

MASON COUNTY CLEAN WATER DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes for March 9th, 2023 (via Zoom)

03/09/2023 – CTO 1:02 pm by Commissioner Shutty

Welcome & Introductions: Roll Call

Members: Erica Marbet - SIT, Nick Schneider – MCD, Kevin Shutty – BOCC, Teri King – Citizen, Evan Bauder – MCD, Jason Ragan – Taylor Shellfish

Other Agencies/Public: Jena Ross – Craft3, Jennifer Dow – Craft3, Art Whitson – Port of Grapeview, Jean Frost – WSDOH, Tom Bloomfield – Seattle Shellfish, Seth Book (Citizen), Constance Ibsen (Citizen), Bob Pastore (Citizen), Trevor Swanson

County Staff: JJ Stepan – Water Quality, Erik Doran – Water Quality, Ian Tracy – EH Program Manager

Review Agenda: Teri requested an item to be added, DOH recreational shellfish beach classification discussion. No other additional items. Approved.

Review/Approval of minutes: Constance wanted to add that she was in the December meeting. With that amendment, there was a motion to approve the minutes made by Erica Marbet and seconded by Jason Ragan. Approved, unanimously.

Public Comments: None

Program Overview:

- Jennifer Dow from Craft3 gave an update on financials and loans closed in Mason County through the end of 2022. Craft3 closed 17 loans, committed amount \$586,638, Water treated \$2,190,000.00. Low Income Families assisted total 8. Seth requested that we talk in future meetings about what craft3 does beyond sewer and septic as they do such innovative things for clean water. Erica asked that we make a tradition of including these numbers in minutes as it is positive news.
- Art asked if Craft3 is doing any monitoring for Mason Lake. Ian explained that they are a financial institution that help provide loans for water quality, like septic issues. Art said so someone must be out taking samples in Mason Lake, right? Ian replied, a broad number of places do sample in areas and there's not a comprehensive monitoring for every water site. He doesn't know of anything ongoing from Ecology but knows of the sampling for the 303 listing, though it's not ongoing sampling. Art expressed concern for cyanobacterial blooms which were seen in Mason Lake in the winter. Seth said this may be a discussion about lakes in the future but cyanoblooms are a concern in fresh water as well, so CWD does include Mason Lake I believe.

Ian added, there's Ecology that runs the harmful algal bloom program and anyone can submit a sample for harmful algal blooms, they don't really accept samples through winter months, usually stopping around November, and they start accepting samples again around April or May. They sample for toxins and not the cyanobacteria themselves. Seth wanted to add that in wintertime a lot of times it is septic – sewage, which has phosphorous which is a blooming

nutrient and in lakes can bloom these things, it could also be that the lake turned over, or there was a wind event, and it dredged up phosphorous from the bottom, etc. It is not automatically a septic concern, but most times it is. Ian mentioned, unless you do manual removal from the bottom of a lake, you can't really get rid of phosphorous. Seth said there are organisms in Fawn Lake and some of these organisms can move up and down – during day they can photosynthesize and then go down to the bottom, pick up phosphorous and move back up. It is a concern in the future. It is good to have this anecdotal information to make future moves with it. There are physical things that can be done like moving aquatic weeds, but more research is needed. Art said he wants to start a baseline study in Mason Lake, but he knows it's very expensive to do the sampling. He's using a DOE certified lab in Tacoma. Microbiologist identified the cyanobacteria in Mason Lake. Moving forward, if the state can't do it, Port of Grapeview. Mason Lake and Benson Lake are in our part of the taxing district so being commissioner that's what I'm going to do in the future and hopefully down the road maybe we can get the county or state DOE to help us investigate. Ian says that's what I was wanting to say is there's already an existing program just not as available through winter months. He referred to a website he sent to Art that can be utilized as they sometimes make exceptions. Anyone can submit samples. Art said what he wants to focus on beyond that is getting baseline of lake and finding baseline parameters. Teri said in chat, Teri King from Washington Sea Grant can and will look at a blue green algae lake sample when Ecology is not able to because it is outside of their sampling intake period. We have been studying cyanobacteria in that lake for a long time, and don't forget that variety of blue-green algae is located in an area with endangered species of plants in that lake, so be very careful when traversing. Deal with and control aquatic weeds in the lake Teri King explained the complete plan and survey of water done to maintain invasive plants, the district has been renewed twice now in Mason County. Lake Limerick also has their own limnologist that works on the lake. Teri said, maybe you and I as residents can work with them to focus more on water sampling versus plant removal. We can talk offline and meet up for coffee some time and talk about that. Erica asked, how has Art not become aware of this? He would be part of the district. Erica stated that it seems like the lake management district would be the right place to push harmful algal bloom issue.

