



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the February 08, 2018, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting, held at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Jay Lind, Paul Dinnel, Julie Barber, Jamey Selleck, Tracy Alker, Sarah Tchang, Nathan Biletnikoff, Suzanne Shull (Jude Apple's alternate); Pete Haase; Lynne Jordan, Todd Woodard
- **MRC Members Absent:** Matt Reynolds, Jude Apple, Betsy Stevenson, Morty Cohen, Phyllis Bravinder
- **Others Attending:** Casey Mclean, SR3; Jacqueline Allison, Anacortes American; Gina Johnson, Salish Sea Stewards

**Call to Order and Introduction:** Paul Dinnel called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

**Approval of Minutes:** January 11, 2018, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

**Public Comments:** Julie Barber shared the sad news of Karen Wolf's untimely death. Karen was killed in a tragic car accident that occurred at the intersection of Josh Wilson/Farm to Market Road. Karen was a GIS Technician with the Skagit River System Cooperative and will be greatly missed. Her death was a huge loss to the scientific community. There is an online petition to install a roundabout at the intersection. A community meeting will be held in Bay View on March 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm.

## Sealife Response + Rehab + Research (SR<sup>3</sup>): Casey Mclean

Casey Mclean is a licensed veterinary technician with SR<sup>3</sup> ([Sealife Response, Rehab, and Research](#)) and is an active member of the West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Network and a trained oil spill responder. SR<sup>3</sup> is a newly established local nonprofit dedicated to advancing the health and welfare of marine wildlife in the Pacific Northwest. In addition to responding to and rehabilitating injured marine wildlife, SR<sup>3</sup> does a lot of public education and outreach. They are a highly collaborative organization partnering with many large and small organizations such as NOAA, the University of Washington, NW Indian College, SeaDoc Society, Vancouver Aquarium, etc. Most of their funding comes from private donations and other foundations. They also receive some grant funding for research.

- **SR<sup>3</sup>'s New Rehab and Science Center:** there are currently 32 sealife rehab facilities throughout the US, but there are none in WA or OR. SR<sup>3</sup> will fill that gap by building Washington State's first dedicated marine animal rehabilitation and science center in West Seattle, right next to Salty's Restaurant. They hope to have rehab pools operational by June 2018. The facility will include a laboratory setting to facilitate the study of marine invertebrate diseases such as Sea Star Wasting Disease, and potential interventions to save these animals. They are not currently set up to facilitate the rehab of seabirds, but they hope to be with a full build-out of their new rehab facility.
- **SR<sup>3</sup> Response to Marine Wildlife Strandings and Entanglement:** SR<sup>3</sup> currently has two boats and a mobile wildlife unit equipped with all of the necessary medical equipment to respond quickly to the animals in need.
  - **Marine Mammal Entanglement:** Over 300,000 whales and dolphins die annually from entanglement in marine debris. Disentangling large marine mammals is very dangerous and requires the right set of skills and equipment. Doug Sandilands is SR<sup>3</sup>'s Entanglement Response Specialist with over 20 years of experience in marine mammal entanglement response on the east coast. He has also trained many other responders all across the east and west coasts. SR<sup>3</sup> is working with other groups to get the equipment necessary to disentangle whales and to properly train responders. SR<sup>3</sup> is also doing a lot of public education and outreach to try to get fishermen and other boaters to report entangled whales and to stay with the animal until responders arrive. Too often, boaters will drive away before reporting their observation making it very difficult for the response team to find the entangled whale. SR<sup>3</sup>'s ultimate goal is to get the fishing industry to go rope-less.
  - **Oil Spill Prepared Response:** SR<sup>3</sup> is working with WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) on a few grants to be oil spill prepared. Soon they will be able to store the oil spill response equipment at SR<sup>3</sup>'s new facility in West Seattle. [Focus Wildlife](#), located right in Anacortes, is the lead responder to oiled wildlife. They will set up temporary rehab facilities in the case of an emergency. SR3 will be ready to assist if needed.

