



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the May 10, 2018, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting, held at the Skagit County Administration Building (1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon)

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Jay Lind, Jamey Selleck, Paul Dinnel, Tracy Alker, Sarah Tchang, Pete Haase, Lynne Jordan, Jude Apple, Betsy Stevenson, Morty Cohen, Phyllis Bravinder, Julie Barber, Todd Woodard
- **MRC Members Absent:** Matt Reynolds, Nathan Biletnikoff
- **Others Attending:** Gina Johnson, Salish Sea Stewards; Rachel Best (Morty's Alternate); Dan van Hees, NWSC

**Call to Order and Introduction:** Paul Dinnel called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions. Paul thanked Sarah Tchang for Chairing the MRC meeting last month in his absence.

**Approval of Minutes:** April 12, 2018, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

**Public Comments:** None.

## Measuring Our Impact – Net Ecosystem Improvement Project: *Dan van Hees, Northwest Straits Commission*

The Net Ecosystem Improvement (NEI) is a project of the Northwest Straits Initiative (NWSI) to help evaluate and quantify the effectiveness of our work using science based evidence. The basic NEI model calculates the change in function per unit area times the area protected or restored. It will be used as a communications tool to show how our actions impact the broader ecosystem. MRC actions that impact a change in our shorelines, a change in behavior, or a change in policy can all be evaluated. The Committee discussed how evaluating and communicating the human element or connection in our work will help appeal to a broader base. Jude noted that Jamie Donatuto, the social scientist for the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, has several publications that link ecosystems with human dimensions and how ecological changes impact human well-being. Jamie's publications can be found on [Researchgate](#) as well as the [Swinomish peer-reviewed publications webpage](#).

Dan van Hees was recently hired by the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) to work with the MRCs over the next six months to identify one or two candidate projects that can be used to develop conceptual and qualitative models to help illustrate the connection between citizen science based recovery and protection actions and effects on ecosystem functions and services. The models will also be used to generate guidelines for future project development and an understanding of where we can expand our efforts. Dan said that he could also help facilitate publishing the work of the MRC in scientific journals if that is something we are interested in. The Committee discussed the Weaverling Spit, Bowman Bay, and Olympia oyster restoration projects as possible candidates. Dan plans to develop a couple of quantitative and visual communication tools starting with the eelgrass restoration model.

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

- **New NWSC Director, Chair, and Vice Chair:** The Commission welcomed Dr. Lucas Hart as the new director at the NWSC meeting last month in Friday Harbor. Lucas's former position as the Marine Program Manager will likely get posted soon. Elections were held for the NWSC Chair and Vice-Chair positions. Paul Clappitt of the Snohomish MRC replaced Nan McKay as the new NWSC Chair and Alan Clark of the Clallam MRC replaced Jamey Selleck as Vice Chair. Nan and Jamey served as the NWSC Chair and Vice Chair for the last two years, the maximum term limit per NWSC Bylaws.
- **Presentations:** Kendra Smith presented "The History of Southern Resident Killer Whales in San Juan County" and Frances Robertson presented on San Juan MRC's project to improve boater education around the whales.
- **The Washington Blue Ribbon Panel on Ocean Acidification Report Update:** The 2017 Addendum to the Ocean Acidification Report identifying strategies for combatting ocean acidification is now available online: [http://oainwa.org/assets/docs/2017\\_Addendum\\_BRP\\_Report\\_fullreport.pdf](http://oainwa.org/assets/docs/2017_Addendum_BRP_Report_fullreport.pdf). A briefing will be held via WebEx on May 22. This addendum expands upon the original 2012 report which established a comprehensive strategy for how to address ocean acidification in Washington.
- **Monthly MRC Reports:** Monthly reports for each MRC are available at this link: <https://bit.ly/2JMCWzX>.
- **Next NWSC Meeting:** The next Commission meeting will be held Friday, May 25 from 10am-12:00pm over WebEx.

