

WILSON INLET MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held 21st September 2011.

Venue: Shire of Denmark Reception Room

Date: Wednesday 21st September 2011-09-20

Time: 1pm

ATTENDEES

George Ebbett (Chair)

Kirsty Alexander (DoW)

Ben Carter (DoW - minutes)

Miriam Lang (DAFWA)

John Taylor (Community member)

Warren Miller (Community member)

Kees Coning (Community member)

Dawn Pedro (Community member)

Elissa Stewart (WICC)

1. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

Gerald Hughes (community member) – Wilson Inlet Restoration Group (WIRG) member, recreational angler. Expressed his concern about a combined management group. Reasoning that another group cannot increase the capacity of the Denmark community to improve the management of Wilson Inlet. Gerald stated that the dismal bar opening highlights the failure of the departments. He asked 'When can we expect the channel to link a wide opening with the Poddy shot dredging?' DoW has held meetings for the public, why was this not done last year. In addition, will it be done this year (distributed images to the members showing previous openings)? Kirsty advised Gerald to provide the list of questions in writing so she could provide answers to all points raised.

2. WELCOME and APOLOGIES

Welcome

Apologies

Angela Dickinson (Community member)

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Confirmation of minutes from the meeting September 19th 2011.

Moved: Warren

Seconded: Kees

4. CORRESPONDENCE & MATTERS ARISING

4.2 Correspondence In:

Kirsty – The DoW algae branch has provided results from last six weeks Wilson Inlet sampling, revealing the presence of a dinoflagellate bloom, which we often get this time of year. The Department of Health has the species on the list as being potentially toxic, and have the blanket warning of not consuming wild shellfish. No further action likely.

4.3 Matters arising:

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5. 2011 BAR OPENING

Kees – I have previously stated my disappointment of the bar opening, both at the previous WIMAG meeting and at a council meeting. My question is ‘Does the DoW consider the opening was effective? In addition, what do the Doppler results show?’

Kirsty – We do not have the Doppler results back yet, and until we do, we will not know how effective the bar opening has been.

Kees circulated some photographs of the inlet, showing the channel at varying time after opening. He explained that photos show how ineffective the opening has been, how narrow the channel is, and how little silt goes out. With such good rainfall, and good potential of discharge, it has been totally stuffed up. We have wasted two years. When are DoW and the Water Corporation going to learn how to do it effectively? The protocol is in error. My major concern is the health of the inlet, and this is the major concern of the whole community.

Kirsty – I do not have anything to add that I have not said before. We have the protocol in place, and the WC did actually follow it.

Kees – The DoW decides the location of the channel, and the direction of it.

Kirsty – The protocol is to be reviewed. In terms of the opening, the location is specified.

Warren – Putting the channel in the same location does not work.

George – The bar opening at the Walpole inlet hasn’t changed in 100’s of years as yet, but the delta has changed dramatically despite the continuous location of the channel.

6. BAR OPENING PROTOCOL

Kees opened stating the issue of a western opening is contentious, especially if there is no potential channel behind the location, and that the channel is redirected to the major channel on the eastern side of the bar. Warren suggested that this would take out the surfing club. Kirsty acknowledged that everybody has different views on the channel location. Kees commented that the protocol is not effective, and asked the members how the protocol could be made effective?

Kirsty – Not everyone will agree with that statement. The reason the minister did commit to the intensive monitoring is to try to answer the question of effectiveness, however, it means many different things to different people. There are other things that have a greater affect on inlet conditions such as nutrients from the catchment and annual rainfall and runoff.

Kees – I maintain that a good opening will improve the health of the inlet. Most of the people who have seen it will agree. The issue is the protocol needs to be improved. I am not worried about timing or heights; we need to discuss the channel. Most people want more marine exchange.

Miriam – as an employee of the public service, and having sat on the drainage committee, I recall that the protocol was developed for a review period of five years. Is there sufficient anxiety in the community that this protocol is reviewed rigorously within the next 12 months, or what will happen if it waits another 2 yrs for a review? The review will cost a lot of money, a lot of community engagement and a lot of public sector engagement. Nothing has actually changed since we started that protocol. Is there any value in revisiting something that the community has agreed with and signed off on?

George – The protocol is a live document that can and will undergo review, I think we should move on.

7. AQUATIC USE REVIEW (Dept. of Transport)

Item omitted in the absence of a DoT representative.

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8. SOCIAL SURVEY

Ben distributed the draft social survey analysis to the members [see attachment] and highlighted some key points. Ben requested that the members take away the draft, and contact him with any queries, concerns or comments, so the document can be finalised. He asked the members if there were any comments already. Kirsty was disappointed to see that respondents are still misinformed, in particular that they believe the bar opening flushes nutrients from the inlet. Kees felt that the higher water levels during non-opening has lead to increased macroalgae in the bar area. The members felt the information provided in the analysis should not guide changes to the protocol, as decisions should not be just based on people's opinion. There were no further comments from the members.

