



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the March 14, 2019, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting, held at the Skagit County Administration Building in Mount Vernon.

- **MRC Members Attending:** Sarah Tchang, Jay Lind, Pete Haase, Tracy Alker, Betsy Stevenson, Suzanne Schull (Jude's Alternate), Kari Odden (Lynn Jordan's Alternate), Nathan Biletnikoff
- **MRC Members Absent:** Jamey Selleck, Paul Dinnel, Lynne Jordan, Jude Apple, Rachel Best, Todd Mitchell, Todd Woodard, Phyllis Bravinder
- **Others Attending:** Dana Oster, NWSC; Diane Hennebert, City of Anacortes (MRC Applicant); Brian Robson, Shell Puget Sound Refinery; Bob Seaman, Whatcom MRC; Bridget Trosin, WA SeaGrant; Richard Brocksmith, Skagit Watershed Council

**Call to Order and Introduction:** Sarah Tchang called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions. Sarah noted there were not enough Skagit MRC members present to have a quorum.

**Approval of Minutes:** January 10, 2019, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written. The February 14 MRC meeting was cancelled due to the weather.

**Public Comments:** Richard Brocksmith provided a brief update on the Puget Sound Steelhead Recovery Plan. Federal, state, tribal, local, and private partners are in the process of developing a long-term recovery plan for Puget Sound steelhead. The draft plan is a fairly generic document that is now available [online](#) for public review. The final plan will be completed in 2019 and will include chapters with specific watershed recovery plans. The draft Skagit Watershed Steelhead Recovery Plan is now ready for vetting by the stakeholders. The Skagit Watershed Council has been tasked with facilitating the vetting process and comment period of this draft plan. To start the conversation with the stakeholders, regional and state experts will be presenting the draft plan on March 21 at the Skagit PUD from 10am-noon. After the draft plan is fully vetted by the stakeholders there will be a much broader public roll out with forums, presentations, and programs in the community.

## **Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report:** *Pete Haase*

There were two NWSC committee meetings since the last Skagit MRC meeting. Meeting highlights from the January and February NWSC meetings were emailed to MRC members.

- The Northwest Straits Initiative's annual retreat will take place March 21-22 at Camano Island.
- Puget Sound Day on the Hill is scheduled for May 14-16.
- All seven MRCs have letters signed by County Commissioners in support of the MRCs and continued state funding that were sent to the Legislators last month.
- Shada Sahandy is resigning from her position as the Executive Director of the Puget Sound Partnership. Laura Blackmore, the Deputy Director will likely be appointed to take her place.
- Federal funding for the Shore Friendly Program, an incentive program for landowners to remove armoring, recently ended. This funding was awarded to the Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) to provide educational workshops to shoreline landowners. The Shore Friendly Program is now being funded through the Washington State Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP), but there is no longer an education and outreach component. The NWSF is seeking other sources of funding to continue providing education and outreach to shoreline landowners.

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

- The NWSF board meeting was held last week. They voted for Jerry Masters to remain on the Board for one more year.
- The NWSF is campaigning to raise funds for interns/fellowships to support the MRCs similar to Clallam MRC's program.
- The Foundation continues to seek funding and support from the private sector.

- Skagit MRC was awarded \$6,000 from the MRC Opportunity Funds to implement a needs assessment and planning workshop for the Salish Sea Stewards Program. The NWSF drafted a contract with Joan Drinkwin to facilitate the workshop and to draft a restructuring plan for the Salish Sea Stewards program.

#### Camp Kirby Site Visit Discussion: *Pete Haase*

One of the Camp Kirby Board Members reached out to the Marine Resources Committee several months ago to inquire about a possible partnership. They were particularly interested in the Skagit MRC's Olympia oyster restoration work, Kids on the Beach, and forage fish surveys. Camp Kirby staff provided a tour of their property on Samish Island on February 26 for several MRC members and other volunteers. They explored lots of ideas for providing activities in support of various camp programs. Erin Walker, Executive Director of Campfire Samish, is the contact person for coordinating activities at Camp Kirby. One of the Salish Sea Stewards classes will be held at Camp Kirby on April 30. Pete said they identified two potential forage fish index sites at Camp Kirby where there is documented forage fish spawning, but no shade. Pete took some gravel samples and sent them to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

#### MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event Discussion: *All*

This year is Skagit MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Skagit MRC was officially established by the Board of County Commissioners on **May 4, 1999**. The Committee discussed several ideas for celebrating the MRC's anniversary.

