



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

*Minutes of the April 12, 2018, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting, held at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes (4701 Fidalgo Bay Rd)*

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Jay Lind, Jamey Selleck, Tracy Alker, Sarah Tchang, Nathan Biletnikoff, Pete Haase, Lynne Jordan, Jude Apple, Betsy Stevenson, Morty Cohen, Phyllis Bravinder, Julie Barber, Jodi Bluhm (Todd's alternate)
- **MRC Members Absent:** Matt Reynolds, Todd Woodard, Paul Dinnel
- **Others Attending:** Gina Johnson, Salish Sea Stewards; Rachel Best (Morty's Alternate); Wayne Huseby, FOSB & FBARCSE; Michael Kirshenbaum, Skagit Land Trust; Kari Odden, Skagit Land Trust

**Call to Order and Introduction:** Sarah Tchang called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

**Approval of Minutes:** March 8, 2018, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

**Public Comments:** None.

## ESRP Grant Proposals: Michael Kirshenbaum and Kari Odden, Skagit Land Trust

Kari Odden and Michael Kirshenbaum presented Skagit Land Trust's (SLT) proposal to apply for \$150,000 for the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) Small Grant for the acquisition and protection of the shoreline portion of a 37.7 acre property on Samish Island as part of a larger project. Pre-proposals are due April 12. Full proposals are due July 18. The property is currently on the market so SLT is in the process of negotiating with the landowner while they try to raise the funds. The entire property was listed last year for \$1.5 million. The 10 acre shoreline portion of the property contains coastal wetlands and a dike. There are a lot of potential opportunities for wetland enhancement including partial dike removal to open up the tidal flow. The upland portion of the property is also considered to be very valuable habitat. The uplands consist of mature forest and important raptor habitat. It was home to the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest great blue heron colony (around 350 nests) until it was recently abandoned just last year. But there is hope that they will come back. Eagles are also very common in that area. SLT will seek other funding for the upland protection. The landowners would like to retain one building on the upland site. SLT is considering creating a conservation easement for the shoreline protection. Jude said that this is the type of project that Padilla Bay NERR might be interested in partnering on. Because this project appears to meet the goals of the MRC, the consensus of the Committee was to support SLT's ESRP Small Grant proposal. However, Betsy Stevenson had to recuse herself from the MRC's decision in order to avoid any potential conflicts of interest, just in case she has to review any future permits for this project.

SLT is also considering applying for the larger ESRP grant for \$980,000 dollars to help pay off the loan for their recent acquisition of Kellys Point on Guemes Island. SLT had originally applied for and ranked really high for the federal Coastal Wetlands Grant for the acquisition of Kellys Point, but federal funding for acquisition projects have been put on hold for now. This ESRP grant application will be a backup, just in case the Coastal Wetlands Grant doesn't come through. The property, which consists of 27 acres with 232 ft of marine shoreline including an iconic feeder bluff and a beautiful upland forest, ranked as a high priority in the shoreline protection analysis that the Skagit Land Trust did in partnership with the Skagit MRC several years ago. 2/3 of the feeder bluffs on this property are considered to be feeder bluff exceptional. These bluffs help feed sediment to the other beaches on Guemes Island through the two drift cells which will help with long-term climate change impacts. The property offers public access to a long stretch of beach, great for bird watching and agate hunting. SLT also plans to install interpretive signage about feeder bluffs and habitat protection. Pete commented that this property might also offer a great opportunity to help educate Salish Sea Stewards or school groups about the importance of feeder bluffs, climate change, and habitat protection. SLT requested a letter of support for this proposal from the Skagit MRC. The consensus of the Committee was to provide a letter of support for SLT's ESRP grant application for Kellys Point. There were no objections.

## Water Quality Testing Update at the Fidalgo Bay Property: Michael Kirshenbaum, Skagit Land Trust

The Skagit Land Trust (SLT) owns two conservation areas on the west side of Fidalgo Bay: the Carstens property on the shoreline of Fidalgo Bay and the Graber property, upslope from the Carstens property and across SR20. There are two small unnamed streams that run across both of these properties into Fidalgo Bay via culverts on the Carstens property. In addition, there is an artificial pond created by a small dam on one of the streams. There is very little information on the water quality of the streams and the role of this dam/pond structure and its impact on water quality is also unknown. Per recommendation of the MRC 's Skagit Restoration Initiative (SRI) subcommittee, SLT was granted \$10,000 of SRI funding from the NWSF to do a water quality study for one year in support of stewardship, restoration, and protection of Fidalgo Bay. SLT partnered with the Samish Indian Nation to collect monthly samples from the artificial pond, the two creeks and the two outfalls. They are testing for Fecal coliform, temperature, turbidity and other measures consistent with long-term monitoring protocols for Fidalgo Bay. They just started collecting samples last month. If results show that the dam pond structure is degrading the water quality, they will conduct a feasibility study for dam removal and riparian restoration. After the water quality study is completed, SLT plans to conduct outreach with neighboring landowners. They will send out a mailing to residences that educates about the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve and water quality inputs and impacts. They will also conduct a field tour for residents that focuses on water quality, the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve, and protected lands.

