage trail.

Jennie mentioned that the Walpole Wilderness Area Management Plan has scope for horse trails.

Action – letter to Albany Bird Group in response to their concerns (Dan to organise).

4.2.3 – Letter from South Coast Licensed Fisherman’s Association

A letter from South Coast Licensed Fisherman’s Association raising the issue of equipment at the mussel lease on Wilson Inlet not being adequately contained, and defective lighting of the area.

Phil Shaw explained that there are 3 sites and they’ve been inspected. 1 site had deficient lighting. All material was contained. Lessee is fixing the problem.

It was determined that a WIMAG response to South Coast Licensed Fisherman’s Association was needed.

Action – letter to South Coast Licensed Fisherman’s Association (Dan)

5. WILSON INLET COMMUNITY FORUM (DoW & SoD)

Daniel, George and Melinda briefed members on the planned community forum to be held on the evening of 2nd December 2009. A draft agenda was distributed.

George explained that he originally thought it would be a normal report to community as in previous years. However it has to address the issue of the sandbar opening debate as well. It’s possible we might not have enough time on one night.

The question was raised as to whether there should be two separate forums? The general response was that this would be difficult to organise because agency representatives are won’t be able to attend at both.

Ben mentioned that the Shire CEO asked him to present at the forum, and that he’d asked the organisers but hasn’t received a response.

George responded that there is an issue of perceived bias. Also, presenters haven’t been set. The bar opening issue is turning some presenters off. There is a concern that you stated that the fisheries research was lacking.

Ben said he has spoken to DoF and it is stated in their info that best approach is combination between the DoF data and independent data.

The question was asked whether DoF could present at the forum?

Phil responded that it would have to be one of the scientists. We need as much info as possible presented, both DoF and independent.

A suggestion was made that some of the presentations not relating to the sandbar debate could be presented at the WIMAG open forum meeting (eg. WINRAP, research studies, etc). Then the forum could follow on from this with presentations and a panel on the bar opening location.

It was suggested that we would need a strong moderator who would need to keep discussion brief and allow motions, but set strong boundaries. Could have payed independent facilitator, or Terry Redman? Managing the motions requires a good facilitator. George stated he’d prefer not to no longer be involved given the scope of the forum. The Shire President was another option. The steering group should set clear objectives and make sure presentations hit the mark. Make presentations available to steering group before.

It was suggested that there are not enough relevant presentations on the bar opening to lead into the debate. We could have 2 agency science presentations, 2 WISE/WIRG presenters with an objective chair. It was raised that there should be debate that the opening location doesn't matter as well as the east/west. It was also noted that Malcolm Robb would essentially present a 'neutral' view in relation to the opening location.

The issue was raised that all existing data is for western openings. More data would need to be collected for an eastern opening to compare east and west.

The question was asked, what would be the outcome of the forum? General discussion was that the outcome would be a motion that would be voted on at the forum and then go to the council meeting. Another option is that everything at the meeting is minuted and provided to the Shire.

Members generally agreed that their preference for the agenda would be to have 2 agency science presentations, 2 WISE/WIRG presenters followed by a community discussion, all facilitated by an objective chair. The steering group would see presentations before hand and clear them. Shire president will chair and allow a motion after debate.

These comments will be taken back to the steering group.

6. PODDY SHOT MANAGEMENT (DoW)

Daniel explained that a draft procedure has been prepared for the ongoing management of the accumulation of dead plant material at Poddy Shot and the associated bad odour and recreational impacts that occur over summer. The procedure also outlines the requirements for possible minor dredging of the boating channel. The procedure has been motivated by complaints last summer and the DoW's one off financial assistance to the Shire to assist in managing the issue. Comments are sought from WIMAG members.

Melinda explained that the Shire is planning to develop a *Ruppia* policy. This will instigate it or feed into that process.

It was questioned whether there is there a method that will minimise disturbance to sediment and the risk of acid sulphate soils (ASS)?

Daniel responded that it depends if you're talking about *ruppia* removal or dredging. Some methods have been trialled in the past to drag a collection device along the shallows and collect *ruppia* whilst minimising disturbance. Dredging would have to address ASS issues.

Mark noted that the Shire has done some revegetation works around the foreshore at Poddy Shot. Any proposal would need to make sure this is taken into account.

7. PROPOSAL FOR INTERNATIONAL WETLANDS & SHORE BIRD EVENT (Basil)

In relation to Wilson Inlet being a member of the International Living Lakes Network, there is a proposal for the above event to be held in Denmark in late 2010. Green Skills are seeking interest from agencies and organisations to help plan and promote the event.

Basil explained that the aim is to host a regional event (rather than the previously proposed international event) to link Wilson with existing Living Lakes networks, and it would focus on caring for migratory shorebirds in the management of the inlet. Would involve some international attendants, and link in with other wetland groups in Australia and internationally. There would need to be partnership with Bird Groups and we'd look at applying for Lottery West funding.

