



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the October 11, 2018, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting, held at Fidalgo Bay RV Resort

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Todd Woodard, Nathan Biletnikoff, Jude Apple, Rick Haley (Tracy Alker's Alternate), Sarah Tchang, Jay Lind, Lynne Jordan, Pete Haase, Paul Dinnel, Phyllis Bravinder, Darla Gay Smith (Rachel Best's Alternate)
- **MRC Members Absent:** Tracy Alker, Rachel Best, Todd Mitchell, Betsy Stevenson
- **Others Attending:** Wayne Huseby, Friends of Skagit Beaches; Dana Oster, NWSC

**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:** September 13, 2018, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

**Public Comments:** No comments

## Skagit County Water Quality Update: Rick Haley, Skagit County Water Quality Analyst

The Skagit County Water Quality Monitoring Program began in 2003 to assess current conditions and to track water quality trends over time. Ambient sampling occurs every two weeks at 40 sites in agricultural-area streams in Skagit County. The sampling sites start upstream at Hamilton and continue down through the rest of the county. Water quality parameters include: temperature, dissolved oxygen, nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus), turbidity, pH, and fecal coliform bacteria. In addition to the regular ambient sampling, storm samples are also collected after big rain events to identify fecal coliform issues and track down sources. Water quality can be impacted by the loss of riparian canopy, poor land use practices, and invasive reed canary grass resulting in low summer flows, high water temps, sedimentation, and low dissolved oxygen. These environmental stressors can impact the health and survival of salmonids. Some of the other environmental stressors are toxic chemicals that runoff from streets and parking lots, as well as fecal coliform bacteria from homes, farms, pets, wildlife, and waterfowl. Fecal coliform bacteria can become concentrated in shellfish which can make people sick if consumed. In 2008, County staff collected a sample from the Samish River with a really high fecal coliform count of 17,000 cfu, well above the standard mean of less than 100 cfu. This resulted in shellfish harvest closures in Samish Bay due to health concerns which lead to the Clean Samish Initiative. The Clean Samish Initiative is made up of 20 governmental, tribal and private organizations all working to clean up fecal coliform pollution in the Samish Basin. We are making progress and have had fewer shellfish harvest closures in recent years. Rick described the water quality in each of the water basins. The water quality in the Skagit River is generally pretty good overall. Several of the sloughs that flow into Padilla Bay tend to have poor water quality and the agricultural systems that pump nutrients directly into Padilla Bay can trigger algal blooms. Skagit County is working to find the pollution sources through monitoring, working with landowners, and finding resources to help improve the water quality. Some of the new techniques being used to track sources include chemical tracers, sewage sniffing dogs, and DNA testing. Public education and outreach is also an important part of the program. The 2017 Skagit County Monitoring Program Annual Report is available on the Skagit County website:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PublicWorksSurfaceWaterManagement/wq.htm>.

## Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: Nate Biletnikoff and Jude Apple

- **Kelp Recovery Plan:** Dana Oster is NWSC's new Project Lead for the Kelp Recovery plan. They are in the process of figuring out the data gaps, priorities, and what they can accomplish in the next year or two with a smaller budget. They are also planning to have a one day workshop with all of the folks involved in kelp monitoring.
- **PSP Vital Signs and Indicators:** The Science Advisory Committee is re-evaluating the vital signs and indicators in the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda which will be updated in 2022.
- **Derelict Boat Removal in Snohomish County:** Around 10 derelict boats have been in Snohomish County removed so far.
- **Environmental DNA (eDNA) Presentation:** eDNA samples are collected from soil, seawater, snow, air, etc. rather than directly from an individual organism. This method of collecting DNA minimizes any stress induced by human

interaction. eDNA can be used for monitoring biodiversity and conservation, and can also be used to study the presence of species and the locations of threatened or endangered species at larger spatial scales and across all environments more efficiently.

- NWSC 5-Year Strategic Plan Draft: Lucas recently made the rounds with MRC members and the NWSC to seek approval for the format of the Draft Strategic Plan. The Plan itself has not been finalized or approved yet.
- Pacific States/BC Oil Spill Task Force Salish Sea Shared Waters Forum- Oct 3 & 4: The Northwest Straits Commission was well represented at the two-day kickoff meeting along with several other stakeholders. The purpose of the forum was to share information and ideas about policies, practices, and safeguards to minimize the risk and impacts of oil spills in the Salish Sea. For more information: <http://oilspilltaskforce.org/task-force-events/salish-sea-forum/>. Several oil spill response table top exercises have also been held at Padilla Bay. Shell and Tesoro Refineries also regularly host oil spill response table top exercises as well.

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

- MRC Opportunity Fund: The Foundation approved a \$6,000 request for Skagit MRC's Salish Sea Stewards retreat.
- Boeing Stormwater Grant: The Foundation received a \$50,000 Grant from Boeing for MRC stormwater projects in Skagit, Island, and Snohomish Counties. Details still need to be worked out.
- Next NWSF Board Meeting - October 24.