- JJ briefed on his ambient monitoring work for the last 3 months, he and Erik have been working on their own respective shoreline surveys. Erik has been ongoing along Oakland Bay, finding one hot spot, and has begun working on it and has more shoreline to cover. JJ has been covering the shoreline of Annas bay and Union to the mouth of Skokomish, with no hotspots detected yet. He has also been focusing on smaller target areas, especially culverts under the highway that would land into a drainage ditch and make it's way on to a beach. Acknowledging a few properties of concern with septic deficient history, he sampled around the areas, and is happy to report everything is looking healthy overall, as well as Weaver creek.
- Erik explained the sampling process starting up Deer Creek and Cranberry Creek. There was a lot of salmon carcass, but everything looked relatively good. He hit a couple of agricultural areas and was pleased to see the areas were clean and well maintained. JJ showed Deer Creek, where he has sampled all culverts, explaining the big area between road and Deer Creek with culverts that dump into wetland area. He sampled there and everything came back very clean. One

agricultural area was sampled and noted no high hits. One area of concern has been pinpointed where Spring Creek empties into Deer Creek, and he is waiting for results on this sampled area.

- Erik focused on Oakland Bay drainage area, mentioning covering the same ground as a historic ecology case where he re-sampled. He showed a decent geo-mean of 436 and Ecology is aware of it, the state is aware of it, and he is following up with them. Other than that, sample results through the whole area was displayed on the map being shared with the group, JJ showed the clean Deer Creek sample information, and Erik stated he is pleased with the results.
- Erica asked about the side with 1120, JJ confirmed that's the one below Oakland Bay farms, labeled OB-10. Erica asked the flow for that day, to which JJ confirmed they're not measuring flow with the samples. Trevor said if you want more detail with load and flow, I can send those or show later. JJ said, for these shoreline surveys, they've focused more on culverts and even little, tiny trickles from the beach to very high output culverts covering drainage of large stretches of roadway, etc. Seth said, maybe in qualitative notes, "lots of flow", "culvert", these notes would be helpful. JJ said moving forward, more detailed notes on flow would be a good idea and acknowledged that.
- JJ mentioned that he is trying to develop and implement a consistent way of logging samples, with the goal being to have consistency to the point that anyone can pick up where someone left off with data. He spoke to his recent work beginning with Esri field maps, a mobile app that allows the user to create maps of points from your phone while you're out in the field which could save as a layer every time a point is visited and be easy to navigate data for any user.
- JJ has been knocking on doors concerning deficient septic systems and reported that the total from the last meeting to now is 99 household visits, with 30 confirmed repairs. A few repairs were done after visiting the property, but a majority were homeowner repairs that had already been done and not reported to the county. There are roughly 15 people he is working with on a regular basis to stay updated on their plans for system repairs.
- Ian wanted to discuss launching an annual water quality report. He mentioned the different types of forms the report could take, i.e. direct mailing across county, press release, or releasing some of the water reports through social media and posting on county website. He asked the group what cycle they would like the annual report based on, the end of the calendar year, or what cycle? The pro's of the end of the calendar year were discussed as the tides are more favorable in this time and there is also more time for office work for a report in winter time.

The finances of information dispersal were discussed, explaining that sending out a small postcard could range from \$6,000 - \$9,000. Pages can range from \$14,000 - \$20,000. Erica said she would rather see the money go to sample time, which the group heard. She suggested putting the report in the Mason County Journal, and then hit social media and every electronic platform that is used. Ian said his idea would be having a limited printing that we use to hand out at events like Oysterfest, with most of the report being available online and heavily pushed

through social media. He mentioned liking the idea of using the Journal too, to which Erica suggested he talk to Barbara Ann. Constance mentioned if we did June – July schedule we could catch people who are here in summer, to which JJ agreed this was a good point. Realistically, people are around water more in Summertime. A lot of people with summer vacation homes are behind on septic maintenance, and maybe being able to reach them and get clean water on their mind may be helpful for our end goal.