9. DENMARK WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT Q & A

Kirsty – WC have not sent a representative, but they have provided WIMAG with answers to the questions submitted by the group. The answers are very brief, what does WIMAG think about the answers provided?

John – There is not much revealing about these answers.

George – This is a corporation handball

Dawn – It is presuming we are just going to go away, but we should be talking about this issue

George – In relation to this issue, WC has threatened the Denmark shire with a moratorium on development, and that the continuation of the pipeline to the Minsterly Rd. / Ocean Beach area will not go ahead, this is corporate blackmail.

Dawn – I propose that we write back saying that they are not sufficient answers, and we want some real answers.

George – there is a general dissatisfaction with the results of these questions, how do we want to deal with it?

Members propose WIMAG write a letter to the Minister of Water, and cc Minister of Agriculture, expressing the groups' dissatisfaction with the answers provided to the groups questions.

Action: Write a letter to the Minister of Water and cc Terry Redman

10. FUTURE DIRECTION OF WIMAG

Kees – It is a shock that it is the opinion of DoW that WIMAG should be disbanded. This will curtail the provision of technical and scientific information, and will curtail community members to provide comment on issues. DoW has an obligation to inform the community of issues (WINRAP 2003), it is highly improbable that DoW will improve its act after disbanding the group. I have a letter written by the office of the CEO, claiming most discussions centre on the opening location, and that the debate always turns east vs. West. My argument is that this is not the case. I have stated my disappointment with the bar opening as the community has the same opinion. The department should be able to take criticism of its actions, if the council feels strongly enough about the termination of the group, the dissemination of technical information should still be provided. I would like WIMAG to continue at least on a quarterly basis.

Kirsty – I am seeking the views of members on the future of WIMAG. As you know, key roles of the group are to provide advice on development that may impact the inlet as well as encouraging the preparation and implementation of plans aimed at protecting the inlet. In recent years, there has been few developments referred to WIMAG and plans or policies are already in place for foreshores, the inlet and specific activities. Agencies like DoW have specific roles for these activities and continue to consult with the Shire when seeking community input. In the absence of new research, development or proposed new plans appropriate for management by WIMAG, it is considered justification for the group's existence is limited. Recent agendas and meetings

have confirmed there is limited business and instead the meetings have discussed items for which direction has already been set by policies or plans. I would like to make sure it is understood that the Department's involvement in Wilson Inlet and that advice will be provided to the Shire on matters of concern. The Department will continue to liaise with other agencies and will contribute to the review of existing plans and policies should they be required. WIMAG has achieved considerable success and I would like to emphasise that its proposed ending is not a reflection of its members or past achievements, what it is, is a reflection of the fact that inlet management needs need to progress. Management has moved on from the intensive research and extensive planning of the past. I seek members' opinions and endorsement of the proposal to reach agreement to end WIMAG's current role.

George stated his intention to retire from WIMAG after November, having submitted a formal letter of resignation a couple of months ago with effect to that, and it does not relate to him whatever happens. Kirsty confirmed DoW will be doing report to community, and that where there is a review of a policy or plan, a group is put together for a particular purpose. DoW funding has decreased, there is no ongoing research now, but the ongoing monitoring program will continue. George noted Dr. Paul Close is researching cobblers, and he wrote a letter of support on behalf of WIMAG - there are many avenues for research.

Kirsty – As I have pointed out in previous meetings, the focus of the current government is on state development, and we have to align our priorities with government priorities. The need for this kind of intensive involvement is no longer there, and as you are aware our resourcing is much reduced, and given the existing plans and policies and the lack of referral of development proposals resourcing a group like WIMAG focussed purely on Wilson Inlet is not considered viable. I would also point out that under existing legislation there is a fairly limited range of activity we are obligated to undertake, such as dredging approvals, and we are not obligated to deliver reports to the community. These are very useful though I agree and would like to offer at least one in the near future.

Kees agreed, stating that the Department of Fisheries are not present, the City of Albany has not attended in a long time, and nor has the WC. Kees suggested it could be considered that an alternative such as quarterly meetings be arranged to update the community, as the loss of WIMAG is a great loss for the community. Elissa supported the idea of quarterly meetings.

George noted the shire is of the opinion that it virtually will take the place of WIMAG. Dawn explained people already lobby her as a councillor, as opposed to as a WIMAG member. Kirsty said that groups across the board are being forced to question if the funding is available to continue, and to make changes to how they operate. DoW may need to rethink how it disseminates the information. George concluded, advising November will quite possibly be a wrap up meeting.

11. DAFWA SEASONAL FORECASTING TOOL

Miriam Lang gave a presentation on the Seasonal Forecasting Tool developed by the Department of Agriculture and Food, WA. Miriam demonstrated to the members how to access rainfall forecasts for specific locations, and months of the year, and explained how the level of confidence in the forecast is attained.

12. MEMBER'S REPORTS

John – Madfish Charters have resumed Bibbulmun track transfers across the Inlet, not sure how long this can continue with the water levels dropping.

13. NEXT MEETING.

Next meeting will be on 16th November 2011
Meeting closed at approximately 2:55pm

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