- **Marine Animal Injury Response:** The number of sick and injured animals has steadily increased. SR<sup>3</sup> staff responds to a large number of gunshot injuries of marine wildlife in WA and OR. They also deal with a lot of cases of people who take young seal pups home because they think they've been abandoned but don't know how to take care of them properly, so they end up doing more harm than good.
- **Marine Mammal Strandings:** The number of marine animal strandings in the Salish Sea has steadily increased since the 1990s. It is unclear what is causing the whales to become stranded. [The West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Network](#) is the lead organization in responding to strandings. Stranded marine mammals, dead or alive, should be reported to the West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Network at 1-866-767-6114. Stranded sea otters should be reported to the Sea Otter Stranding Network at 1-877-326-8837.
- **SR<sup>3</sup> Marine Mammal Research:** SR<sup>3</sup>'s Dr. Holly Fearnbach works with NOAA conducting large whale health research with drones. The drones are flown about 100 feet or more above the animal to collect really high-resolution images of the whales. They can tell if the whales are losing weight, gaining weight, or are pregnant. They can also measure the calves to see how much they are growing and if they are growing at a healthy rate. They can even collect whale blow or "snot" from the blowholes with a drone and petri dish to detect diseases and the overall health of the animal. They are working with other organizations to prepare a medical record for each individual animal to track their health stats over time.
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** to receive updates about SR<sup>3</sup> and their volunteer opportunities, email: [info@sealifeR3.org](mailto:info@sealifeR3.org), or sign up online: <https://www.sealifer3.org/maillinglist-form>. There currently aren't any ongoing volunteer opportunities right now except for public education and outreach and specialty skills such as graphic designers and business managers, etc. But once the hospital is up and running there will be more volunteer opportunities.

#### **MRC Opportunity Fund:** *All*

The Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) is now accepting applications for the MRC Opportunity Funds through February 28, 2018. MRCs are eligible to apply for up to \$10,000 for one or more projects. After discussing several different project ideas, the consensus of the Committee was to apply for funding for the following:

- **\$1,000 - Fidalgo Bay Day General Support (Pete Haase, Project Lead):** \$1,000 would be used to purchase items outside of the scope of MRC's project budget including prizes and other items to support the very popular Discovery Passport Activity in partnership with the Friends of Skagit Beaches. The money would also be used to purchase food items for special guests and volunteers. In past years we had other sources of funding to purchase these items.
- **\$1,000- Fidalgo Bay Day Plastics Display (Pete Haase, Project Lead):** \$1,000 would be used for a professional creation of a plastics-in-marine waters display and educational materials in partnership with the Friends of Skagit Beaches and the Washington Zero Waste group. The display and educational materials would be used as part of Fidalgo Bay Day as well as other events and activities.

(Pete said that he will need to confirm the above proposal ideas with Friends of Skagit Beaches before applying for funding)

- **\$2,000? - Video Camera/Video Services for Salish Sea Stewards Training (Jay Lind, Project Lead):** Jay said that a video of the classes would be helpful for volunteers who miss a class and to help with future training. In addition, the video camera could also be used for other MRC events, projects, and activities as well. Jay will research the cost and feasibility of purchasing a video camera and/or contracting with someone to record and edit the Salish Sea Stewards classes. Additional memory and an external hard drive to store the videos would also need to be purchased.

The Committee also discussed the following project ideas, but decided not to move forward with seeking MRC Opportunity funds for any of these at this time:

- **Fidalgo Bay Water Quality Study:** The Committee discussed the possibility of applying for MRC Opportunity Funds to conduct a water quality study in Fidalgo Bay to test for contaminants pre- and post-construction of WSDOT's Sharpe's Corner roundabout project. The results would help determine how well WSDOT's Best Management Practices are working to protect the water quality in Fidalgo Bay. Todd said that the Samish would be willing to collect the samples if the MRC wanted to apply for funding to cover the lab costs. The Committee decided that a water quality study wasn't really worth pursuing because the results from the 2007-2009 water quality study indicated that the water quality was already in pretty good shape and would likely only improve with the implementation of WSDOT's Best Management Practices.
- **West March's Point Water Quality Study:** The Committee briefly discussed the idea of conducting a water quality study on the west side of March's Point to test contaminants in the waters near the Washington State Department of Health's (DOH) Shellfish Growing Area. DOH closed the Shellfish Harvest area in 2016 due to concerns over fecal

coliform, but no testing has been done for heavy metals or other contaminants. However, there was not enough interest from MRC members to pursue this project at this time.

- Educational Video: Island County MRC is seeking other MRCs who might be interested in applying for the MRC Opportunity Fund to work with Florian Graner to produce a 30-minute educational video similar to “[Discover the Olympic Coast](#)”. The video would be adapted for our region to share with schools (K-5<sup>th</sup> grade students) and would include an accompanying curricular activity on marine food webs that NOAA developed that aligns with existing curricular standards. Skagit MRC members decided that there wouldn’t be enough time to contact the schools to see if this would even be a possibility. An MRC Project Lead would also need to be assigned to carry out this project, but there wasn’t enough interest at this time.

