



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the April 11, 2019, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting, held at the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort in Anacortes

- **MRC Members Attending:** Sarah Tchang, Jay Lind, Pete Haase, Tracy Alker, Paul Dinnel, Lynne Jordan, Jude Apple, Betsy Stevenson, Bob Weathers (Phyllis Bravinder's Alternate), Nicole Casper (Todd Mitchell's Alternate), Darla Gay Smith (Rachel Best's Alternate), Jodi Bluhm (Todd Woodard's Alternate)
- **MRC Members Absent:** Jamey Selleck, Phyllis Bravinder, Todd Woodard, Todd Mitchell, Nathan Biletnikoff, Rachel Best
- **Others Attending:** Diane Hennebert, City of Anacortes (MRC Applicant); Jason Morgan, NWSF; Nicole Jordan, NWSC; Kari Odden (Lynne Jordan's Alternate); Wayne Huseby, FOSB/FBARCSC; Amy Eberling, Salish Sea Stewards/Salish Sea School

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

**Approval of Minutes:** March 14, 2019, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written after changes were made to the meeting attendance.

**Public Comments:** Jude Apple has officially accepted the position as the new Director at Padilla Bay NERR.

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

The NWSC did not have a meeting in March. Pete provided a brief report on the Northwest Straits Initiative's annual retreat which took place March 21-22 at Camano Island. Below are a few highlights from the retreat:

- Around 25 people attended including representatives from each MRC, NWSC Staff, Northwest Straits Foundation Staff, and gubernatorial appointees. Most of the MRC representatives were new to the NWSC.
- The retreat was facilitated by Hilary Wilkinson.
- There were a lot of group discussions and a few breakout sessions.
- The main accomplishment prioritizing and clarifying some of the items in the NWSI Strategic Plan.
- The retreat provided a great opportunity for networking and reminiscing about the NWSI and the progress and changes that have been made over the last 20 years.
- Pete thought it would be helpful to have a retreat or workshop that focused more on the MRC members and the work of the MRCs to help initiate more collaboration among the MRCs.
- The next NWSC meeting will be held at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend on April 26 at 10:30am.

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

- Don and Tarrell recently met with Shell to discuss Skagit MRC projects that Shell might like to help support. Shell expressed interest in the Kids on the Beach program. They are still working out the details.
- The Foundation is in the process of finalizing a Near Term Action grant proposal in partnership with the University of Washington (UW), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and the Friends of San Juans to monitor the effects of shoreline armoring and shoreline restoration at several sites around Puget Sound including Bowman Bay. We've now completed 3 years of collecting monitoring data at Bowman Bay. This grant will help fund the remaining two years of monitoring at Bowman Bay so that we will have a total 5 years of monitoring data. Researchers at UW will synthesize the data and write up a case study.
- Next NWSF meeting will be April 25 in Port Townsend to make it easier for Caroline to attend.

