**Kitsap Branch EXCOM Meeting Minutes for March 17, 2016**

Held at Fire Station 56, 6470 Seabeck Highway NW, Bremerton Washington

Present: Rachel Samardich (our new treasurer), Jeff Schrepple, Tom Thrasher, Dave Burton, and Linda Anderson-Carnahan

The meeting was called to order at 5:52 pm.

**Agenda**

Approval of November Minutes - David moved and Tom seconded; minutes approved.

Branch Fiscal Status/Introduction of new Treasurer (Rachel Samardich) -

Branch fiscal status is good.  There are more people enrolled in classes than anticipated.  No longer a profit and loss center, all branches are now just cost centers.  Branch expenses are higher than expected due to carry over from last year.  Revenues are also higher.  Branches represent 15% of the organization’s expenses and 21% of the revenues.

Changes in the BoardMC/Headquarters - Vern has stepped down as our Branch rep on the Board; he has also cancelled the kayaking class.  Sue will cover the remainder of Vern’s tenure and will attend the Board retreat with Jeff this coming weekend.

The new Director (Tom Vogl) is very enthusiastic and has a diverse background.

Leah Shultz has been replaced Geoff Lawrence.  Lorna Corrigan is the new president elect of the Board.  Mindy Roberts has been replaced by Dave Shema as the Club Safety Chair.

**Activity Reports**

Conservation (Rick Gillattt) - salmon safari in the fall.

Kayaking - Vern has cancelled the kayaking course this spring.  Jeff will ask if he wants to continue to lead the naturalist program. It was suggested that Dana Talley might be willing to run the kayaking program if Vern quits completely.

Navigation- 24 students successfully completed the course in February

Wilderness First Aid - the course was offered in conjunction with Jefferson County Search and Rescue.  20 Mountaineers successfully completed the course.

Intermediate Climbing - 3 new students this year (Jerry, Eric and Troy).  Expect more new intermediate students next year.  Goal is to get as many new climb leaders as possible this year.  Plans underway to mentor climbing leads this year, possibly as many 7 new leaders by the end of the climbing season.

Basic Climbing - 2 students have withdrawn from the course.  The other students are doing well and will undertake Field Trip 3 this coming weekend.  Giving students the chance to summit a rock climb and glacier climb before June 1 (only one other summit required to graduate the basic course).

Hiking - Christine will try to get the hiking program moving forward in the spring.

**Old Business**

Altwein funds (~$116k) - not at the top of Tom Vogl’s list so we have more time to determine how to spend the fund.  Some of the funds went toward upgrading the cabin.  One option for using funds is Liz Rocks (climbing wall at Pt. Defiance - Mountaineers are already a partner in the effort).  The Tacoma Branch has also offered use of their interior and exterior wall to other Branches (contact is Sarah Holt).  We could also use the funds to purchase a couple PLBs (position locating beacons) - the Seattle Branch is also doing this as well as purchasing some SPOT devices.  Mountaineers working on updating their 2017 strategic plan.

**New Business**

New Budget Process -  Mountaineers programs are growing and fund raising is going well.  Starting Jan. 21, Branches are no longer concerned with revenues.  FYE 17 (fiscal year ending -Sept. 30, 2017).  By July, 2017, need to know capacity for courses and recommended course costs).  Mary Huse is the fund raiser for the Club.  The Club’s budget is $6m.  Branches will no longer generate profits or losses and will not have a reserve (we currently have about $27k).  On October 1, 2020 the reserve will move to the Mountaineers Headquarters if not spent by the Branch.  Geoff Lawrence believes the Branch expenses have been too low and we need to do volunteer recognition (e.g. free AIARE level 1 course, wilderness first responder course, etc.).  HOWEVER, from now on, all needs to be included in the budget request and cannot be funded during the remainder of the year (any excess will be spent on new staff, salary increases, etc.).

Course fees will need to be approved by a pricing committee and will consider demographics and what the market will bear (e.g. what do for-profits charge for the same course).  The number of scholarships will also be increased.   In proposing course costs, course leaders need to provide the justification for their proposed cost fees.  Rachel suggested coming up with a Branch-wide justification based on past data.  Tom mentioned the risk to the Mountaineers 501c3 status (non-profit).

There are 11,506 members in the Club with a goal of 12,000 by the end of 2017.  The Branch membership has increased by 15%.  There was an energetic discussion and Linda requested that Jeff push the organization to pay deference to the course fees proposed by the Branch course leaders.

Need a Board Rep and cabin caretaker (and secretary?) & Kitsap cabin caretaker situation and access to the facilities.

We will advertise for a secretary for the Branch.

Kitsap Cabin Caretaker has left and needs to be replaced.  If anyone needs to use the cabin, contact Jeff.  If you know anyone who is interested in a nonpaid caretaker job (in exchange for free rent), let Jeff know.  Jeff will ask if the Branch can be on the selection panel.

Unanimous approval of Rachel as treasurer and Sue as the Board rep.

Funding item not on original budget.

Avalanche Beacons Purchase for $2250:  Tom moved and Linda seconded; unanimously approved.

Rhododendron Preserve Conservation Management Plan/Earth Day Initiatives –  Objective: Briefing on the Preserve, goals of Management Plan and generate ideas on how to meet objectives.