- To help promote Skagit MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we could write one or two feature articles in the paper about the MRC and our 20 years of accomplishments. Tracy is seeking MRC members who might be interested in taking this task on.
- The Committee also talked about promoting Skagit MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as part of this year's Fidalgo Bay Day's event on August 24, 2019 and sponsoring a special activity at the event. Tracy is looking into the possibility of contracting with diver Laura Hanson to present her virtual reality diving experience in the Salish Sea. Laura has multiple headsets so several kids can check it out at the same time. Here is the link that talks a little bit about the 6-minute video "Virtual Salish Sea and Beyond" at the 2018 Greenlife Festival: <https://pixvana.com/vr-casting-powers-360-video-premiere-at-the-2018-greenlife-festival/>.
- Pete suggested hosting a community picnic in partnership with the Friends of Skagit Beaches and Salish Sea Stewards. The MRC could provide a cake and write articles to help promote the event.
- Bridget Trosin recommended planning an event with the County Commissioners. The event could be kicked off with a proclamation followed by personal stories from MRC members, volunteers and other groups who have worked with the MRC over the last 20 years. It could also include an ongoing slide show of volunteers and projects, or maybe a short video. Betsy volunteered to take the lead on this and work with Pete and Tracy to try to get something planned.

#### Pinto Abalone Letter of Support: *Tracy Alker*

Paul drafted a letter on behalf of the MRC in support of listing pinto abalone as endangered at the state level. Comment letters are due to the WDFW by **March 25, 2019**. Because the Skagit MRC is an advisory committee to the Skagit County Board of County Commissioners, a copy of the letter was shared with the Commissioners to make sure they didn't have any issues with the MRC sending it to WDFW. The NWSC submitted a letter of support as well. The consensus of the Committee was to approve the letter as written. No MRC members expressed any potential conflicts of interest.

#### Orca Recovery Outreach and Education: *All*

The Northwest Straits Foundation is the recipient of grant funding through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to implement actions to increase the availability of prey species for Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW) in the Northwest Straits region. The grant has many tasks and actions that included a restoration project, monitoring, prioritization of potential future restoration actions, and community outreach. The NWSF recently sent out a Request for Proposals for MRCs to conduct community outreach and education events in support of SRKW recovery. There is an average of \$2,000-\$3,000 available per MRC. MRCs are encouraged to work together. Proposals will be accepted, and funds distributed on a rolling basis beginning on **March 11, 2019**. All activities and reporting must be completed by **November 30, 2019**. The Committee discussed the following possibilities:

- Skagit County Medicine Take Back Program Outreach: Kari suggested partnering with the County Health Department's prescription medicine take-back program. Our messaging could focus on the environmental impacts of pharmaceuticals that are flushed down the drain into Puget Sound and into orcas. The Medicine Take Back program is a much better and safer alternative for families and orcas alike. The grant funds could be used to contract with

someone to develop the marketing materials such as banner ads for newspapers, magazines, social media, and radio ads, videos, public service announcement, etc.

- Skagit Watershed Council: Richard Brocksmitth said that the Skagit Watershed Council recently developed the “Skagit STEAM Educator Resource Guide,” as a comprehensive tool for educators to find information about current environmental and conservation education programs being offered to K-12 Youth in the Skagit watershed. The guide has been well received by the local school districts and is available on the Skagit Watershed Council’s website. Richard suggested there might be an opportunity for Skagit MRC to partner with some of these programs to help students make connections with the health of orcas.
- San Juan MRC: Nate pointed out that the San Juan MRC is doing a lot of really great things in the orca recovery effort and there might be an opportunity to partner with them on a project or apply for grants.
- Britt Slough Restoration Project: Nate suggested looking into the possibility of an orca recovery outreach project in connection with the Britt Slough Restoration Project or other similar habitat restoration projects happening in Skagit County. Richard said there is always a need to improve communications with those restoration projects and this orca recovery outreach might be a great opportunity to do that.
- Puget Sound Anglers: Jay commented that the Puget Sound Anglers is willing to donate to efforts for raising salmon to larger adult size for release to benefit fishing and orcas.

## Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards: We currently have 19 people registered for the class. The application deadline was extended to March 15. The speaker schedule was shared with MRC members and posted on the MRC website. The public is welcome to come and listen to the speakers. The Friends of Skagit Beaches provided funding to purchase tote bags with the Salish Sea Logo to give to the presenters. Classes start March 19 – May 21, 2019. The subcommittee met with Joan Drinkwin, the Volunteer Program Coordinator, on February 26.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: Fidalgo Bay Resort has been reserved for next year’s Fidalgo Bay Day on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019. An ad will be placed in the Skagit Valley Recreation & Activity Guide insert in the Skagit Valley Herald that will be published on April 17 and run through August. The Friends of Skagit Beaches will once again host the very popular Discovery Passport Station activity with other sources of funding for the prizes. We will also have the beach seining activity and the Shannon Point Marine Center touch tank. This year’s event will be part of the Skagit MRC’s 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. We are hoping to contract with diver Laura Hanson to present her virtual reality diving experience in the Salish called “Virtual Salish See and Beyond.”
- Forage Fish Surveys: Surveys continue at our restoration sites and index sites. One was canceled in February due to the weather. Pete is looking into another potential index sit at Camp Kirby.
- Kids on the Beach Project: We now have a contract in place with UC Davis/The SeaDoc Society. The only caveat is that Mira will not be able to perform any of the tasks on the beach with the school groups like she did last year. Fortunately, Padilla Bay NERR staff has offered to assist with those tasks on the beach along with help from volunteers. Conway Middle School will likely participate again this year. Mira plants to reach out to La Conner Schools as well. We will try to schedule the beach days when the weather is a little bit warmer and hopefully more opportunities to find eggs. Pete said he gets a lot of requests from other groups with kids to participate in the forage fish surveys. He tries to accommodate those groups as much as possible, mostly under the umbrella of the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve, since that is the area where they find the most eggs.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Monthly plant maintenance work parties with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group will start sometime in the spring and continue through the summer. Jason Morgan recently added Bowman Bay to the MyCoast App to upload beach photos to document changes over time: <https://mycoast.org/wa>.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Surveys were conducted in February. The Puget Sound Restoration Fund will provide a quarterly report in April.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Paul recently completed a report on Olympia Oyster Restoration in Fidalgo Bay and Cypress Island which has been shared with the MRC and NWSC and posted on both websites. The report summarizes all of the work that has been done over the last 16 years. Information from the report was included in the online Encyclopedia of Puget Sound. Field work will start up again in April or May 2019.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Dana is leading the effort in the development of a Puget Sound wide kelp conservation and recovery plan that started at the end of 2017. MRCs, scientists, NOAA, county reps, USGS, and six tribal reps attended the Kelp Recovery Workshop at Padilla Bay on February 28 (the third workshop in the series). Phyllis attended the

workshop on behalf of the Skagit MRC. The focus of the workshop was on high-priority data gaps and identifying actions to address data gaps. An MRC kelp monitoring workshop will be held April 18 at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Surveys will start up again in June. Suzanne shared graphs that showed the results of kelp surveys in Skagit County. Kelp beds appear to be increasing at the Shannon Point site. Kelp beds at the Coffin Rocks site appear to be pretty stable. A kelp monitoring poster is available to share at upcoming events like Fidalgo Bay Day.

#### **2019-2020 MRC Grant Project Idea Discussion: All**

The Committee discussed our current MRC grant funded projects and whether or not we would like to continue these same projects under the new 2019-2020 MRC Grant or if we want to consider new projects for this funding. The projects funded under the current 2018-2019 MRC Grant include:

- **MRC Operations:** \$23,900
- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** \$1,900
- **Salish Sea Stewards:** \$19,900
- **Kids on the Beach:** \$8,900
- **Pinto Abalone Recovery:** \$18,000
- **Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance:** \$2,400
- **Total Grant Amount= \$75,000**

Because we did not have a quorum no official decisions were made regarding project proposals for the 2019-2020 MRC Grant. However, the Committee expressed support to continue the same projects under the new MRC Grant. The MRC grant application includes a simplified logic model to help guide the desired outcomes and the measurable ways to reach those outcomes. The metrics will help evaluate the project's success and will be used to help paint the bigger picture of regional impacts. The MRC Grant proposals are due in June. Although it is anticipated that the total grant amount will be around \$75,000 again, the Committee was encouraged to take into consideration what we could get done if we end up getting less money, as well as a wish list of what we could do with additional funding. Tracy reminded the Committee that the Northwest Straits Foundation is available to help the MRC apply for other grants or donations if we have specific projects we would like to get funded. There is also the MRC Opportunity Fund that we can apply for.

New Project Ideas for Consideration:

- If additional funding becomes available, Pete suggested the MRC consider installing interpretive at the Samish Flower Farm beach in partnership with the Skagit Land Trust. It is one of the few places in Skagit County with public beach access. The tidelands are owned by the Padilla Bay Reserve. The habitat is unique and would provide an excellent opportunity for public education and outreach.

#### **MRC Participation at Upcoming Events:**

- May 16-May 19 (10am – 6pm)- Anacortes Boat Show: Need MRC volunteers to co-host the Be Whale Wise Booth with the San Juan and Whatcom MRCs.
- June 1 - 2 (10am-6pm)- Anacortes Waterfront Festival: Pete is thinking about reserving a table at the Anacortes Water Festival and is looking for MRC volunteers to host the MRC display for half a day. The MRC would share the booth with the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve and the Friends of Skagit Beaches.

