



**DRAYTON HARBOR SHELLFISH PROTECTION DISTRICT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MEETING SUMMARY

Date: February 18, 2004
Time: 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Place: Marine Drive Harbormaster Meeting Room – Blaine

AGENDA

1.	4:00	Public Comment Period
2.	4:05	Review Agenda and January Meeting Summary
3.	4:10	Selection of Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman
4.	4:20	Drayton Harbor Water Quality Update through mid-February (Geoff Menzies)
5.	4:30	Update on site selection for new Blaine Wastewater Treatment Plant (Steve Banham – City of Blaine, Public Works)
6.	4:50	Taxing authority of the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District: a dedicated source of funds for program implementation – Discussion
7.	5:20	Planning for Spring 2004 Shellfish Festival
8.	5:50	New Business
9.	5:55	Next Meeting's Agenda

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Committee Members

Geoff Menzies
Bjorn Hrutfiord
Bob Williams
Janet Hansen
Charlie Hawkins
Kathy Cullen
Pam Taft
Bonnie Onyon

Others

Mark Henderson – Ecology
Steven Banham – City of Blaine Public Works
Scarlet Tang – Whatcom County Water Resources
Sara Kinney – Nooksack Natural Resources
Ken Carrasco – WSU Extension
Kati Johnson – Whatcom County Water Resources

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED

- 02/18/04 Agenda
- DH Water Quality Table, Nov. '99 to Feb. '04
- Graph of Station 4 Fecal Coliform levels Nov. '99 to Feb. '04
- DOH Preliminary Summary of Marine Water Data for DH
- Snohomish County SPD funding under RCW 90.72
- Draft Status of Implementation of DHSPD Recommendations found in the May 2000 DHSPDAC Status Report and Water Recovery Plan

MEETING CONTENTS

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1. Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

Meeting participants introduced themselves to the group. New member Ken Carrasco was introduced. Ken has a fish biology background with an interest in shellfish issues. He works for the WSU extension under a WSU/UW Sea Grant. Welcome, Ken.

2. Review Agenda and Previous Meeting Summary

The Agenda and Previous Meeting Summary were approved as written.

- *Action:* Kati Johnson will distribute the 1/21/04 Meeting Summary as final.

3. Selection of Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman

The AC nominated Geoff Menzies as Committee Chair. All were in favor. Geoff is the Committee Chair. The AC nominated Charlie Hawkins as Committee Vice-Chair. All were in favor. Charlie is the Committee Vice-Chair.

4. Update on Drayton Harbor Water Quality through mid-February – Geoff Menzies

Geoff distributed to meeting attendants a Drayton Harbor Water Quality Table, Nov. '99 to Feb. '04 and Graph of Station 4 Fecal Coliform levels Nov. '99 to Feb. '04 for information. A DOH Preliminary Summary of Marine Water Data for Drayton Harbor was also distributed.

Geoff met with George Boggs, John Gillies, and Frank Meriwether regarding the November 20, 2003 rain event. The DOH has done a preliminary evaluation excluding all wet weather events that effect Drayton Harbor water quality. DOH looked at rainfall amounts for the sampling day (day 0) and four days before sampling. If rainfall exceeds one half inch in a 24-hour period then those data are excluded. The distributed document shows the results of analysis excluding the November 2003 rain events. Please note that the DOH document is preliminary and not for official use.

The November 2003 rain event will not be excluded outright from the entire dataset. It will be excluded along with other data based on rainfall criteria when DOH considers a partial reclassification from "Prohibited" to "Conditionally Approved" status based on rain events. While all stations in Drayton Harbor are currently classified as "Prohibited", the preliminary analysis by DOH suggests that all stations (except stations 8 and 15) have the potential to meet both parts of the shellfish standard and be reclassified. DOH will probably look at all the work that has been done and conduct another shoreline survey this spring. It is likely there will be a partial reclassification to "Conditionally Approved" this spring based on the preliminary numbers shown in the document.

While a "Conditionally Approved" status is an improvement over "Prohibited", a "Conditionally Approved" versus "Approved" classification creates additional challenges for commercial shellfish growers due to intermittent and unpredictable closures related to

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rainfall. When the beds are classified as "Conditionally Approved," growers are less competitive and struggle to provide product on a consistent basis, which it makes it more difficult to maintain clients.

The Whatcom Conservation District will submit a report to DOH regarding the high fecal coliform count from the November 2003 rain event. This report will be submitted to DOH for consideration regarding any reclassification this spring.