Melinda attended a Living Lakes conference last year, and talked with government agencies to seek support for hosting the 13th International Conference. There was a lot of

'in kind' support, but not enough financial. Tough time for funding, so not appropriate in current climate. Therefore a regional conference seems a better idea and more practical. The event normally takes place annually. Wilson Inlet is the only current Australian member of the Living Lakes Network..

Jennie expressed that DEC would likely be very interested in providing 'in kind' assistance.

Basil explained that they were seeking in principle support from WIMAG for the event.

Motion: That WIMAG give in principle support for a Regional Living Lakes Network Event based in Denmark, and that Green Skills keep the group informed on any progress.

Moved: Ben

Seconded: George.

Motion carried.

8. MEMBERS REPORTS

Chris – DoW received funding through State NRM funding program for 2 Rivercare Officers across 8 catchments on south coast (including Wilson Inlet). This includes considerable funds for on-ground works.

Water Corporation has recently consulted landowners on the possible location of a new Denmark River dam. This is part of their Water Forever initiative, which includes 30 sites possible sites across the South Coast. DoW will give advice on overall economic, social and environmental factors. The DoW's opinion may differ from Water Corporation's opinion. The consultation has sparked quite a response from landowners.

The DoW is still working on Protection Plans for the Denmark & Quickup rivers. This will hopefully provide funding for waterway protection works.

Melinda – Hay River reserve vesting issue was decided at the October council meeting. It was carried for DEC to take the vesting for the reserve. The motion included a list of items that needs to be addressed in an MOU. This would need community consultation. The Shire will provide input to the management plan for the reserve, including on the current use, fire access, survey of bird assets and shorebird habitats, corridor linkages. The Council would like prioritisation for urgent on ground works, and for Council be invited to continue involvement.

There was a motion passed on Poison Point to allow \$15,000 for roadworks to be spent upgrading the track down to poison point. \$11,000 fund for a walk trail and signage, picnic tables already exist. It is good that the road will go in first, this was a condition of the grant application.

There has been some weeding occurring along the foreshore – Green skills received funds for Denmark Weed Action Group to do some weeding in Mt Hollowell and foreshore areas. Attacked a lot of asparagus weeds, and developing a GIS database of weeded areas. 2 weeding workshops have also been organised.

4 peppermint trees have been planted at the Rivermouth, picnic tables are being sourced.

George mentioned that he is concerned about the Hay River reserve issue, with the possibility that everyone will wait for someone to make the first move. How do we set up a community group or committee for involvement into management plan? Do we involve WIMAG?

Jennie responded saying she'd need to talk within DEC to determine status of acquiring other neighbouring reserves. It is likely we'll use a steering group, usually via council. It can be broadened to include community members or WIMAG. DEC will take action in the first instance to instigate this.

Jennie – Walpole Wilderness Area Management Plan has been gazetted. The Walpole Nornalup Inlet Marine Park was gazetted recently too. It is good to link comparisons between the two estuaries. Consultation on the Munda Biddi trail is starting.

Ben – thankful that rumours about the Denmark dam have been answered by Chris. Recently been to US to present data on fish research at a conference. I received great feedback that the south coast estuaries are unique, and hence getting good presence on world stage.

Gerad- none.

Warren – The inlet is currently low in salinity, about 10ppm. No marine exchange is really happening. The water is pretty milky.

Basil – Would like to get Water Corporation to do a briefing on the dam proposals and the Mitchell River proposal.

Mark – quite a few plants have died when the inlet wasn't opened in 2007. Is any monitoring being done?

Chris responded that transect photo monitoring has been started, but not sure if it is still happening. Will follow up.

Daniel – There have been recent elevated phytoplankton levels in the inlet, caused by the continued strong spring river flows. The dinoflagellate *Dinophysis acuminata* has been detected at levels slightly above the health guidelines for consuming shellfish. On 30th September there were elevated levels at Site 12 (eastern side of the inlet), and on 15th October it was detected at Site 6 (near the mussel farm). The Department of Health (DoH) and Shire of Denmark were notified of this. No warnings were considered necessary at this stage by the DoH.

At the last WIMAG, some concerns were raised about the scale of the Wilson Inlet telemetry plot on the DoW's website. We have come up with some options to change the scale, and I'd welcome any comments from members who are interested.

George – Wants clarification from DoT on boat safety requirements and what's required. Gerard said he would follow up with Tony Fitzpatrick.

9. **NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting will be on 16th December 2009.

Meeting closed at approximately 3.00pm.

Action items from meeting held 21 October 2009:

- 1) Letter to Albany Bird Group in response to their concerns (Dan).
- 2) Letter to South Coast Licensed Fisherman's Association (Dan).