## Project Status & Discussion

- Fidalgo Bay Day: Fidalgo Bay Resort has been reserved for next year's Fidalgo Bay Day on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019. This year's event will be part of the Skagit MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Planning is currently underway.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Monthly plant maintenance work parties with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group will take place from 10:00am to 1:00pm on the following dates: May 17, June 21, July 12, August 16, and September 20. The work party schedule has been posted on the MRC website and in "The Wave."
- Forage Fish Surveys: Surveys continue at our restoration sites and index sites at Ship Harbor, Samish Island, and Similk Bay. Pete is now waiting for approval from WDFW regarding his proposal to add two new index sites at Camp Kirby.
- Kids on the Beach Project: 50 eighth grade students from Conway and 50 eighth grade students from La Conner are participating in the Kids on the Beach program this year. Padilla Bay NERR's Education Department has joined forces and will accompany Mira during the classroom sessions and will be in charge of the beach activities. Both groups will conduct surf smelt surveys and beach seining like we did last year. The beach activities for Conway students will take place on May 1 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort and on May 2 at Lone Tree Point for La Conner students. Volunteers will be recruited to help with the beach activities. The Science Symposium for both school groups will take place on May 10 at Padilla Bay. Padilla Bay NERR expressed interest in the possibility of partnering with the MRC to host the Kids on the Beach program in the future.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: The Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) and WDFW divers completed site surveys and genetic sampling at three of the six abalone outplant sites in Skagit County over the last three months. They collected tissue samples to get a better understanding of the genetic diversity as it relates to original hatchery outplants and wild populations. Final surveys were conducted on the Young Abalone Module experiment. There appears to be no difference in survival rates between cohorts outplanted at 9 months old and 15 months old. This is good news because outplanting abalone at a younger age means less hatchery time will be required. Abalone are increasing in size and density at the outplant sites. However, we still have not seen any signs of natural recruitment. Paul said that pinto abalone recovery will be a much slower process compared to Olympia oyster restoration in Fidalgo Bay. Additional abalone will no longer be outplanted at the two sites where survival rates were really low. Divers set up two new outplant sites in Skagit County which will be seeded with approximately 1000 abalone of two year classes sometime in April. PSRF is also doing pinto abalone recovery work in the San Juan County as well. Paul plans to go out in the field at least once or twice this year with PSRF.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Field season will start up again in a couple of months. Volunteers will collect around 20 cultch bags to monitor oyster settlement and will deploy new cultch bags to monitor next year. After collecting data for the last 20 years, we now have really good population estimates and will no longer need to conduct annual surveys of all the plots. From here on out we will start to monitor at 3 to 5 year intervals instead of every year. Olympia oyster restoration efforts in Fidalgo Bay have been very successful. There is now a sustainable spawning population at around 3 million oysters. Most successful areas are where shell was added to enhance oyster habitat for oyster larvae settlement. This year Paul will work with Jude to look for other potential locations for native oyster restoration in Padilla Bay, particularly in the southern channels near Bay View State Park where there is a Pacific oyster bed. According to historical records, there used to be an estimated 2,000 acres of Olympia oysters in Padilla Bay and Samish Bay. Paul has also been working with Brady Blake from WDFW over the last two years to look into the possibility of transferring some of the adult oysters from Fidalgo Bay over to the east side of Marchs Point.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: An MRC kelp monitoring workshop will be held April 18 at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Surveys will start up again in June. Bob Weathers and Phyllis Bravinder cannot attend this year, so Tracy is looking for another representative from the Skagit MRC to attend. Bob said that Brad Smith, the lead volunteer for the kayak kelp surveys at Shannon Point, can represent Skagit at the workshop.
- Salish Sea Stewards: There are now 21 people taking the class. Classes are mostly held every Tuesday from 1:00pm to 5:00pm and are going really well so far. We have a lot of really great speakers. The speaker schedule is posted on the MRC website: [www.skagitmrc.org](http://www.skagitmrc.org) and the lectures are open to the public. The next class will be held Friday, April 19, in partnership with WSU Snohomish Beach Watchers. The focus of the class will be on climate change. Jay said he spoke with Shannon Blue, the Environmental Program Coordinator at Skagit Valley Community College. She agreed to post the speaker schedule around the college to attract younger people to the program. Joan provides all of the presentations, the speaker survey, pictures, and other training materials for the Salish Sea Stewards online in a dropbox.

- Salish Sea Stewards Restructuring Plan: Skagit MRC was recently awarded \$6,000 from the MRC Opportunity Funds from the NWSF to implement a needs assessment and planning workshop for the Salish Sea Stewards Program. Joan Drinkwin has been contracted to facilitate the workshop and to draft a restructuring plan for the Salish Sea Stewards program. Joan will be meeting with the Salish Sea Stewards long-range planning committee on April 25 at 10am. Jay asked MRC members what they would like to see from the Salish Sea Stewards long-term planning workshop. Below summarizes some of the thoughts that were discussed.
  - It is difficult to find grants to run a volunteer program like the Salish Sea Stewards. The program will fall apart unless there is at least a part-time paid position to oversee it.
  - Consider getting paid sponsors from large Corporations like Boeing.
  - Look at partnering with a larger organization that has a local chapter like Surfriders that can provide resources and guidance.
  - Padilla Bay might soon be able to play a larger role in supporting the Salish Sea Stewards training program in addition to proving the facility and infrastructure. However, they most likely would not be able to help with volunteer coordination.

#### Guardians of the Sea Program: Amy Eberling

Amy Eberling is currently enrolled in the Salish Sea Stewards training this year and was really impressed with the work of the NWSI and the Skagit MRC after learning about it in class. Amy is in the early stages of developing a non-profit for 9-12 graders called The Salish Sea School. This School is set to open a program for 9-12 graders in June 2020 called "Guardians of the Sea (GOTS)." It will launch out of Anacortes. GOTS is a boat-based exploration of the Salish Sea that will foster cognitive, social, & emotional learning through scientific inquiry, citizen science projects, and mindfulness in nature practices. The School will be similar to a summer day camp and each session will be 4-days long/6hrs per day. It will be a small group of around 5 students on a 25ft boat. The overall goal is to provide opportunities for youth to become exposed to the Salish Sea and thus develop a deep appreciation to initiate a personal desire for its conservation. Amy is currently working on developing relationships with any organizations/professionals in the area that could benefit from any sort of on-the-water data collection/monitoring/etc. from the youth citizen science projects she will be leading. The projects lining up so far are a tufted puffin survey near Smith Island and marine plastic sampling in partnership with Peter Hodum at the University of Puget Sound. The students will be collecting long-term data sets that will be sent to Peter for analyses. Amy is looking for suggestions for good monitoring locations for marine plastic sampling near the Skyline Marina where they will be launching. In addition to GOTS, Amy would also like to do monthly marine-inspired gatherings for youth. She recently applied for two grants. There will also be a fee for students to attend the class. Jude suggested contacting the Anacortes HS Green Club. There is also the Youth Earth Summit at Padilla Bay every December.

#### MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event Planning Update: Betsy

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. Betsy is working on a proclamation in recognition of the Skagit MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary that will get signed by the Board of County Commissioners on June 18, 2019 at 3:00pm. Pete will reach out to several people who have been involved with the MRC over the years to come and say a few words. Betsy is looking for ideas from the Committee regarding the accomplishments we would like to highlight at the celebration. Tracy will get a cake and put together a slide show of photos that will run in the background as part of the celebration. Pete will work with the Friends of Skagit Beaches to plan a community picnic as part of the MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and volunteer appreciation. Skagit MRC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration will also be a part of this year's Fidalgo Bay Day. Skagit MRC will host a virtual reality diving experience with Laura Hanson. Tracy is currently working on a contract agreement with Laura.

#### Orca Recovery Outreach and Education: All

The Northwest Straits Foundation recently sent out a Request for Proposals for MRCs to conduct community outreach and education events in support of orca recovery with grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. There is a total of \$18,900 available for all MRCs (approximately \$2,000-\$3,000 per MRC). MRCs are encouraged to work together. 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 and Tracy recently met with the County Health Department staff about potentially partnering with them to help with the outreach for their prescription medicine take-back program. The Health Department was very supportive. Our messaging would focus on the environmental impacts of pharmaceuticals that are flushed down the drain into Puget Sound and into orcas. Tracy is waiting to hear

back from Clallam MRC to see if they might be interested in partnering since they have a similar medicine take back program. Kari got a cost estimate from a firm for developing the marketing materials, creating a video and social media campaign, and developing a countertop box design for around \$7,200. Kari will explore other options that will help reduce the costs. MRC members expressed concern about measuring behavioral change with a social media campaign especially in such a short timeframe.

- **Action Item:** The consensus of the MRC was to apply for the NWSF funding for the Skagit County Medicine Take Back Program Outreach proposal. Kari will draft a proposal with different cost option scenarios for the social media campaign to promote Skagit County's medicine take back program and reduce the amount of pharmaceuticals entering Puget Sound. The proposal will be routed to the MRC for approval before submitting it to the NWSF.
- **Friends of San Juans Orca Outreach Presentation:** Friends of the San Juans can provide a 1.5-2 hour presentation covering orca biology, prey needs and limiting factors, impacts from pollution (vessel traffic, exhaust fumes, oil spills), Task Force info, current legislation, and will include actions that citizens could take to help. They did a live stream for one of the sessions and it is available to watch here: <https://sanjuans.org/2019/03/19/2019-protect-what-you-love-2/>. Lovel Pratt, a San Juan MRC member, and Deborah Giles, a researcher at Friday Harbor Labs would be the presenters. The cost to do the presentation would be around \$750 plus travel expenses. Lisa suggested inviting other partner organizations to host a table to demonstrate actions they are taking that are also benefitting Orca and prey species. The presenters are available Thursday evenings and Fridays. June is orca awareness month! Several other MRCs have expressed interest in doing this as well. The only requirement of the MRC would be to schedule the event, reserve the facility, invite other organizations to host tables, help promote the event, and just show up. Betsy suggested hosting the event in Mount Vernon or Burlington to reach a different audience other than Anacortes.
  - **Action Item:** In addition to applying for the NWSF funding for the Skagit County Medicine Take Back Program Outreach for orca protection, the consensus of the MRC was to also apply for NWSF funding for the Friends of San Juans Orca Outreach Presentation. We will not need to fill out an application for the Orca Outreach Presentation. Tracy will coordinate with Lisa to schedule the presentation in Skagit County and will also try to reserve a facility somewhere in Mount Vernon.