The hope is to have locally-grown oysters at this spring's Shellfish Festival. The Harbor will continue to be sampled twice a month, likely through the end of March 2004. Puget Sound Restoration Fund has funding through the County to assist with sampling through May or June 2004. A future sampling schedule will depend on funding and classification status.

See the DOH website for more information on shellfish bed classifications.

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/grow.htm>

5. Update on site selection for new Blaine Wastewater Treatment Plant – Steve Banham

Steve Banham, City of Blaine, Public Works, gave an abbreviated presentation about the site selection for a new Blaine Wastewater Treatment Plant. The full presentation was given to the Port Commission on February 17. The presentation summarized the role of the Citizens Wastewater Advisory Committee and their site recommendations, benefits and challenges of site selection, the type of technology the new plant would use, discussion of West Blaine's needs, and an estimated budget.

One of the main goals of the new wastewater treatment plant is to redefine what a treatment plant is and have it be an amenity to the community. Today's treatment plants, also known as water reclamation facilities, are much more visually and olfactorally appealing. There is also an opportunity for a new plant to have educational and interpretive elements that strive to involve and educate the community about water use and quality.

A Citizens Wastewater Advisory Committee (CWAC) was appointed by the Blaine City Council and established in May 2003. Steve reviewed the outlined objectives that were used in drafting recommendations for different sites. On a scale of 100 points, the CWAC gave safeguarding marine water quality 36 points.

The Citizens Wastewater Advisory Committee recommended three site alternatives for a new wastewater treatment plant. Two of these sites were in Canada, one on Marine Drive in Blaine. In November 2003, the Greater Vancouver Regional District notified the CWAC that it is not interested in providing sewage treatment for Blaine.

The CWAC met again and re-evaluated the Marine Drive site and considered other alternatives. The CWAC discussed treatment and piping technologies because of a concern of a pipe running under Drayton Harbor between West and East Blaine. The CWAC also had more refined cost data by this time.

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A recommendation was made to the Blaine City Council that the new wastewater treatment plant be located on a 2.5-acre site on Milhollin Drive. Milhollin Drive runs perpendicular to Marine Drive down to the boat launch. The CWAC recommended that a treatment plant at this location must provide high quality wastewater treatment (i.e., provide high quality effluent), high odor, noise, and visual mitigation, have a small footprint, and be an amenity to the community with educational and interpretive opportunities.

There were several benefits and challenges noted for the Milhollin Drive location in comparison to other options:

- + Lower cost – direct funds to positive features and less to piping as in traditional plants
- + Good location for educational and interpretative elements (near park, dock, ferry, etc.)
- + Option to include equalization storage at the plant
- + Able to be done in phases
- + Built to handle West Blaine waste, if needed
- + Can take E. Blaine load off of W. Blaine plant
- Odor and visual mitigation
- Find the right footprint
- Stay consistent with the community and Port visions for the area
- Site ownership and control issues (Port or City)

There are two possible undeveloped site options on Milhollin Drive that would provide various options for locating outfall. One option is to overlay the treatment enclosure with the marine enclosure in the Harbor. Another simpler option of using the current outfall would require more piping and might be more costly. However, a higher quality effluent would mean fewer shellfish problems in the area.

The tribes' main concerns are to re-open the shellfish areas. Steve noted that having an outfall located in the current area would not pose a problem to re-opening shellfish beds because the effluent from a new plant would be of much better quality. Steve noted DOH's opinion is that with improved effluent, the closure zone would be pretty tight and probably around the pipe itself, just offshore. More research is needed of the data coming out of other plants using similar technology.

The new wastewater treatment plant would use the membrane bio reactor (MBR) method. The MBR method is especially suited for areas such as Drayton Harbor where higher water quality on a smaller footprint is needed. This method allows the plant to be enclosed within a building allowing for greater flexibility in its appearance. Odors are controlled in a MBR plant by covering and reducing the amount of air in the treatment process, and then treating that air. The MBR method also allows for a phased solution – membranes can be installed as needed.

Steve noted that the plant would have a 700,000-gallon capacity equalization storage located under Marine Drive. The construction of the equalization phase could be timed with the planned reconstruction of Marine Drive.

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A goal of a new wastewater treatment plant in Blaine is to redefine what a treatment plant looks like. Steve showed pictures of similar facilities in the U.S. and Canada. They are visually appealing and do not look like the traditional smelly, open-pit, industrial sewage treatment facilities. These newer facilities are being dubbed “water reclamation facilities” and can be amenities to their communities. One member noted that one such facility in Vancouver, WA overlooking the Columbia River Gorge, is located in an affluent residential area, and has weddings held at the facility.