#### **Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report:** *Jamey Selleck*

- New NWSC Director Search: Rich Childers recently resigned as the Director of the Northwest Straits Commission. The NWSC is now in search of a new Director. The job announcement has been posted with the Department of Ecology. Jamey will be serving on the Election Committee. The hiring process will likely take at least three weeks. Interviews will likely take place in March.
- Northwest Straits Commission and Northwest Straits Foundation Joint Retreat: March 1-2, 2018 in La Conner. The major topic will be strategic planning.
- Our Coast Community Film Series: The Snohomish MRC presented on their “Our Coast Community Film Series”. The film series consisted of three ocean-themed films, engaging local schools, and the promotion of the [MyCoast App](#). The MyCoast App can be used to document tides, storm damage, beach cleanups, and other shoreline changes over time.
- Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP): Jay Krienitz, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife presented on the ESRP small grants program to support smaller projects to involve the MRCs. A Request for Proposals will be sent out in mid-February. Jay offered to present the program to each of the MRCs.
- Electric Boat Propulsion in the Salish Sea: Ken Carrasco, San Juan MRC representative, presented on electric marine propulsion.
- NWSI 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and MRC Conference: 2018 is the 20th year anniversary of the Northwest Straits Initiative. Please contact Sasha to share ideas for showcasing our work or to get involved in planning the MRC Conference at [horst@nwstraits.org](mailto:horst@nwstraits.org). The conference is scheduled for November 16 - 17, 2018 in Port Townsend.
- Puget Sound Partnership Near-Term Actions: The final NTA proposals are due by March 30, 2018. The Northwest Straits Foundation submitted several regional NTAs and is requesting letters of support from the MRCs.
- Next NWSC Meeting: The next Commission meeting will be held Friday, February 23 via a WebEx conference call.

#### **Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Report:** *Jay Lind*

- New Director of Philanthropy: The Foundation’s new Director of Philanthropy, Tarrell Kullaway, just started in January. If you have any suggestions regarding potential donors, MRC Conference sponsors or ideas for fundraising, please contact Tarrell at [Kullaway@nwstraitsfoundation.org](mailto:Kullaway@nwstraitsfoundation.org).
- Media Coverage: Jay said that he has been in touch with the La Conner News about publishing stories about the Northwest Straits Initiative and the work of the MRC.
- Next NWSF Board Meeting: February 15, 2018.

#### **MRC Administrative Report** *Tracy Alker*

- Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference – April 4-6: The NWSC is offering to cover the registration fees for the conference for one MRC representative from each MRC. Preference will be given to session chairs and presenters of MRC work. The Commission cannot cover travel or lodging, but there is some funding in the MRC budget to do that. MRC members were asked to let Tracy know if they would like financial assistance for the conference before February 14<sup>th</sup>. The conference will be held in Seattle from April 4-6, 2018. For more information about the conference, check out the conference website: <http://www.wvu.edu/salishseaconference/>.
- Northwest Straits Foundation Letters of Support for Near-Term Action Proposals: Tracy asked the Skagit MRC members if they would be in favor of providing a letter of support for the Northwest Straits Foundation’s Regional Near-Term Action proposals including:
  - Shoreline Armor Reduction and Prevention Program
  - Shoreline Restoration Effectiveness Monitoring
  - Similk Bay Shoreline Armor Removal Project

The consensus of the Committee was to provide letters of support for each of the proposals listed above.

- 2018-2019 MRC Grant Project Ideas: Tracy reminded the Committee that we need to start thinking about project ideas for the next MRC grant that will begin October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019. This is the MRC's base funding that the NWSC seeks for us through the EPA/PSP. It is anticipated that the grant amount will be similar to our current grant (\$70k to \$74k). We will likely be asked to present one of our project proposals at the April NWSC meeting. The Northwest Straits Foundation is also available to help us apply for additional funding if needed. MRC members were reminded that it is also a good idea to be thinking about potential projects that might fit other sources of funding.

## Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards- Gina Johnson & Tracy Alker:
  - **Volunteer Program Coordinator/Contractor Status**: After widely distributing the Request for Quotes and Qualifications (RFQQ) and extending the deadline several times, we finally received proposals from two well-qualified firms, Veda Environmental and Natural Resources Consultants, Inc. (NRC). The nine-member Salish Sea Stewards subcommittee evaluated and ranked the proposals. Joan Drinkwin with Natural Resources Consultants, Inc. was selected for the contract. The subcommittee felt that Joan would be a huge benefit to the Salish Sea Stewards program because she has a lot of experience in planning and facilitating educational workshops and volunteer training and coordination and she was also the former Interim Director for the Northwest Straits Foundation for several years and worked with the Skagit MRC on many projects. Joan has already hit the ground running with the Salish Sea Stewards training program. Jamey noted that because he also works for NRC, he had to recuse himself and was not involved in any of the decision making processes regarding the contractor selection for this project.
  - **Planning**: Training is scheduled to begin March 20 through May 22. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Padilla Bay. One of the training dates will be Wednesday, April 18 in collaboration with the Snohomish WSU Beach Watchers training. The class will be held at Padilla Bay and the topic will be Climate Change and Ocean Acidification. The Subcommittee recently had a meeting with Joan to discuss potential training topics and speakers. Joan started contacting speakers for this year's training. So far 17 volunteers have applied to take the training. Joan will be completing background checks on all of the volunteers.
  - **Promotion**: The media has been contacted about the training and posters have been widely distributed. There was a recent article in the Skagit Valley Herald about the upcoming training. The training announcement was also posted on the Salish Sea Stewards Facebook page, the MRC website and "The Wave" along with a link to the application. Applications are due March 2, 2018.
- Bowman Bay Nearshore Restoration- Jay Lind: Lisa Kaufman is coordinating with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to continue plant maintenance and possibly have another planting sometime this spring/summer. Paul noted that while they were beach seining at Bowman Bay last Tuesday they ran into a school of juvenile surf smelt as well as a juvenile pink salmon near the restoration area. The next beach seining at Bowman Bay is scheduled to take place Friday, February 23.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Pete Haase: Fidalgo Bay Day will be held September 15 this year at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Pete distributed a bunch of Save the Date cards at the Storming the Sound event in La Conner. Pete contacted all of the leads that play key roles as well as the organizations that bring displays. The City of Anacortes sent a letter that said we will not be able to hang the street banner this year. Apparently, the street banner is in pretty bad shape and is becoming a safety hazard and needs to be replaced. Lynne suggested advertising the event on the John L Scott Reader Board. Lynne also suggested contacting the Skagit STEM Network to see if they might be interested in participating this year.
- Kids on the Beach Pilot Project- Pete Haase: The Request for Quotes and Qualifications (RFQQ) was widely distributed, but only one proposal was received from a highly qualified firm. Mira Lutz with One Ocean Environmental was the contractor selected to develop and implement the Kids on the Beach pilot project. The goal is to provide valuable learning experiences for local middle-school students by providing opportunities for them to use scientific procedures in the classroom and on the beach. Mira has already started reaching out to the local schools to participate in the program. It is anticipated that the contract will be signed soon.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration- Paul Dinnel: Paul has been working with a group of students at Western Washington University (WWU) who are interested in monitoring oysters in Chuckanut Bay this year. He has also been working with students who are writing a story for the WWU newspaper about native oyster restoration. The data analysis from last year's monitoring efforts will be finalized soon.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery- Paul Dinnel: A pinto abalone recovery planning meeting was held yesterday at the Manchester Lab. The pinto abalone recovery team plans to put together a manuscript on the pinto abalone recovery

efforts over the last ten years. The San Juan County MRC will be a partner in the pinto abalone recovery effort this year. Monitoring will start up again soon. It is anticipated that an additional 1,000 juvenile pinto abalone will be outplanted at the restoration sites in Skagit County this year. Paul plans to go out in the field with the crew during some of the monitoring and outplanting excursions.

- Forage Fish Index Site Surveys- Pete Haase: Monthly surveys continue at Skagit MRC's three Forage Fish Index sites: Ship Harbor, Similk Bay on the Swinomish Reservation, and Samish Island. Samples are sent to WDFW for processing and analysis. There was a microscopic analysis training that was recently held for volunteers at Padilla Bay. Around 18 volunteers from Skagit and Whatcom Counties participated in the training. The intent is to eventually have a few well-trained volunteers take the lead on the microscopic analyses.
- Kayak Kelp Recovery- Suzanne Shull: Suzanne Shull has been working with Helen Berry to analyze the kelp data that all of the MRCs have collected. At this point, they are just looking at changes in the kelp beds over time between 2015 and 2017 as well as looking at changes in the kelp beds throughout the season. They will also be looking at temperature data to see if there are any patterns. To do this, the survey sites will be grouped into regions. For Skagit, the Coffin Rocks survey site at Deception Pass could potentially be grouped into two different regions. Suzanne requested feedback from the MRC members on where they think it should be grouped. The Shannon Point kelp survey site can't really be grouped into a region with any other survey sites at this time. Suzanne suggested that it might be interesting to see what is happening with this kelp bed relative to the kelp beds in the San Juans. Todd noted that Samish is re-digitizing aerial photography of kelp beds and will make the data available to others who are interested. Lucas is planning a kelp recovery team workshop on March 20 in Seattle.

#### Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:

- Taste of Padilla Bay with a Hint of Hawaii- August 11, 2018. This fundraiser event hosted by the Padilla Bay Foundation is another seafood extravaganza with a Hawaiian flare featuring a new Estuarine Research Reserve on Oahu. The money raised will be dedicated to children's education.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m. The next MRC meeting will be held Thursday, March 8, 2018, at the Skagit County Administration Building (1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon)**