## **NWSC Representative/Alternate Election**

Jamey announced that after serving as the NWSC Representative for the Skagit MRC for the last three years, he will be stepping down from that role. Although the maximum term limit for the NWSC Representative is two years, the Committee decided to make an exception so that Jamey could serve out his term as NWSC Vice-Chair. Jamey noted that it takes close to two years just for the NWSC Representatives to get a really good understanding of what the NWSC is all about and what their role is. He suggested the MRC consider increasing the maximum term limit. The Committee discussed some of the duties, expectations, and time commitment of the NWSC Representative. The NWSC Representative is responsible for attending the monthly NWSC meetings to update the Commission on the progress of the Skagit MRC activities and vote on behalf of the Skagit MRC on issues discussed at NWSC meetings. The NWSC meetings rotate from WebEx meetings to in-person meetings in different Counties. The NWSC Representative also reports back to the MRC members at the MRC monthly meetings on the topics discussed at the latest NWSC meeting.

- Action: MRC members voted unanimously to elect Nate Biletznikoff, currently serving as the NWSC Alternate, as the new NWSC Representative and Jude Apple as the NWSC Alternate. There were no objections. Jamey said that he could fill in as needed.

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

- **MRC Opportunity Fund:** The Foundation awarded several MRC grants through the Opportunity Fund including Skagit MRCs Plastics Display and the Discovery Passport Activity for Fidalgo Bay Day. Skagit MRC's proposal for the Salish Sea Stewards retreat is currently under review.
- **Communications Internship:** A new communications internship is now available. This intern will focus on coordination and promotion of MRC work that supports the recovery of Southern Resident Killer Whales.
- **Boeing Grant Opportunity:** The NWSF was invited to apply for \$50k Boeing Grant for MRC stormwater management projects in Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties. Some of the potential project ideas that were discussed included rain gardens and other Low Impact Development projects, outreach, educational workshops, interpretive signage, etc. Lynne Jordan pointed out that there is a new [Opportunity Zone](#) designation for several communities in Skagit County that provides federal tax incentives for business and development in low-income areas, including an area just south of Commercial Avenue in Anacortes. With the tax incentives, there could be a great opportunity to incorporate LID projects in some of the Opportunity Zone designated areas.
- **GiveBIG Campaign:** Terrell worked on the GiveBIG Campaign to help raise funds for the Foundation and MRCs. They received a \$10,000 match from a private donor. The campaign ended on May 9<sup>th</sup>.
- **Derelict Crab Pot Removal:** Jason Morgan will be leading the effort to remove derelict crab pots in the Guemes Channel later this month to early June. Komo 4 News and the Skagit Valley Herald will be covering the story.
- **Kukatali Reserve Restoration Project:** The Northwest Straits Foundation is providing some grant funding that was left over from the Shannon Point Restoration project to support the Kukatali Reserve Restoration project. Construction on the tombolo will begin in July. Volunteers will help with some of the pre-construction monitoring in June including beach wrack, large woody debris, and forage fish surveys. Monitoring will continue after construction is complete.

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

- **2017 MRC Annual Report:** The 2017 MRC Annual Report is now complete and has been distributed to MRC members. It will also be posted on the MRC website and shared with the Board of County Commissioners.
- **Joint MRC Meeting:** Island and Whatcom MRC expressed interest in having a joint meeting with Skagit MRC in July. Tracy requested feedback regarding potential dates, times, location, agenda items, etc.

## **Project Status & Discussion**

- **Salish Sea Stewards- Morty Cohen:** There are two weeks left of classes. The last class will be held May 22, 2018 at Padilla Bay and will be followed by a potluck. MRC members are encouraged to attend to show their support. 30 people originally signed up to take the training, but several ended up dropping out for various reasons. Classes are going really well. Joan has done an excellent job running the program this year. Class participants will be asked to complete an evaluation of the entire training program at the end of the last class. The MRC's goal of linking volunteers with volunteer opportunities has been working out really well. Rachel applied for the MRC Opportunity Funds for the Salish Sea Stewards Retreat on April 30th. We are still waiting to hear back whether or not it will get funded. The Salish Sea Stewards Planning Subcommittee will be meeting today after the regular MRC meeting. MRC members are welcome to join. A volunteer appreciation picnic sponsored by the Friends of Skagit Beaches will be held at Washington Park in Anacortes on June 12<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 1pm. MRC members are invited.