#### **MRC Administrative Report: Rick Haley**

- New MRC Grant: The new grant has been signed with a start date of October 1. Tracy is still working on getting the other MRC Grant related contracts signed.
- MRC Conference: The MRC Conference will be held at Fort Worden in Port Townsend Nov 16-17. MRC members are responsible for making their own arrangements for lodging. Reimbursement will be at the government per diem rate.
  - MRC Ignite Presentation: Pete agreed to do the MRC Ignite Presentation to highlight the Kids on the Beach program at the MRC Conference this year. Pete will work with Mira on the presentation since it will be part of a joint project with the SeaDoc Society this year.
- MRC display: Tracy is seeking MRC display ideas for the conference. We could just highlight two or three of our favorite projects, or highlight all 20 years of accomplishments. Rick encouraged people to get their ideas back to Tracy.
- November 8 MRC Meeting: The Committee voted to cancel the November 8<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting because the majority of MRC members will be attending the MRC Conference the following week.
- MRC Display at Fidalgo Shoreline Academy: Rick will host the MRC display at the Fidalgo Shoreline Academy.

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

- Salish Sea Stewards: We recently sent out a Request for Quotes and Qualifications for a Volunteer Program Coordinator. It was posted on the County MRSC Roster, on the MRC website, on the SSS Facebook page, and on "The Wave". Proposals are due October 29<sup>th</sup>. The SSS Planning Subcommittee will be meeting on November 2 to evaluate the proposals. Wayne reported that the Friends of Skagit Beaches is committed to continue covering some of the funding that the MRC Grant can't cover next year.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: Fidalgo Bay Resort has been reserved for next year's Fidalgo Bay Day on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019. A round of applause was given to Pete for all the work he puts into coordinating this event for the past several years. Jay will be the new Project Lead for next year's Fidalgo Bay Day.
- Forage Fish Index Site Surveys: All seven MRCs collect forage fish data at index sites. Dana will be taking over the lead of this regional project for the NWSC. Skagit MRC conducts index site surveys at Similk Bay, Ship Harbor along Guemes Channel and Samish Island. WDFW has a new coordinator for the forage fish index sites. A phone conference with Phil Dion and Lisa Helliar at WDFW will be held October 24<sup>th</sup>. Wayne thanked Pete for leading the forage fish surveys in Skagit County for the last six years. The Orca Task Force has identified forage fish as a critical component.
- Kids on the Beach Project: Last year we contracted with Mira Lutz to develop and implement this pilot project. Mira worked with Conway School and got 50 kids to participate. Mira recently got hired with the SeaDoc Society as their new Education Coordinator. In 2019, we hope to continue working with Mira to expand the Kids on the Beach project in collaboration with The SeaDoc Society/ UC Davis. We are currently working on getting a contract in place.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: We are in the process of contracting with SFEG to do Bowman Bay watering and weeding in

2019. The plants seem to be filling in nicely. Large Woody debris has started accumulating on the beach and seems to be helping to protect the plants and shoreline. The beach slope also seems to be leveling out more.

- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Paul worked with Josh Bouma to finalize the 2018 report which has been submitted. As part of the larger project, PSRF is working with Western Washington students to seed larvae in enclosed modules in the water to see if they will settle into the rocky substrate. If successful, this method would be much faster than raising juvenile abalone in the hatchery for two years before outplanting. They are also working on outplanting smaller juvenile abalone rather than larger ones for that same reason. Work under the new MRC Grant will continue in 2019.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: 2018 was a very productive season and we had a ton of volunteer help. There was a lot of oyster settlement in places we've never looked before, especially up around Shell's RV Park, outside of the enhanced shell plots. We now have an estimated 3 million oysters in Fidalgo Bay. Paul is working on the data analysis and report which will likely be done sometime in November. Next year Paul will be working with Jude to look for potential areas in Padilla Bay for oyster restoration work. WDFW is also interested in transporting some of their oysters over to the other side of March's Point. On October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, the Puget Sound Restoration Fund will distribute additional shell on the Swinomish tidelands on the east side of Fidalgo Bay and across Weaverling Spit to encourage more settlement.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Suzanne Shull will be giving a presentation on kelp monitoring data at the Fidalgo Bay Shoreline Academy on October 20. Preliminary data indicates that the kelp beds in Skagit County waters seem to be more stable than the kelp beds located farther to the south.

#### Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:

- Kukatali Preserve Restoration Project: Restoration work is now complete. Where there used to be riprap there is now a lot of driftwood. There is also a new channel separating the mainland from Kiket Island during high tide.
- Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) Grant Funding Listings: Paul offered congrats to the various organizations in Skagit County for the most recent ESRP listings for grant funding. Skagit Land Trust's proposals for Kelly's Point and Samish Flower Farm ranked really well. They were above the 8-million-dollar funding level and are expected to get funded as long as the state's legislature proceeds normally. The Northwest Straits Foundation is also on the list for probable funding for Samish Island and Similk Bay shoreline restoration projects.
- Fidalgo Bay Water Quality Testing Update: Skagit Land Trust's water quality testing on the Fidalgo Bay Graber property in collaboration with Samish Indian Nation's water quality testing at the nearby outfalls have not found in any red flags. All results from Edge Analytical show fecal coliform levels to be clean.
- Fidalgo Shoreline Academy- October 20: Jude Apple will be the keynote speaker at the Fidalgo Shoreline Academy this year.
- City of Anacortes Job Opportunity: City of Anacortes is seeking a new Storm Water Coordinator to replace Matt Reynolds who recently retired. Because Matt retired, he can no longer represent the City of Anacortes on the Skagit MRC.
- Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Management Plan Update: A meeting with all of the stakeholders was recently held in Anacortes. WA Department of Natural Resources is working on a draft plan that should be ready by December. They looked over the work that has been done over the last decade and came up with good ideas for the plan.

**The meeting adjourned at around 11:00 a.m. The next MRC meeting will be held December 13, 2018 at the Port of Anacortes (The November 8<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting was canceled due to the MRC Conference, Nov 16-17 at Fort Worden).**