If we released a report July 1st this year, we will have almost a full year of data as we started in August. We could do another in January of 2024 if we find it wasn't a good time to release a report. Another benefit of July 1st is the report would be fresh for Oysterfest, and we have a lot of outreach opportunities at Oysterfest. The group agreed to July 1st for the first annual water quality report.

- Ian said there is a funding source coming to Mason County, for more water quality work in the South Sound region (which would not include Hood Canal) it would mean us hiring a third water quality employee if that funding happens. In the meantime, we have a point of proposal with the Conservation district, MCPH, Squaxin Tribe. Essentially, the piece of funding Mason County would have would be for extra outreach, meeting and public meeting, and mailers. Nick gave a number of \$57,480 for MCPH to do that increased public outreach. There was mention from Nick of the Puget sound national estuary program, applied for Puget sound shellfish SIL, award was 438k and some change, focus areas will be WRIA 14 15 + 16, threatened shellfish growing areas 5-10k, close to 25k acres shellfish growing areas, mason conservation district's skookum watershed project, objective to form a special program to address water quality concerns in skookum watershed, annual meetings with Squaxin tribe to discuss progress and efforts in watershed, this is exciting as its able to give us a special chunk of watershed and help us track our own strategies for effectiveness.
- Ian started off on this topic stating that previously, Teri wanted to bring up DOH beach classifications, focusing on brown parcel closures depicted on the WSDOH map. Ian said at least two times a year, I get a call or email from one of Jeans staff and we discuss every single one of the closed parcels, their status, whether they're an active pollution source, and this changes as some get cleaned and corrected. Recently, within 6-7 months ago, some parcels were changed on the map to not be brown parcel closures but to become unclassified areas, and I think that's what Teri wanted to discuss.

Jean Frost opened the explanation, stating, like Ian said, there are a variety of what we call parcel closures or closure areas which are not prohibited, so they are not, they are brown pollution color, and they can be determined or made in a variety of ways. You can evaluate shoreline on a rotating basis every 12 years, due to direct onsite failure or drainage with elevated bacteria levels that we think are affecting the safety of shellfish harvest areas, a good example in Mason County is the Hoodspout area, and there isn't a known failure onsite septic in that area, but there is a drainage that has really elevated levels that we suspect may be onsite septic related, or just pollution, as well. The other, is programs like Mason County Public Health,

doing shore work and water quality work and notifying us of failures and direct issues, at this time we'd create an area or parcel closure depending on our internal guidance, those are the 2 main ways, like Ian says, we periodically reach out to our local health partners to ask for progress updates on the closures. 9 out of 10 times, we are aware of pollution and correction work like drainages or septic repairs and so in several areas you will see those parcel closures won't last very long. We have other long-standing ones, that's kind of our process and so when we are going to remove them we have a different process in that a lot of times we're waiting for a septic to be repaired or confirmation that it's no longer directly impacting a growing area, and bacterial levels are lower, or some sort of pollution source has been identified and corrected. It is intended to be a shorter term than a classification change, with no defined limit for how long we can keep areas in this closed status, but we are working hard to try and get those removed as quickly as possible. We are understanding that some things are very hard to fix and take years of enforcement and that there are no good solutions for some as well.

Constance said, as a citizen, there's some confusion, for instance, about what is really happening – so what is happening with summer tide and the brown, so we're calling that a parcel closure, right? It was confirmed, yes. Constance confirmed, so the brown dots are called parcel closures. Jean explained, yes, so it's not a classification change but it means the same thing, i.e. we do not believe it's safe, there's a pollution source there, and commercial harvest is not allowed there and it is not recommended to privately harvest and eat from that area, however we do not have control over personal consumption on your own tidelands.

Teri followed up on that example, and said sometimes those locations say "please go down and enjoy yourselves" with those shellfish, so when your team calls in every 6 months Jean, do you guys have a strategy for taking care of these locations? How can we do a better job with a parcel closure, making sure it's identifiable with a future owner, how do we get to that? In the case of brown dot there in Tahuya, Duwatto, could that ever go to unclassified, or will it remain as a pollution source going brown? Jean responded that, generally, if there's a parcel closure we are not contacting the parcel owner. We may, if there was a commercial harvest site existing on that parcel, as in a commercial operation it is our obligation to notify. Generally, we leave it up to local jurisdictions to have a conversation with private property owners, it varies from county to county for what their process is for that information. We don't have a ton of these closures in the Puget Sound. Ian explained what we do in Mason County, we are looking at every single one of these closures every 3 months at least, discussing with owners, what are you doing to get this fixed? There are a few with no possibility of repair in any close point of time.