After meeting with the Port staff, a two-day charrette was conducted where an architect/facilitator was brought in to discuss the plan. The Port and City laid out their overall long-term visions for the Harbor area. Six potential sites were identified in the Marine Drive area. Pros and cons were discussed for each site with a focus on a plant’s contribution to and possible advance of the overall collective vision for the area. Charrette participants voted for site #6 – a Port property at the southwest end of Marine Drive that is planned for industrial development. A plant located here would fit into the Port and City’s long-range vision for the area.

An artist’s conception was created that had the plant fitting on as little as one-half to one acre with space reserved for future additional buildings. Administrative and educational offices would be located near the front of the facility. A viewing-type glass structure would be included at the front of the facility and would fit in with the architectural style of the area. The processing areas would be at the back of the facility where shipbuilding and industrial activities currently exist. Truck traffic with an MBR plant is about the same as other methods – about three trucks a week. Site #6 is already planned for industrial development, so truck traffic would not be out of place.

Steve noted that he met with the Port on February 17 to discuss site options. Site #1 on Milhollin Drive is still a possibility. A glass viewing tower included at this site could tie in with the future boardwalk and bridge extension. A facility at site #1 could be excavated down somewhat to minimize any visual blocking of the marina. However, Steve noted, one would encounter water table issues if the plant was too deep. In addition, a big and low building is not attractive from an architectural standpoint. The land around Marine Drive is fill so a plant at any of the proposed sites would need to be pile-supported, regardless of design.

Steve outlined costs of a new water treatment plant by phase. Figures include planning, design, and construction management costs.

I.	Equalization Storage construction. (Possibly begin as early as this summer.)	\$4 million
II.	Plant Construction with 25-year capacity Outfall Construction and improvement	\$15 million \$500,000
III.	West Blaine Solution (3 options)	\$7 million (average)
	TOTAL	\$26.5 million

Other options include West Blaine (\$30-49 million), East Blaine (\$33 million), or Birch Bay Water/Sewer District (\$39 million).

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Construction of the equalization storage beneath Marine Drive could begin this summer with plant construction beginning early 2005. Completion of a new wastewater treatment plant could be in 2008 or 2009.

Birch Point is a growing area with both Blaine and Birch Bay service areas. There are three possible options for a West Blaine solution. One possibility is to link W. Blaine flows to Birch Bay Water and Sewer that provides service on Birch Point. Another option is to build a small satellite plant in W. Blaine. A third option is to take waste to a new Marine Drive location. This option raises some concerns of having raw sewage flow through a pipe beneath Drayton Harbor from W. Blaine. More data are needed before any of these options are finalized.

The CWAC is no longer meeting. However, the City plans to keep members informed of the progress of the project via a mailing list and may solicit their input at a later date.

The next steps include gaining the support of the Port Commission, finalizing a General Sewer Plan, determining a Rate Plan, finalizing Lift Station 1's equalization plan, and starting the wastewater treatment facility's planning.

- *Action:* Steve Banham will keep the DHSPD Advisory Committee updated on the wastewater treatment facility project's process.

6. Taxing authority of the DHSPD: a dedicated source of funds for program implementation

Under the state legislation that formed the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District (DHSPD), the County Council has the authority to charge a fee for implementing elements of the program. This is an option the DHSPD has never used. The County Council would have to amend the Ordinance that established the shellfish districts. Whatcom County has adopted the May 2000 Status Report and Water Recovery Plan, written by the AC, as the shellfish protection plan for the Drayton Harbor watershed. Many elements of the program have been implemented with an array of funding sources, but there is more to be done. For example, the Puget Sound Restoration Fund has raised over \$200,000 in financial contributions and in-kind support over the past three years for program implementation. These funds have been from the County as well as private sources and other grant programs.

Geoff noted that Drayton Harbor is at a critical point where it is likely to see a "Conditionally Approved" classification in the near future. Might an upgrade mean the AC will dissolve? Geoff noted that until the root causes of wet weather events and pollution sources that lead to problems in Drayton Harbor are addressed, there would continue to be water quality problems. He thinks it is time to re-evaluate how projects are going to be funded over the next few years. He noted that a critical review of the program and what it would take to implement key remaining elements needs to be done.

The challenge facing the AC is how to convince the County Council to enact a fee that is sufficient and fair to everyone in the watershed.