- **Bowman Bay Nearshore Restoration- Jay Lind:** Nearshore restoration monitoring continues. One of the Salish Sea Stewards classes was held at the Bowman Bay restoration site. The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) recently hosted a planting party with a school group of around 40 fourth graders. The kids got to check out the beach seining and forage fish surveys that were going on the same day. We will have a contract soon with SFEG to continue working with volunteers throughout this summer to water and weed the plantings at Bowman Bay.
- **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 will be receiving MRC Opportunity Funds from the NWS Foundation to support the passport activity discovery stations and the plastics display in partnership with Zero Waste Washington and the Friends of Skagit Beaches.
- **Kids on the Beach Pilot Project- Pete Haase:** Mira Lutz with One Ocean Environmental has done an excellent job developing and implementing the Kids on the Beach Pilot Project. 50 eighth grade students from Conway Middle School are participating in the program this year. This project taught the eighth graders how to write research proposals, conduct field research, sort through historical data, and perform statistical analysis. The students will be presenting their findings at the Science Symposium this Friday, May 11 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort from 9:30am to noon. There was an excellent article in the Skagit Valley Herald about the program.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration- Paul Dinnel:** In the next few weeks volunteers will start collecting and monitoring shell bags in Fidalgo Bay and will deploy 20 new shell bags for future monitoring. Paul recently gave a presentation on abalone and native oyster restoration as part of the Salish Sea Stewards training. Paul also created a poster on the Skagit MRC's native oyster restoration work in Fidalgo Bay which he will be presenting at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Open House on May 19<sup>th</sup> at the NW Education District Building in Anacortes from 9am to 3pm.
- **Pinto Abalone Recovery- Paul Dinnel:** 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. Volunteers are currently storing their own samples for now until the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has enough staff available to start doing the Quality Analysis again. There might be an opportunity to add the Kukatali Reserve as a new forage fish index site to survey for long-term monitoring, if approved by WDFW. If not, volunteers will conduct forage fish surveys at this location as part of the restoration project. A forage fish survey training for Northwest Straits Initiative volunteers is tentatively scheduled for June 1 at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Pete is looking into the possibility of moving the training to the Fidalgo Bay Resort because there will be more opportunity to find forage fish eggs at that location. There are currently 8 or 9 volunteers who get together once or twice a month to sort through samples to look for fish eggs under the microscopes at Padilla Bay.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys - Phyllis Bravinder:** An MRC kelp monitoring WebEx meeting was held May 9<sup>th</sup>. The next Kelp Recovery Plan workshop and WebEx will be held June 8<sup>th</sup>. Lucas Hart presented on kelp as part of the Salish Sea Stewards training. The kayak kelp surveys are important to help with ground-truthing historical data, and data collected via satellites and aerial photography. Jamey shared that Betsy Peabody with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund was recently interviewed on CBS's 60 Minutes about growing kelp and kelp research: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/seaweed-farming-and-its-surprising-benefits/>. There was also a recent article about their work in the Seattle Time's Pacific Northwest Magazine.

### **2018-2019 MRC Grant Project Proposals/Budget Recommendations**

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the following project proposals and budget for the 2018-2019 MRC Grant. There were no objections. Jamey Selleck abstained from voting to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. The project leads will each prepare the proposals/application for their projects. Tracy will enter everything into EAGL, Ecology's online grant application by the May 22 grant deadline. Grant applications will be reviewed by the NWSC Technical Advisory Committee. Clarification from MRCs may be requested. The MRC Grant start date will be October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019. The total grant amount is: \$75,000.

- **\$23,900 - MRC Operations (Project Lead: Tracy Alker):** The original budget requested amount was for \$24,500. The budget was reduced to \$23,900. Funding is for staff support, meeting refreshments, MRC display and outreach material updates, and travel for MRC members for NWSC meetings, trainings, conferences and workshops.
- **\$1,900 - Fidalgo Bay Day (Project Lead: Jay Lind):** Jay volunteered to be the Project Lead for Fidalgo Bay Day with support from the Friends of Skagit Beaches and others on the planning team. Pete said he would prepare the project proposal and grant application. He also offered to help provide some guidance to Jay throughout the planning

processes. 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.