When asked about a specific resort with a related issue, it was said out of an abundance of caution, DOH will likely keep that brown until there's not a pump tank located on the beach. The 3 main resorts with this issue, I have notified and conversed with several times, so them claiming to have no knowledge is not true. Recently, I've convinced the owner of Summer Tide to display a sign. The latest owner of Summer Tides does have a plan to correct. One failed septic on the property, and use has been discontinued for the 4 or 5 RV slots. Mikes Beach Resort used to be brown parcel and is now an unclassified area, so it was never supposed to be a brown parcel said Jean. At some point, it ended up being that way and it's unclassified versus

being brown and they will not allow us to evaluate their system or beach. Unclassified for commercial harvest means the same thing. Teri asked, so between the two programs, if there's a commercial kitchen there, that's where Ian's team has the ability to inspect their septic as it is a part of the food code, right? To inspect that septic system, so are we using all of the tools we have to look at those parcels? Ian said, so for food service license standpoint, this is the first year we are not renewing facilities if they don't have an up-to-date o/m in the last 12 months for renewal. This was always supposed to be happening but was not. We will be closing within next 48 hours any who are outstanding on their o/m. Summer Tides does have a food license, and they are not deficient in the system that supports the food facility. Sunrise Hotel is going through a re-development, we have ironed out a plan, which consists of removing all RV slots, putting in a huge treatment level A system. Anything shown as downgraded or closed is something we are actively working on, anything related to a pollution source that Mason County can regulate, we are actively pursuing, those are our core goals.

Next steps:

- Next Meeting June, 2023.

Partner updates:

- Ian said that Alena Reynolds is leaving Ecology, that's why she is not here, the new contact is Hannah Coe, she's not here today but she will be our new contact for anything water quality related in Mason County.
- Erica shared that, thanks to Mason County, the tribe has been sampling Skookum watershed and Kamilche peninsula. Fecal coliform winter counts are low and that's what I know right now.
- Trevor Swanson shared his screen with the group showing results from earlier in the discussion, focusing on the Oakland Bay Farms culvert, displaying the September 2021 results that showed really high hits that have been knocked down quite a bit. OB-10 is the same as OBC014, we have come down with some higher hits lately so we'll continue to sample that along with Mason County. I think they plan on putting some more vegetation in the mud around the creek so we will see what that does. He shared recent data from Oakland Bay, 614 is at head of bay where Cranberry and Deer Creeks head in. There are higher hits in saltwater in summertime. Last year versus this year, we do have improvements in the approved area of the bay. It's really just the head of the bay that's seeing problems right now.
- JJ spoke to a section of map in Caldervin Creek, up the middle of a row of houses, and every single one of houses there has septic system with median installs of 1970, and the king tides push water and do flood all properties so it is an area of concern.

Additional Section: Resources shared in text chat in the meeting –

1. Here is spencer lake district information –
<https://masoncountywa.gov/ac/spencer-lmd/index.php>
2. Mason Lake District –
<https://masonlakelmd.gogladly.com>

3. Island Lake District #1 –
Doesn't have an independent website. Resolution and other materials are on the county website.
4. The Harmon Dumping –
https://products.kitsapsun.com/archive/2004/01-17/378096_sewage_dumping_allegations_lead.html
5. For Background information on the Oakland Bay conditions –
<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2064/2015/07/Oakland-Bay-Water-Quality-Improvement-Report-and-Implementation-Plan1.pdf>
6. Puget Sound National Estuary Program List
<https://pspwa.app.box.com/s/f3zun7ie3n2wuefar8bdgoq8qmgvxwhh>
7. <https://www.summertideresort.com/>

Adjourned: Motion to adjourn made by Nick Schneider at 3:02 pm, seconded by Teri King.

Respectfully submitted:

Cheryl Craig, MCPH Clerical & Ian Tracy, EH Specialist