

San Juan Islands National Monument Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

September 27, 2023

Meeting via Zoom

9:00 a.m. MAC Chair Jamie Stephens provided a welcome and gave a brief introduction to Zoom and best practices. The MAC members in attendance were Amy Frost (public at large), Richard Wigre (public at large), Jamie Stephens (Local Government), Tracey Cottingham, Erin Corra, Shirley Williams (Wildlife/Ecological) (Education/Interpretation), Del Guenther (Wildlife/Ecological), Ruth Milner (Wildlife/Ecological), Amy Nesler (Recreation/Tourism) and Tom Reeve (Cultural/Heritage).

9:03 a.m. BLM District Manager Kurt Pindel welcomed the group.

9:05 a.m. The MAC members introduced themselves and mentioned their interest areas. Then BLM members introduced themselves. Then the agenda was reviewed.

9:17 a.m. The MAC asks about the need to redo the charter. BLM clarifies the charter renewal process. They discuss the history of charter revisions, expressing interest in seeing a red line version. The MAC then mentions ongoing support, learning and readiness to contribute to charter revisions and offers historical files.

09:34 a.m. Updates are given on various summer activities. Acknowledgment is given on the efforts of volunteers and the public in supporting the Monument Advisory Committee. The MAC highlights the importance of nominations for the committee and emphasizes the need for a strong pool of candidates.

09:42 a.m. The MAC discusses the significant contributions of Park Rangers stationed on Lopez and the involvement in community engagement, trail work, and citizen science projects. Challenges were addressed in accurately tracking visitor numbers, particularly those arriving by boat. She also touches on advancements in technology for visitor data collection. The conversation shifts to discussing visitor data trends, the impact of changing demographics, and collaborations with other committees and organizations.

9:59 a.m. The MAC discusses hunter activity in the south end of Lopez, highlighting its significance in understanding land use patterns. While specific data on hunter activity is limited, it's acknowledged as an important aspect to consider in overall land management. The discussion shifts to future trends in visitor numbers, with an emphasis on the evolving demographics and potential shifts in recreational preferences. This prompts considerations for long-term planning and infrastructure development to ensure that the Monument can accommodate visitors effectively while preserving its natural resources.

10 a.m. The discussion then shifts towards permission requests for hunting in the area. The process of obtaining visitor counts is explained, mentioning the use of infrared counters and other methods. This data is then segmented into visitor use days and further categorized by activity. This polling process is highlighted as complex due to budget concerns and privacy requirements.

10:05 a.m. The MAC continues discussing hunting permits on Lopez Island during the general season, emphasizing the rarity of deer tags being issued through the permit system. Information about

deer from Lopez Island is shared, suggesting five to 10 hunters participating actively. Then, attention is drawn to the importance of engaging with tribes to enhance salmon habitats. The tribes' extensive tracking efforts regarding salmon movements, buoys, and impacts of visitations to the San Juan Islands are acknowledged.

10:09 a.m. The MAC updates on the tribal forum development are provided, highlighting the valuable partnership with local tribes in the management plan. A third-party facilitation service is considered to ensure unbiased coordination. Efforts to establish effective communication early in planning processes are emphasized. The facilitation process is expected to yield substantial insights into tribal partners' needs for the San Juan Islands National Monument. The focus then shifts to the volunteer program. Revitalizing and organizing volunteer agreements is mentioned, with plans to acknowledge and award volunteers for their contributions. The need for accurate volunteer hour reporting is emphasized.

10:31 a.m. The MAC discusses the potential BLM acquisition of Watmough Bay. There was an ongoing discussion on its potential transfer to the National Monument. Tribal input was sought, with five responses favoring incorporation into the National Monument.

10:33 a.m. The MAC then discussed the potential formation of a "friends group" to support the National Monument. This group could receive resources and funds, potentially through cooperative agreements. A discussion on the structure and role of this group was proposed, recognizing the need to balance tribal interests with those of the broader Lopez community.

10:54 a.m. The focus shifted to cultural resources. Monitoring revealed no new disturbances. The Tribal Forum played a crucial role in shaping cultural resource management plans. This involved considerations like prioritized site monitoring, stabilization efforts, and addressing any barriers to treaty rights. The exchange with other monument managers, particularly from Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, offered valuable insights into building effective tribal collaborations.

11:00 a.m. During this time, there is a discussion about engaging with tribes in areas like the Grand Staircase and Bears Ears. The emphasis is on learning from tribal relationships and management practices elsewhere. It's stressed that the committee needs to be informed about the best practices in co-managing bases with tribes.

11:05 a.m. The conversation shifts towards understanding the demographics of indigenous visitors to BLM sites. Questions are raised about whether staff, volunteers, and committee members are familiar with the history and have made efforts to engage these visitors. There's recognition of the need for increased knowledge and training among committee members.

11:10 a.m. Shirley Williams shares her perspective on the historical and political context, emphasizing the impact of colonial policies on indigenous communities. Williams advocates for creating pathways to access ancestral lands and highlights the need for equitable representation and engagement.

11:15 a.m. The discussion turns toward the planning and the creation of an outreach product. The focus is on developing an updated brochure (interpreted as a broader communication tool) that conveys core values and information about the monuments. BLM emphasizes the need for input from the Monument Advisory Committee and tribal consultation.

11:20 a.m. A question came about target audience and the most effective means of communication. It's suggested to consider different venues such as kiosks at trailheads. BLM clarifies that the outreach strategy includes various tools like brochures, websites, maps, and bulletin boards. They emphasize the importance of having a tangible resource while also leveraging online platforms and digital interfacing.

11:30 a.m. The discussion starts with the importance of incorporating language about "leave no trace" and tribal presence into a toolkit for the monument. Emphasis is placed again on finding effective ways to communicate this information to the public. The conversation touches on the possibility of electronic brochures, websites, QR codes, and the importance of gathering input from various stakeholders.

12 p.m. The meeting invited tribal representatives and elected officials to share comments.

12:02 p.m. The meeting was opened to the public for comments on the national monument or related discussions. One comment expressed concerns about the transfer of Watmough Bay to the BLM and whether it would remain under permanent control. There were apprehensions about potential changes in ownership and the Federal Government's obligation to honor conservation easements. The MAC emphasized the added level of protection the BLM brings.

12:12 p.m. The conversation continued and the MAC assured all that newly acquired lands become an integral part of the monument, with their management addressed in the management plan and highlighted the significance of public processes and NEPA considerations for decisions concerning new areas.

12:25 p.m. The MAC meeting concluded.