

**San Juan Initiative  
Lopez Island Library  
May 21, 2007**

**Meeting Summary – Draft**

Prepared by Amy Windrope

Policy Group Members in Attendance:

Tom Cowan	Lynn B	Lisa Byers
Nick Jones	Ron Zee	Patty Miller
Kevin Ranker	David Jones for Liz Illg	Jonathon White
Kit Rawson	Pete Kilpatrick	Jeri Ahrenius
Sam Buck	Steve Simpson	

Invited guests:

Paul Kamin, Director, Eastsound Water Users Group  
John Whetten, Chair, Water Resources Committee  
Barbara Rosenkotter, Lead Entity Coordinator for Salmon Recovery  
Vicki Heater, Env. Health Specialist

Public:

Jack Cory  
Jody Kennedy  
Laura Arnold

**Decisions:**

Jonathan White appointed co-chair.  
San Juan Initiative will use a modified consensus as described below  
Alternates must be approved by Chairs. Alternates may participate in conversation but may not vote.  
Meeting notes for May 7 and April 27th approved by full Policy Group with changes.

**Welcome and agenda**

Kevin: Described role of Co-Chair, asked for nominations. Sam nominated Jonathan White, Lynn seconded. Lisa nominated Tom but Tom declined. Jonathan was unanimously approved for Co-chair position.

**Decision-making structure:**

Carol introduced the “consensus spectrum” and suggested a modified consensus approach that allows issues to go to a vote when consensus fails. A quorum was decided to be 2/3 of the local Policy Group which is 10 people and a majority of the full group. If the Policy Group can not reach consensus, they may initiate a 2-step process for voting.

Step 1: vote to go to a vote. If consensus is not reached, the Policy Group may initiate a vote to resolve an issue. A super majority is required (2/3 of local and 2/3 of whole group).

Step 2: Vote on issue. For an issue to be decided, a super majority is required. (2/3 of local Policy Group and 2/3 of whole group.)

### **Meeting Summaries**

It was decided that the San Juan Initiative will keep “meeting summaries” not minutes. Drafts of the meeting summary will not circulate outside of the Policy Group until approved in a public meeting.

Changes to the notes from the May 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting:

- Notes instead of minutes; don't include the agenda
- Add date and page number

Changes to the notes from the May 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting

- Page 4 list of issues- delete house-site clearing and logging”
- Delete all personal references in notes
- Every page has date and page number

Meeting notes for May 7 and April 27<sup>th</sup> approved by full Policy Group with changes.

Summary of Manager's Meeting on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

- Context: letter from Bill and County Council (Shared Strategy and County as leads) inviting participation
- Good participation- offered support- data, staff, technical support, funding
- Need to head in this direction in Puget Sound and excited

Marine Manager Workshop- exciting, MRC is interested in partnering with the Initiative to provide some policy analysis for the Marine Stewardship Area Plan's priorities.

### **Presentation on water quantity issues in San Juan County**

Vicki Heater

Discussion supported by John Whetten, Paul Kamin and Barbara Rosenkotter

*What are key protection issues:*

- seawater intrusion
- nitrate contamination (caused by septic systems- requires careful monitoring and adaptive management)
- build-out impairing existing water supplies
- density of development leading to septic systems too close to each other and to wells.

Where do nitrates come from? Nitrate is a form of ammonia- urine

Does the County monitor for other septic system based pollutants?

No; use nitrates as a tracker but don't test for things like pharmaceuticals or heavy metals which are also potentials

What are the regulations to restrict the amount of water withdrawn?

Well pulls saltwater in- County has done well with this issue by restricting flow or raising well up so that the sea water isn't pulled up; restrictions are common; one way to get to issue would be to designate high risk areas so that we could work with community in an area to increase communication

Role of rainwater catchments? Rainwater catchments must go through regulatory process if used for drinking water. The County issues permits for single family development but under state water law, you need a water right. This discrepancy has led the County to be out of compliance with state water law. New general permit for County will allow water rights and rainwater catchments approvals. County will hold permit and each new permit for single family development will subtract out of total volume allowed for each island.

