



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

*Minutes of the July 11, 2019, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting, held at the Skagit County Administration Building in Mount Vernon (1800 Continental Place)*

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Sarah Tchang, Jay Lind, Kari Odden (Lynne Jordan's Alternate), Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Phyllis Bravinder, Betsy Stevenson
- **MRC Members Absent:** Tracy Alker, Jude Apple, Diane Hennebert, Jamey Selleck, Todd Mitchell, Todd Woodard
- **Others Attending:** Kathy Thornburgh (MRC Applicant), Darcy Bird (Dept of Ecology), Charlette Turman (SCPW), Brian Robson (Shell Puget Sound Refinery), Cory Ertel (Shell Puget Sound Refinery), Bridget Trosin (WA Sea Grant)

**Call to Order and Introduction:** Sarah Tchang called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

**Approval of Minutes:** June 18, 2019, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

**Public Comments:** Jay commented on an article he read in the Seattle Times about the different types of plastic in the ocean and how they impact the marine environment.

## **North Central Puget Sound Geographic Response Plan Update:** *Darcy Bird, Ecology*

Darcy Bird is an oil spill preparedness planner with Washington State Department of Ecology. Darcy is in the process of updating Ecology's Geographic Response Plans (GRP) for the North Central Puget Sound and North Puget Sound regions. GRPs identify and prioritize the most sensitive resources at risk from oil spills for each geographic location and the best strategies to protect those resources in the event of an oil spill. GRPs are developed in collaboration with the local community, government agencies (local, state, and federal), as well as industry and tribal partners. If oil were to hit the water, an incident command post would be set up and manned by an environmental unit that would use the GRP as a guideline to employ the best strategies to protect wildlife and other sensitive resources. GRPs are also one of the many tools included in the Northwest Area Contingency Plan (NWACP), which is a tristate area (Oregon, Idaho and Washington) agreement that provides policies and tools to ensure a coordinated rapid response across jurisdictional boundaries in the event of a major oil spill. The marine environment is dynamic and constantly changing, so GRPs are considered a living document that needs to be updated on a regular basis. The formal update process occurs every five years. Several agencies and industry leaders and other stakeholder groups regularly conduct oil spill drills and field exercises to test the GRP strategies. As part of the process for updating the GRPs, Darcy will be meeting with different stakeholder groups, making field visits, looking for deficiencies in the current plan, and adding new strategies to protect our natural resources. She will be in our area July 30<sup>th</sup> through August 1<sup>st</sup> and will be back here again later in August and September as well.

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

- 2019 MRC Conference will be held November 15-16 at the Courtyard by Marriott in Everett. The reception and dinner will be held at the Angel of the Winds Arena in Everett. Contact Sasha Horst ([horst@nwstraits.org](mailto:horst@nwstraits.org)) for ideas for conference topics or presenters.
- June 28<sup>th</sup> NWSC meeting in Everett from 10:00am-3:00pm.
  - Each MRC presented one of their proposals for the new 2019-2020 MRC Grant. Pete presented Skagit MRC's Salish Sea Stewards proposal to bring the rest of the MRCs up to speed on the Salish Sea Stewards program, the workshop and our goal to build a sustainable program, and what to expect in the future.
  - NOAA Hollings Scholar, Maddie Beaudry, informed the MRCs about her upcoming project to gather current and historical information on bull kelp to help illustrate kelp distribution in Puget Sound, identify factors contributing to bull kelp loss, and inform future kelp conservation and recovery planning.
  - The Final NWSC 2020-2024 Strategic Plan and 2020 Operations Plan were both adopted. MRCs are expected to be knowledgeable and supportive of these plans.
- Next Monthly NWSC Meeting: will be held over WebEX on July 26 (10am -12pm).

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

- As of July 1, Don Hunger will serve as the new Director of the Foundation and Caroline Gibson will serve as the Director of Partnerships for the Foundation. They are looking for input from MRCs regarding funding needs for projects, etc. Pete suggested the MRC come up with a way to put our thoughts together to figure out what are needs and priorities are.
- Jay said the Foundation is working to emphasize the bottoms-up approach, by seeking more local input and direction from the MRCs regarding project priorities. They are looking into different ideas for raising money to help support the work of the MRCs.
- The Northwest Straits Foundation will be meeting with the governor at Cornet Bay on July 17 for a half an hour. Island County MRC will be involved.