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Geoff asked the group if they have a copy of the May 2000 Status Report and Recovery Plan and accompanying County ordinance. Several members have seen the Plan but do not have a copy of their own.

- *Action:* Kati Johnson and Scarlet Tang will get a copy of the Plan to each AC member, either by link to the website, e-mail attachment, or hard copy.

Geoff talked with Keith Wilnauer, Whatcom County tax assessor. He noted the approximate taxable property value in the watershed is more than \$800 million (excluding land classified as timberland or forest land, confined animal feeding operations subject to NPDES [National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System] permitting, and wastewater treatment facilities). A \$0.25 fee per \$1000 property value would yield \$200,000 a year. Keith noted that DHSPD would most likely not be able to construct a fee based on the assessment of property tax.

Geoff distributed a one-page summary of shellfish protection district funding in Snohomish County. Snohomish County established the Stillaguamish Clean Water District with funding that generates over \$800,000 per year. Constructing a rate structure is beyond the expertise of the AC. Snohomish County hired an engineer to design a rate structure that is fair to everyone in the watershed.

As the document explains, the Snohomish County rate structure is based on assigning a rate category (based on land use classification and/or degree of impervious surface) to each tax parcel in the district. The information on parcels used to determine rate categories is available in the tax assessor's database. One challenge with designing a system of funding is that there can be no services funded by a fee that are funded under other legislation.

- *Action:* Geoff will talk with Snohomish County about their SPD funding and obtain more information.

Geoff noted that he would like to look at the Whatcom County Flood Tax as a potential source of funding to help implement key elements of the plan.

The AC would have to determine where any generated funds would be used. Geoff noted a few possible projects that currently have no funding:

- Dealing with the many hobby farms in the watershed that are impacting the water quality of Drayton Harbor;
- Implementing an on-site-sewage operation and maintenance and inspection program; and
- Continuing to monitor water quality in Dakota and California Creeks as well as priority storm water drainages. (This is currently funded in part through work conducted by PSRF, Hirsch Consulting, and NWIC).

- *Action:* Geoff will get a clearer idea of funding through the Flood Tax from Bruce Roll and Scarlet Tang, Whatcom County Water Resources.

Geoff identified the next steps that need to be taken. He distributed a summary of which

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DHSPD AC recommendations in the May 2000 Plan have and have not been implemented.

- *Action:* AC members will go through the distributed summary document and the May 2000 Plan to identify recommendations that have not been implemented.

7. Spring 2004 Shellfish Festival Planning

This year's Shellfish Festival will be either Saturday, May 8th or Saturday, June 5th from 11:00 a.m. to 5:30ish p.m. Both of these dates correspond to huge low tides. The tentative plan is to have an invitation-only lunch for approximately 150 to celebrate reclassification and to acknowledge all the people who have contributed to the community oyster farm and shellfish protection district. This would be organized by PSRF and Resort Semiahmoo if they agree to participate. Following the lunch, and similar to past Open Houses held by the DHSPD, displays and educational materials would be set up and available to the community at the Port Conference center on Marine Drive. There would also be a BBQ, trips out to the tide flats, and plover tours. There would be no charge for the community to attend the Open House

The Semiahmoo Resort is not going to host a "Shuckin'" event this year because past events have been very expensive and due to timing/weather factors.

Farms in and out of the drainage might be asked for donations. One member suggested contacting Farm Friends. One member asked if the City of Blaine would be involved.

There was discussion among the group about where these events would be held – lunch at spit and the rest at Blaine Marina. The AC was concerned how the invited lunch guests would transition into the later activities if their locations were separate. It was noted that part of the community would be isolated if the lunch was at the Resort. Some members expressed a desire to keep the Festival a local event by having all activities on the Marina side of the Harbor. Other members noted that scheduling could be changed to allow for lunch guests at the Resort to come to the Marina and enjoy the other events.

The details of the displays, volunteers, etc. are yet to be determined. Geoff asked if any committee members would be interested in assisting on a Festival Planning Committee. Bob Williams, Janet Hansen, Charlie Hawkins, Sara Kinney, and Scarlet Tang volunteered.

- *Action:* Geoff will contact members interested in being on a Festival Planning Committee to meet at a separate time.

8. New Business

There was no new business to note.

9. Next Meeting Agenda

Two items were identified for the next meeting's agenda

- Examine how to decrease bird droppings; consult a study on the topic.
- Update on sea grass cottages including a timeline.

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