Background:

The 16.3 mile2 Chico Creek watershed is 80% forested with Douglas Fir, Western Red Cedar and Western Hemlock.  The watershed, which includes Kitsap and Wildcat Lakes and Kitsap, Wildcat, Lost and Dickerson Creeks, supports the largest Chum salmon run in southern Puget Sound, as well as an endangered coho salmon run, thanks in part to the habitat protection provided by the Preserve.  It is one of the largest examples of lowland virgin forest remaining in the Puget Sound basin.  It contains the ‘big tree’, a Douglas Fir with a 30’ circumference, that is estimated to be 800 years old.   The area has four distinct plan communities including a pine resistant to blister rust.

Late 1800s-   most of the area logged

Early 1900s

1915:         Mountaineers purchased 74 acres

1963:         Mountaineers Foundation (Foundation) formed with the mission of conservation

1985:         180 acres deeded to the Foundation to be held in perpetuity as a nature conservancy

1995:          Paschalls deed land to the Mountaineers Foundation, allowing caretaker to stay

2010:          Management turned over to the Foundation (caretaker died in 2009)

Present:    460 acres including 70 acres of old growth forest, and 61 acres in conservation easement from Ueland Tree Farm.  The Foundation is required to annually monitor the condition of the conservation easement lands and report to Ueland on the threats to the area and its conservation values.

The Suquamish Tribe, whose usual and accustomed area includes the watershed, provided a grant to the Foundation for the purchase three parcels from Ueland in 2012.  The Foundation is required to annually monitor and report on the condition of these parcels to the Tribe.  The Tribe routinely counts the spring smolt and fall salmon runs in the creeks.

The Foundation’s ‘Second Century Fund’ was established to purchase more parcels as they become available (goal of raising $500k for acquisition).

Preserve Management Plan (2014) for 2020 and beyond:

Goal of the Preserve:

1) protect healthy, natural plant and animal communities

         2) enjoyment of future generations

Goals of the Management Plan:

* Protect and restore critical habitat and biodiversity;
* Education for children and adults of the Kitsap Peninsula
* Community connection to nature.

Threats:

* human activities: overuse, prohibited access, surrounding habitat fragmentation via forest management and urbanization, and erosion, especially around the big tree
* Need to help mature forests become more resilient to climate change impacts: precipitation, temperature, fire, flooding, erosion, insects (Doulas Fir will have problems naturally re-establishing its populations by 2050).  Climate change will make restoring damaged areas recently acquired even more difficult.
* invasive species including ivy, vinca, blackberry, scotchbroom, dogs, bark beetle)
* loss of large predators (onsite wildlife cameras have recorded bear and coyote).

What is the work we need to partner with volunteers and others to accomplish:

* annual assessment of the condition of the easement, newest parcels, and the Preserve in general (ideally quarterly) and development and implementation of plans to address threats.  BioBlitz in 2015 and 2020 to establish a species inventory for plants and animals.
* removing invasive species (EPA Earth Month ivy pull on April 7 in Hidden Valley; basic climbing class conservation event pulling ivy?); may require contracts for off-trail areas.  Use physical control methods rather than chemicals (only in limited situations).
* tracking visitors, providing signage and preventing unauthorized access; limit travel off trail travel to appropriate times and places (e.g. for work crews or educational programs consistent with Foundation policies).
* using professional services, help regenerate damaged areas (newer acquisition) by thinning, aeration, mulching, and planting so they can repair themselves and be sustainable with minimal human intervention.
* establish and communicate policies to protect biodiversity.  Set aside areas for minimal or no human impact (e.g. Hidden Valley closed to the public).  No dogs in Preserve.  Limit access to streams to educational program (erosion in Chico Creek is a problem) and then use decontamination controls.  Prohibit access during critical times for fish.  Prohibit introductions or removal of plants or animals.  Ask visitors to log wildlife sightings.
* Fund and encourage research (perhaps working with Olympic College and UW) into natural systems at the Preserve, especial related to human activities and climate change.
* Strategic land purchases to protect the conservation values by providing a buffer to future human activities and climate change.
* Develop written agreements with Mountaineers and Hansen property owners regarding access through the combined properties and maintenance of shared infrastructure.
* In areas purchased from Ueland, determine which roads could be used for trails; restore remaining roads to natural conditions.
* Clean up hazards in Hidden Valley.  Professional restoration assessment to identify options.  Likely that all or most buildings will be razed.  Build a small open pavilion for environmental education activities on footprint of building.
* Assessment related to proposed learning center?
* Potentially reopen trail from theater through Hidden Valley
* Repair one bridge and replace the other bridge.
* Establish the Foundation as a community partner and the Preserve as a valuable environmental education location providing passive (e.g. signage) and active learning programs.  Partner with local educators to understand curriculum needs and optimize the value of the Preserve to educators.  Develop age-appropriate environmental in-person and on-line education programs that protect the Preserve (e.g. wader decontamination, restoration opportunities).
* Update and maintain social media for the Reserve (e.g. update the video, database for Bioblitz information).  Develop educational materials and contacts (e.g. plant identification and use in food or medicine, history of Preserve, trail map, Q&A for speakers, etc.).  Online library and clearinghouse for Preserve-related materials.
* Evaluate how to best engage the local community.
* Expand the volunteer base and conduct fund raising.

Selection of Month for Next Quarter’s Meeting – Members present decided that the next quarterly meeting will be held on the third Thursday in May (May 19th)

Meeting adjourned at 7:37.