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

- **New NWSC Director:** Lucas Hart was recently hired as the new NWSC Director. As Lucas transitions into his new role, he will also be really busy juggling the duties of his previous position as the NWSC Marine Program Manager until that position is filled.
- **Salish Sea Ecosystems Conference Recap:** This year's transboundary conference was the biggest one ever. Governor Jay Inslee was one of the speakers at the conference. There was a great tribal presence. There were 14 concurrent sessions. It was difficult to pick which sessions to attend because there were so many great ones being offered. Each talk was 15 minutes long. There has been some discussion about possibly limiting the number of speakers and sessions, or extending the conference one extra day which would also increase the cost of the conference. There were some complaints that the program wasn't available online, it was only provided via a smart-phone app.
- **Next NWSC Meeting:** The next Commission meeting will be held Friday, April 27, 2018 11am-3:45pm at Friday Harbor.

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

The NWSF didn't have a meeting last month. Jay reminded everyone that the derelict crab pots in the Guemes Channel will be pulled in June. Jason Morgan will be leading this effort.

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

- **MRC Grant Reports:** Quarterly progress reports and the 2017 Annual Report were due April 10<sup>th</sup>. Tracy thanked the MRC members for sending in their volunteer hours and project updates. Tracy is still working on the 2017 Annual Report but hopes to have it finished soon.
- **MRC Opportunity Funds for the MRC Retreat:** Per consensus, the Committee decided not to apply for MRC Opportunity funds for the MRC retreat this year. Committee members agreed that we could probably still have the retreat without any funding. We just wouldn't be able to hire a professional facilitator or pay for a facility or food.
- **MRC Membership Discussion:** With the increased interest in MRC membership, it was suggested that this would be a good topic for discussion at our next MRC meeting. It is important that we maintain a well-balanced representation of diverse interest groups and that the members are active participants. We currently have 15 voting MRC members. There is nothing in our MRC Bylaws that sets a maximum number of MRC members. The question about limiting the number of MRC members has been brought up in the past, but no official decisions were ever made.

#### **Project Status & Discussion**

- **Salish Sea Stewards- *Morty Cohen*:** Training started on March 20 and will run through May 22, 2018 at Padilla Bay. 30 people signed up to take the training, but 4 ended up dropping out for various reasons. Classes are going really well. Joan has done an excellent job running the program this year. We've gotten a lot of great feedback from the class participants. Darla Gay, a new Salish Sea Steward from this year's class and a Snohomish County Beach Watcher, will be joining the Salish Sea Stewards Planning Committee. She recently moved to Guemes Island and has a lot of experience in figuring out how to keep the WSU Beach Watchers program going in Snohomish County. She will be a really great addition to the team. Pete shared an article that was recently in the Anacortes American about volunteers participating in the Mussel Watch Program in Skagit County. Tom Flanagan, a Salish Sea Steward from last year's class was quoted in the paper and gave the Salish Sea Stewards program props.

Morty announced that he plans to resign from the MRC in June, but still plans to be involved in volunteering. MRC members thanked Morty for everything he has done for the program. Morty recommended that Rachel Best take over his role as the MRC Project Lead for the Salish Sea Stewards program. Rachel is currently Morty's MRC Alternate, but will be submitting an application to become an MRC member soon. Morty will be working with Rachel as co-project lead through June. Morty and Rachel are currently working on the Salish Sea Stewards proposal for the MRC Grant.

Morty thanked Jude for doing such an excellent job drafting the application for the MRC Opportunity Funds for the Salish Sea Stewards Retreat. The Salish Sea Stewards Planning Committee reviewed the application and made some comments. Jude said he will make the changes based on the comments and send the final application to Rachel for submittal to the NWSF. The application is due April 30<sup>th</sup>.