- **\$19,900 - Salish Sea Stewards (Project Lead: Rachel Best):** The original budget request for this project \$20,500. It was reduced to \$19,900. Funding is primarily for the Volunteer Program Coordinator's time to plan, promote, and facilitate the Salish Sea Stewards training program and provide limited volunteer communications, engagement, and coordination.
- **\$8,900 - Kids on the Beach (Project Lead: Pete Haase):** The original budget request for this project was \$10,000, but was reduced to \$8,900. Funding is primarily for the contractor's time to run the program. It will also be used for field journals and to bus the kids to the beach.
- **\$18,000 - Pinto Abalone Recovery (Project Lead: Jay Lind):** The original budget request for this project was \$20,000, but was reduced to 18,000. Funding is to contract with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund for outplanting, surveys, and hatchery production.
- **\$2,400 – Bowman Bay Planting (Project Lead: Jay Lind):** The original budget request for this project was \$3,000, but was reduced to \$2,400. Funding is to contract with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group for planting and plant maintenance parties with the help of volunteers.

### **MRC Membership:**

- **MRC Membership Discussion:** The Committee discussed the importance of maintaining a well-balanced representation of diverse interest groups and the need for MRC members to be active participants and willing to be a project lead or serve as an MRC officer or NWSC Representative. We currently have 14 voting MRC members representing all of the various interest groups (marine scientists, local government, tribal, economic, recreational, environmental, and concerned citizens). However, there is nothing in our MRC Bylaws that sets a maximum number of MRC members. The Committee discussed whether or not we should include a maximum limit in our Bylaws. After further discussion, the Committee decided there was really no need to limit the number of MRC members at this time.
- **MRC Membership Application - Rachel Best:** Rachel submitted a MRC membership application to take Morty's place as the Project Lead for the Salish Sea Stewards after he leaves in June. Rachel worked for the WA Department of Ecology Hazardous Waste and Toxic Reduction program for 15 years and is currently serving as Morty Cohen's Alternate on the MRC. In addition, Rachel is a Salish Sea Steward graduate from the class of 2016 and a member of the Salish Sea Stewards Planning Subcommittee. Rachel has taken on the role of updating the Salish Sea Stewards Facebook page, maintaining Volgistics to report and track volunteer hours, and sending out the volunteer news bulletin "The Wave". The Committee voted unanimously to make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Rachel to the MRC. There were no objections.

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

- **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 sharing information about Olympia oyster restoration in Fidalgo Bay.
- **2004 Northwest Straits Initiative's Five-Year Evaluation:** Jay suggested MRC members take a look at this report to remember where we were 15 years ago versus where we are now, especially in light of the NWSI's 20 year anniversary. Here is the link to the report: <http://nwstraits.org/media/1257/nwsc-2004-evaluationrpt.pdf>.
- **MyCoast App:** The Snohomish County MRC is currently using the MyCoast App to collect and analyze pictures and data relating to storm events, derelict boats, king tides, and creosote pilings, to help build awareness among decision-makers and stakeholders. Pete shared that the WA Department of Natural Resources is trying to get a state-wide subscription to the [MyCoast App](#) so other groups can use it without having to pay for the high subscription costs. Stay tuned!
- **Nature's Score Card:** Pete shared that the Washington Environmental Council and the Puget Soundkeeper Alliance produced a report that ranked different municipalities for incorporating Low Impact Development (LID) into their municipal codes to manage stormwater runoff. 23 municipalities failed to meet this requirement. The City of Anacortes scored surprisingly low. Here is the link to the report: <https://naturescorecard.com/>. Several Committee members pointed out that the City of Anacortes is currently in the process of updating their code to incorporate LID components.
- **Green Crab Survey Update:** 13 green crabs have already been found in Dungeness Spit this year. Our area is now in high alert.
- **Potential Mitigation Project Opportunity at Padilla Bay:** Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) has been asked to make recommendations for potential mitigation projects along the Padilla Bay shoreline as part of the permit process for the Rozema Boat Builder's dock expansion. Jude asked MRC members to share any project ideas.

The meeting adjourned at 11:12 a.m. The next MRC meeting will be held Thursday, June 14, 2018, at the Port of Anacortes