## Project Status & Discussion

- Fidalgo Bay Day: The event will be held August 24, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Some of the supplies have been ordered. An inventory of the rest of the supplies will be conducted after the meeting. Jay is waiting on a confirmation from Rosie to see if she will once again be able to do the traditional welcoming ceremony on behalf of the Samish Indian Nation and offer the no-host salmon BBQ lunch.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Monthly plant maintenance work parties with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group started May 17 and will continue each month through September 20. The next one is scheduled for July 12. The trees and shrubs have struggled to survive at this site. Additional plantings of trees and shrubs will likely need to occur to replace the ones that died. It was originally anticipated that it would take at least five years of planting and plant maintenance to help establish a healthy riparian habitat at the Bowman Bay restoration site which. It will be five years in 2020, so we will have to wait and see if additional plantings and maintenance will still be required. Monthly beach seining and forage fish surveys continue. Intertidal monitoring, led by Jason Morgan, is scheduled to take place at Bowman Bay on July 17. Jason Toft with University of Washington will also be there conducting large woody debris and beach wrack surveys.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Monthly surveys continue at the Bowman Bay, NW March's Point, and Kukatali Preserve restoration sites, as well as the three index sites (Similk Bay, Guemes Channel at Ship Harbor, and Samish Island). Surprisingly, quite a bit of spawning was observed at the Ship Harbor site this past month. Charlette noted that the forage fish survey crews also make it a point to clean up any trash they find on the beach while they are out there doing the surveys. Two new Salish Sea Stewards volunteers have been helping with the surveys. At the request of the City of Anacortes Parks Department, the forage fish monitoring team agreed to survey the beach along the Guemes Channel trail once a month to look for forage fish spawning activity at five different sites that had good sediment and shading. They will write a report when the surveys are complete.
- Kids on the Beach Project: This year's program is now complete. The program details and recommendations will be compiled into a final report that will be used to help expand the program to other schools next year. It was pretty evident that the program had a positive impact on the students because they were able to take what they learned in the classroom and apply it to the field activities they were tasked with on the beach. Shell Puget Sound Refinery has offered to provide \$10,000 to support the program next year. Pete will be meeting with Mira and Padilla Bay staff soon to figure out the details with regards to how the program will be administered next year. Padilla Bay will likely take on more of a leadership role in running the program next year.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: This year's field work is now complete. Paul Dinnel is working with Josh Bouma on the final report which will be complete before the end of this grant period. The Puget Sound Restoration Fund had a very successful fund raising event to help support the pinto abalone recovery effort.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Most of the field work for this year has been completed. Monitoring was reduced compared to previous years. The more intensive surveys will now only occur every 3-5 years. 20 recruitment bags were collected and monitored for oyster settlement and 20 new recruitment bags will be distributed in Fidalgo Bay. Preliminary data shows that minor settlement occurred last year compared to previous years. Post larval recruitment has yet to occur on the sampling ceramic tiles that are being collected every two weeks, but it's still early in the season. Paul will be working with Puget Sound Restoration Fund and volunteers to get measurements of the seed oysters placed at the Weaverling Spit site last fall along with some shell. He'll also be working with Jude Apple to check habitat suitability in the south channels of Padilla Bay for oyster seeding.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Seven new Salish Sea Steward volunteers expressed interest in helping with the kelp surveys this year. A short refresher paddle and protocol review occurred on June 27<sup>th</sup> at Washington Park with volunteers

Brad and Dale taking the lead. On July 1<sup>st</sup> there was a meeting to discuss the kelp monitoring program in Skagit County to plan out the summer surveys. A land-based GPS training was held on July 16 at Bayview State Park. The training also covered how to take photos and record data correctly on the forms. Congressman Rick Larsen joined volunteers for the first bull kelp monitoring trip of the season on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Lead volunteers have been assigned to each kelp survey site at Coffin Rocks, Shannon Point, and Biz Point. The lead volunteers are responsible for scheduling the surveys and coordinating with the new volunteers who have expressed interest in helping with the surveys. Kelp surveys will take place at Coffin Rocks on July 20<sup>th</sup> and at Shannon Point on July 28<sup>th</sup>.

- Salish Sea Stewards: Salish Sea Stewards have been putting in a lot of volunteer hours this summer! Joan Drinkwin is working on finalizing the report from the Salish Sea Stewards Planning Workshop which will be used to help determine the best option for administering the program in the future.

#### **MRC Membership Update:**

- Kathy Thornburgh applied to become an MRC member to replace Lynne Jordan as the new representative of the Skagit Land Trust. Unfortunately, there weren't enough members at the MRC meeting for a quorum, so the vote was postponed until the next MRC meeting in August.

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

- Governor Jay Inslee will be making a visit to the Island County MRC's Cornet Bay restoration site on July 17 along with representatives from the Northwest Straits Commission and Northwest Straits Foundation, and several volunteers.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:38am. The next MRC meeting will be held August 8, 2019 at Fidalgo Bay Resort (4701 Fidalgo Bay Rd, Anacortes).**