- Bowman Bay Nearshore Restoration- Jay Lind: The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) will be hosting a planting party for a large group of 4<sup>th</sup> graders on Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup>. The plants, mostly dune grass and coastal strawberry, were provided by SFEG. The kids will get an opportunity to help with the beach seining and forage fish surveys. The County is working on a contract with the SFEG with MRC Grant funds to lead the monthly plant maintenance activities at the Bowman Bay restoration site this year which will mainly consist of weeding and watering with the help of volunteers. Jamey said that the Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council will be meeting in Anacortes in September. As part of that meeting, the NWSC is considering organizing a field trip to the Bowman Bay restoration site or to the San Juans in September to showcase our work.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Pete Haase: Fidalgo Bay Day will be held Saturday, September 15, 2018 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Early event promotion has been initiated. Save the Date cards have been distributed. Event leads and organizations have been contacted and many have already confirmed that they will be participating this year. We are still waiting to hear back from the Northwest Straits Foundation to find out whether or not the application for the MRC opportunity Funds got approved for the Discovery Passport activity and the plastics display for Fidalgo Bay Day this year.
- Kids on the Beach Pilot Project- Pete Haase: Mira Lutz with One Ocean Environmental has been contracted to develop and implement the Kids on the Beach Pilot Project this year. Mira has been doing a wonderful job connecting with the schools and students and getting this pilot program up and running in a really short time frame. 50 Conway middle school students are participating in the program. Mount Baker Middle School was originally planning to participate as well, but ended up having to cancel due to too many scheduling conflicts. Kari said that she has some great contacts at the schools and could help reach out to them next year to participate in this program. The Conway students will be learning how to design a research project, field research techniques, and data analysis. The students will be working in teams and each team will be developing research proposals. Their field work activities will take place on April 18<sup>th</sup> at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. The students will learn beach seining and forage fish survey techniques, how to record data in their journals, and how to look for eggs under the microscope. Pete and Jason were able to find lots of volunteers to help out with this event. It is anticipated that the press will be there to do a story for the paper. The students will take the data back to the classroom for experiments and analysis. A science symposium will be held for the students to present their research on May 11 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Volunteers will be recruited to help with the annual monitoring sometime this spring during low tide. Additional oyster shell will be distributed on the east side of Fidalgo Bay and Weaverling Spit in collaboration with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund and the Samish Tribe to try to establish a reproductive oyster plot in that location.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: The field work is now complete. The data will be analyzed and a final report will be generated before the end of September.
- 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. The samples and data are sent to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for analysis. There was another conference call a couple of weeks ago. Pete noted that the person at WDFW who does the lab analysis and generates the reports took another job. In addition, Lucas Hart, the forage fish index site lead for the NWSC, will be stepping down from that role now that he is the new NWSC Director. It is unclear how this might impact the forage fish index site sampling and analysis and the overall program for the long-term.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys - Phyllis Bravinder: An MRC kelp monitoring WebEx meeting will be held May 9<sup>th</sup>. The Salish Sea Stewards training will cover the topic of kelp and kelp monitoring this year. Phyllis attended part of the Kelp Recovery Workshop via the WebEx.

The Kelp Recovery Plan development will be a two year process. It primarily stemmed from the critical habitat needs for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed rockfish because kelp is a habitat requirement for rockfish. It also provides important habitat for salmon. The Kelp Recovery Plan will take a very broad ecosystem approach. The first of a series of Kelp Recovery Plan Workshops was held in Seattle on March 20<sup>th</sup>, and was made available for others to attend via WebEx. Around 30 people attended the workshop in Seattle and around 30 more participated via WebEx. The workshop included presentations on recovery plan goals, kelp status and trends, habitat impacts, tribal perspectives, mapping projects and salmon-kelp and rockfish interactions. There were talks from experts from California, Washington, and B.C. The talks were focused on historical data, satellite imagery, work that is being done and monitoring gaps. The next Kelp Recovery Workshop will be held in June. Jamey said that the Puget Sound Restoration Fund is currently growing kelp in the Manchester lab and is working on outplanting the kelp. Researchers are also looking at areas that have experienced kelp bed loss to analyze the extent of the loss, sediment composition and predator-prey interactions and their correlation to kelp bed loss.

### **2018-2019 MRC Grant Project Proposal Discussion**

The Request for Proposals (RFP) was recently sent out to MRC members. The total MRC Grant award will be around \$75,000. Grant applications are due **May 22, 2018**. The MRC Grant start date is October 1, 2018, through September 30, 2019. Rachel agreed to take Morty's place to present the Salish Sea Stewards proposal at the NWSC meeting in Island County on June 29. The Committee discussed the following projects that are being proposed by MRC members for the 2018-2019 MRC Grant funding. Bowman Bay Restoration planting was added to the list of project proposals. In order to move forward with all of the projects being proposed and to stay within the total budget, the Committee decided to reduce the budget of each project by at least \$600. Some project budgets were reduced by even more. Tracy will be meeting with Sasha and Lucas on April 24<sup>th</sup> to discuss the MRC Grant project proposals. Final decisions regarding the project proposals and budget will need to be approved by the MRC at the May 10 MRC meeting:

- **\$23,900 - MRC Operations:** The original budget requested amount was for \$24,500. The budget was reduced to \$23,900. Funding is used for staff support, meeting refreshments, MRC display and outreach material updates, and travel for MRC members for meetings, trainings, conferences and workshops.
- **\$1,900 - Fidalgo Bay Day:** The original budget request amount was \$3,500. The budget was reduced to \$1,900. This funding is for event promotion and advertisement and miscellaneous supplies. We will need a new project lead.
- **\$19,900 - Salish Sea Stewards:** The original budget request for this project \$20,500. It was reduced to \$19,900
- **\$8,900 - Kids on the Beach:** The original budget request for this project was \$10,000, but was reduced to \$8,900
- **\$18,000 - Pinto Abalone Recovery:** The original budget request for this project was \$20,000, but was reduced to 18,000.
- **\$2,400 – Bowman Bay Planting:** The original budget request for this project was \$3,000, but was reduced to \$2,400.

### **Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:**

- **New Swinomish Shellfish Farm:** Julie announced that the Swinomish Tribe just hired a new shellfish farmer, Stewart Thomas to build and manage a new shellfish farm for the Swinomish. Stewart worked at Taylor Shellfish for about ten years. The sustainable shellfish farm is going to be located just south of the Swinomish Golf Course on the Swinomish owned portion of the beach.
- **Swinomish Juvenile Crab Study:** The Swinomish Tribe received two grants for a crab study. Traps consisting of a floating 5 gallon plastic jug with a light to attract crab megalopa will be set at several locations including: Rosario Bay, Cornet Bay, Washington Park, Bowman Bay, and possibly Skyline. The traps will float at the surface and will be tethered to public docks and piers. Volunteers will be recruited to help check the traps daily.
- **"Environmental History of Skagit County" Presented by Teresa Trebin - April 14, 2018:** The lecture is sponsored by the Skagit County Historical Museum and will be held 2pm to 4pm at the historical Skagit City School. The cost is \$5 for adults and \$4 for senior citizens. Lectures are free to museum members.
- **Skagit Conservation District Native Plant Sale- April 14, 2018:** 9am to 1pm at the Plant Materials Center, 16564 Bradley Road. Most of the plants are sold as bareroot seedlings.
- **"Getting to Know NOAA", Presented by Polly Hicks- April 20, 2018:** The lecture series is sponsored by the Friends of Skagit Beaches. Lectures are held at the NW Education District Building in Anacortes. Lectures are free and start at 7pm. There is limited room, so get there early! There will be demonstrations of the KidWind Challenge in the lobby. It is the ultimate wind turbine design competition for students.
- **Transition Fidalgo & Friends Future Fest- April 21 and April 22:** at the Port Transit Shed Event Center in Anacortes. On Sunday April 22, there will be a workshop that focuses on citizen science. Different organizations, including the Skagit MRC, have been invited to share information about citizen science opportunities. Pete Haase volunteered to share information about the Skagit MRC and our volunteer opportunities.

- Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Earth Day Event at Edgewater Park- April 21: Pete Haase and Susan George will be hosting a table for the Skagit MRC and the Northwest Straits Initiative. The display will focus on crabber outreach and will include crabbing tips to prevent lost crab pots, the escape cord quiz and crab pot rigging demonstration.
- Skagit Land Trust's (SLT) Earth Day Celebration at the Utopia Conservation Area- April 22: SLT, in partnership with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and Puget Sound Energy will be hosting a volunteer work party from 1pm to 4pm at the Utopia Conservation to plant trees and shrubs. There will also be some fun activities for kids of all ages.
- Mount Vernon High School Science Night- April 26, 2018. Betsy Stevenson will be hosting Skagit MRCs display.
- "Orcas in Puget Sound" Presented by Sue Madsen- May 5, 2018: The lecture is sponsored by the Skagit County Historical Museum and will be held 2pm to 4pm at the historical Skagit City School. The cost is \$5 for adults and \$4 for senior citizens. Lectures are free to museum members.
- Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Open House- May 19<sup>th</sup>: The public open house will be held at the NW Education District Building in Anacortes on May 19<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 3pm. The open house will include educational posters, displays, activities, and short talks. Paul Dinnel will be presenting on Olympia oyster restoration in Fidalgo Bay.

**The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m. The next MRC meeting will be held Thursday, May 10, 2018, at the Skagit County Administration Building (1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon)**