#### **Stormwater Grant Discussion:** All

The Northwest Straits Foundation recently sent out a Request for Proposals to the Skagit, Snohomish, and Island County MRCs for the Boeing Stormwater Grant. There is a total of \$30k available. The deadline for this application is May 1, 2019. Awards must be spent out by October 31, 2019, unless an extension is requested and approved. Collaborations and partnerships in the community are encouraged but the funds cannot be used as pass-through to other organizations. Skagit County can now be included in Objective #1 (Green Infrastructure Solutions for Capturing and Treating Stormwater runoff) in addition to Objective#3 (Promote the use of green infrastructure solutions for improving water quality) and Objective #5 (Conduct environmental monitoring at three sites). Jason said that for Objective #5, as long as we have a monitoring plan in place by October 31, the volunteer training and monitoring can extend beyond that deadline. The Committee discussed the following ideas brought forward by Diane:

- **Objective #1:** The Fidalgo Trail Riders, a local mountain bike club, is proposing to construct a bike skills course on top of the recently decommissioned dump site in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. The bike skills course has wide community support and is one of the few activities that would be allowed at the site. The bike course will be built sometime this summer. Rain gardens could be installed at the low ends of the bike skills course to provide treatment to the runoff. Because water cannot be infiltrated on the site due to the cap on the landfill, impermeable liners would be placed under the rain gardens. The treated water would flow into the existing swales that help drain the cap. The raingardens could potentially be installed by volunteers. Interpretive signs about the raingardens could also be installed to help educate the bike club community about stormwater issues and actions to minimize the harmful impacts. The bike club has offered to sign a maintenance agreement taking on responsibility for maintenance of the bike park. For more information, here is a link to the Fidalgo Trail Riders website: <http://fidalgotrailriders.org/>, and the section regarding the proposed bike park: [http://fidalgotrailriders.org/?page\\_id=2](http://fidalgotrailriders.org/?page_id=2).
- **Objective #3:** This Objective requires collaboration with the other MRCs. The MRC could partner with government stakeholders (stormwater coordinators, planning/building officials, street/storm crews, possibly some elected officials), contractors/landscaping professionals, plant nurseries, environmental groups, HOAs, residents with an interest in LID, etc to build a widespread rain garden network. It could be a one stop shop for all things rain gardens. Ideally, the MRC would establish some kind of central spot where people could get information about rain garden functions, construction requirements, maintenance requirements, permits/regulations depending on jurisdiction, etc.

We could also have a series of workshops. One could be aimed at contractors and landscapers and provide information on rain garden construction requirements and maintenance. Another could be for the general public and cover what rain gardens do and how to design them for your yard. The final workshop could be a gathering of community leaders, MRC members and green infrastructure experts to brainstorm ideas to improve the network and expand outreach. We would reach out to other MRCs to share our strategies, successes and lessons learned.

- **Objective #5:** The MRC could partner with the bike club and the Anacortes High School Green Club to monitor runoff at the new bike skills course site and downstream wetlands. There could also be some opportunities to bring in other local environmental organizations to take part in monitoring.

➤ **Action Item:** Pete will work with Diane and Wayne to draft a proposal for the stormwater grant.

#### **MRC Membership Application – Diane Hennebert**

The Committee voted by consensus to make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Diane Hennebert to the MRC. There were no objections. Diane will represent the City of Anacortes. Diane has a strong background in stormwater and water quality issues and currently oversees the NPDES permit for the City of Anacortes.

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

- **April 17- Final Fidalgo Bay Stakeholder Review Meeting at 1pm** at the ESD building in Anacortes, all are welcome. The Washington Department of Natural Resources will be mailing out the draft Fidalgo Bay Management Plan this week for review.
- **April 25- Mount Vernon High School Science Night:** Betsy will host the Skagit MRC display and stormwater golf game that focuses on the impacts of stormwater pollution on orcas and what folks can do to help. She will also bring Fidalgo Bay Day promotional flyers.
- **April 25-27- Pacific Estuarine Research Society Conference:** This Pacific northwest and Canadian Pacific estuarine ecosystems conference will be hosted at the Fidalgo Bay Resort Convention Center in Anacortes on April 25-27. The theme of the conference will be “Performing Science in Today’s Changing World”. Registration for the conference is online. For more information: <http://www.pers-erf.org/>.
- **Shannon Point Shoreline Restoration Discussion:** Paul recently met with John Lunsford to get an update on the City’s plans for the trail extension through Shannon Point Marine Center’s property to Washington Park and to see if shoreline restoration at Shannon Point might once again be a viable option. Paul will continue these discussions with the City and NWSF to see if it would be possible to make the Shannon Point Shoreline Restoration Project happen, so stay tuned.
- **Puget Sound Anglers Update:** Jay reported that Puget Sound Anglers has funding available to donate towards efforts for raising Chinook salmon to larger adult size for release to benefit fishing and orcas. They are currently looking at three possible locations to do that including: Bowman Bay, Secret Harbor, and one other location. Cooke Aquaculture offered to provide a net pen, the food distribution system, and the food itself to help support this effort.

**The meeting adjourned at 11:18am. The next MRC meeting will be held May 9, 2019 at the Skagit County Administration Building in Mount Vernon (1800 Continental Place).**