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

- Friends of Skagit Beaches Annual Winter Lecture Series: The next lecture will be held **March 15, 2019** at the NW Education Services District Building in Anacortes, 7pm-8:30pm. "Puget Sound Mussel Monitoring Long-term Active Biological Monitoring of Nearshore Contaminants" presented by Jennifer Lanksbury, Wildlife Biologist, WDFW. The last lecture will be held **April 12, 2019**, "Plankton of the Land: Mosses, Lichens, and Fungi in Pacific Northwest Forests" presented by Kem Luther, PhD. The lectures are free and open to the public.
- Orca Network Presentation- **March 20**, at noon at the WSU Extension Facility. "Preventing Extinction of the Southern Resident Orcas."
- Washington Sea Grant's Green Crab Monitoring Training for Volunteers- **March 20**, 9am-3pm at Padilla Bay: <https://wsg.washington.edu/event/crab-team-training-pbnerr-19/>
- Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) Beached Bird Training Session: **March 24**, 11am-5pm at the Stanwood Senior Center (7430 276<sup>th</sup> St NW, Stanwood). The data collected by volunteers will be used to establish the

baseline pattern of bird mortality on North Pacific beaches and help address important marine conservation issues and protect marine resources. RSVP [coasst@uw.edu](mailto:coasst@uw.edu) or (206) 221-6893.

- Skagit Watershed Council Meeting- **March 27**, from 10am to noon at the Skagit Public Utility District building in Mount Vernon. They will be discussing the Draft Puget Sound Steelhead Recovery Plan.
- 'Kids Can Save the Planet' Free Documentary Series at the Lincoln Theater [www.kidscansavethplanet.com](http://www.kidscansavethplanet.com). The award winning documentary "Plastic Is Forever" by Dylan D'Haeze, a 13-year-old filmmaker from the San Juan Islands, is the first film in the series that will be shown at the Lincoln Theater in Mount Vernon on **March 28, 6:30pm**.
- 2019 Puget Sound Bird Observatory Wetland Secretive Bird Monitoring Project: The Puget Sound Bird Observatory is looking for volunteers to help monitor wetland birds in Skagit County. Surveyor training for Skagit and Snohomish survey locations will take place **March 30, 2019**, 9:30am-2:00pm, at the Stanwood PUD Building. RSVP: Cindy Easterson at [eastersonfamily@msn.com](mailto:eastersonfamily@msn.com) or call (425) 876-1055.
- Marine Biotoxin Volunteer Monitoring Program 2019 Training: The Skagit Conservation District is seeking volunteers to support monitoring local recreational shellfish harvesting beaches for Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) and Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning (DSP). 2019 training dates: **April 9** from 1pm to 4pm at the Padilla Bay Research Reserve and **April 11** from 2:45pm to 4:15pm on the beach at March Point. Pre-registration required by April 4. Contact Kristi Carpenter, Skagit Conservation District @ (360) 428-4313 or email: [kristi@skagitcd.org](mailto:kristi@skagitcd.org).
- NOAA has a new mapping tool for endangered species habitat: [https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/new-app-makes-endangered-species-habitat-easy-find?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/new-app-makes-endangered-species-habitat-easy-find?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)
- San Juan MRC's Plastic Free Salish Sea documentary: [Click here](#)
- The Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Boat Disposal Sites Map: WDNR's Vessel Turn In Program and the Defenders of Wildlife have been in collaboration to create a map of boat disposal sites throughout western Washington.
- The Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership (PMEP) Request for Proposals: The Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership has issued a Request for Proposals for nearshore science support. They are seeking a contractor to conduct literature reviews, compile available information, and collaborate with regional experts including the PMEP nearshore regional working group to develop a "State of the Knowledge" report on West Coast nearshore habitats. The full RFP can be found at the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission website.
- Liz Lovelett Appointed to Washington State Senate: Jay shared the news that Liz Lovelett (former MRC member and Anacortes City Council member) was recently appointed to replace Kevin Ranker in the Washington state senate. Liz signed the letter in support of continuing state funding for the Skagit MRC.

#### MRC Membership Application – Diane Hennebert

Unfortunately, the Skagit MRC did not have a quorum to vote on Diane's application. The vote will need to be postponed until the next MRC meeting on April 11 or vote by email.

**The meeting adjourned at 11:00am. The next MRC meeting will be held April 11, 2019 at the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort in Anacortes (4701 Fidalgo Bay Road).**