What percentages of wells are metered? Old wells are not metered. Metering of community wells is standard practice. Hard to get a handle on individual wells but it is a small percentage.

### *Surface Water*

Why isn't retaining water in streams a key issue? Groundwater withdrawals is still a small issue. Human consumption is not a huge impact, water use in SJ County is really pretty low. Irrigation is not a large impact but that may shift – except saltwater areas and contamination

Barbara: Significant gaps in water quantity- stream flows and habitat- consistently allowing impoundments that limit stream flows. There are several cases in San Juan County of upstream impoundments drying up streams. Need to address stream flow issues; permitting of ponds and impoundments. The County currently does not focus on habitat issues surrounding water quantity. Freshwater inputs are critical to nearshore environments (shellfish beds, spawning on beaches etc) are impacted by freshwater inputs- not well addressed and need to look at more US Corps of Engineers report – talks about springs everywhere and this doesn't seem to connect to what you are reporting- we have changed hydrology significantly – diverting and draining surface water management

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### *What are the gaps that should be addressed?*

John Whetten:

Shoreline of the islands- freshwater lens is thinnest, most easily affected and where most of development is happening- many exempt wells and many more being permitted, withdrawal of more than the resource can support- more to retain the natural hydrology of the islands is a benefit- shoreline is already platted and ready to develop

- encourage people to limit consumption from freshwater lens
- water catchment preferable to drilling wells
- Effect of seawater intrusion is most acute at shoreline. There are very small lots being purchased right along the shore. Owners of these lots should consider community water groups or get their water from inland sources.

Comments from Paul Kamin:

- Monitoring is funded by DOE not a County commitment- need to monitor groundwater levels for quantity and quality
- Need to increase the frequency of testing- relatively inexpensive to make decisions more proactively
- Need to support the county hydrologist because too much rests on a part-time person- that position dependent on outside funds-
- Recharge protection- stormwater planning, as we look at development- taking more water and destroying the way that we get water; East Sound limiting withdrawal to less than half of water right because we are concerned about quantity.
- SJC has some of the most liberal policies to well head protections- we have a large number of penetrations into the aquifer. Easy to put wells into places where lot sizes are too small.
- SJC is a series of aquifers- where are the aquifers? Lack of information about where the aquifers are and how they are connected. Where is the interaction between aquifers, recharge areas and habitat areas?

Who is involved in regulations?

County  
State Dept of Health  
DOE

Kevin summary:

- holistic look from
- habitat protection
- recharge protection
- build constituencies of people who understand and advance
- shoreline areas- catchment and getting wells off the shoreline
- county budgetary priority
- well-head protection

Public Comment: Jack Cory: please make copies; think it is important to keep track of who is saying what and why- it is important for decision-making; this is key as representative role

### **Priority Issues**

Policy Group Members were asked to bring 3 top issues that we then tallied

Water quantity- fresh: 10

Water quality-fresh: 7

Water quality- salt: 7 (10 if combined)

Toxics: 4 (pollution of upland soils, solid waste)  
Population growth and development as it affects natural vegetation: 8  
Conservation of natural habitats and rural lands:

Mid-way through tallying priorities, it became clear that Policy Group Member's priorities needed more definition and would not fit easily into the structure that was provided. Policy Group Members were then asked to identify what they wanted to protect. This conversation was greatly constrained by time.

- County-wide office of ecosystem health
- Air quality
  - Impacts of climate change
- Protection of shoreline functions
- Protection of nearshore habitats
  - Synchronization of goals and policies
- Biodiversity
- Protection of productive landscapes including shellfish and agriculture (above??  
In rural lands)
  - Protection of diversity of human community
- Ecosystem structure (upland and marine)
  - Establish a minimum baseline for ecosystem health- what is the common understanding of what we are trying to protect- when is enough enough?

**TO DO:**

- List of Regional Group/Staff regional appointees/Locals
- List of whom is coming on June 13<sup>th</sup>
- Send electronic copies of new notes
- Please make copies for the public
- Come back to issue of representation of those at the table
- Add to community calendar from newspapers
- Need a purpose at top of each hand-out
- Staff takes the list or priority issues and creates coherent package of issues for Policy Group to prioritize.