



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the February 13, 2020, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting, held at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes

Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Tracy Alker, Jay Lind, Pete Haase, Diane Hennebert, Phyllis Bravinder, Rachel Best, Jude Apple, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Brian Robson, Nicole Casper
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Kathy Thornburgh, Betsy Stevenson, Kevin Anderson
- **Others Attending:** Darla Gay Smith, MRC Alternate

Call to Order and Introduction: Jay Lind called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: January 9, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

Public Comments: No comments

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: *Pete Haase/ Phyllis Bravinder*

The last NWSC meeting was held January 31, 2020 at Camano Island attended by Phyllis. Phyllis said the NWSC meetings are great way to connect with the other MRCs and learn what they are working on.

- Island County Commissioner, Janet St. Clair, provided opening remarks. She was very knowledgeable and supportive of the work of the Northwest Straits Initiative and the MRCs.
- Island MRC presented on their Sea Level Rise Workshops.
- The President of Sound Water Stewards, Linda Ade Ridder, presented on their volunteer program.
- Katie Harris was recently hired to replace Nicole Jordan as the NWSC's new Communication and Outreach Specialist.
- The Commission briefly discussed the NWSI Retreat, Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan, and MRC Symposium.
- **Next Monthly NWSC Meeting:** February 28 (WebEx Conference Call 10am – 12pm).
- **NWSI Retreat:** March 26-27 at Padilla Bay Reserve.

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

- The NWSF has been selected as the honorary partner at the Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods' five course seafood dinner on Thursday, March 19 at the Cedarbrook Lodge in Seattle from 6:00pm – 10:00pm. Any donations raised will help support the Foundation.
- The Foundation is seeking a new Director of Advancement.
- There are two new board members from San Juan Island and Port Townsend.
- **NWSF Board Meeting:** The next Board meeting will be held tomorrow. They will be introduced to the newest board member from San Juan Island.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards:** The Salish Sea Stewards training program is being administered in partnership with Padilla Bay this year. Classes will be held every Tuesday starting March 10th through May 12th from 1pm-5pm at Padilla Bay. The Padilla Bay education staff have been busy lining up speakers and finalizing the training schedule. Training will include both classroom style lectures interspersed with field activities. Some of the field activities will take place at Padilla Bay as well as Deception Pass and Fidalgo Bay. Last week the training announcement was posted online at all the local online news outlets including two local newspapers. Phyllis recently posted the training announcement in the Clamdigger. It is also being promoted at the Friends of Skagit Beaches (FOSB) Lecture series. FOSB will once again provide funding for some of the incidentals that the MRC grant can't cover. We currently only have 6 applicants. The goal is 20-25. Rachel asked MRC members to please help spread the word and share the link to the Salish Sea Stewards [Facebook](#) page. MRC members and former Salish Sea Stewards are invited to attend some of the classes.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** The date for this year's event has been set for Saturday, August 29, 2020 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Pete distributed 35 Save the Date cards at Storming the Sound. Skagit County's new intern, Aida Miller, will take the lead in coordinating Fidalgo Bay Day this year. Jay Lind will continue to serve as Event Chair. Aida will schedule a

meeting with the subcommittee sometime in February or March to come up with a list of task assignments and lead volunteers. Nicole Casper said she has several contacts at the La Conner School District and would be happy to pass along information about Fidalgo Bay Day to them before school lets out for the summer. Jude said he would contact the Anacortes School District to find out what the process is for sharing information about special events. The Anacortes Green Club expressed interest in helping out with kids activities. Jay is still waiting to get a confirmation from Shannon Point about the availability of their touch tank.

- **Bowman Bay Restoration:** Plant maintenance will start again in May or June in partnership with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group. Monthly beach seining and forage fish surveys continue at this site. Several weeks ago the beach seining pulled up a lot of newly hatched surf smelt. There was a planning meeting for intertidal monitoring at Padilla Bay yesterday. The 2020 monitoring schedule has been set for each of the sites including Bowman Bay. No intertidal monitoring will occur at March Point this year.
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** 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). The County just hired a new intern, Aida Miller, who will lead the forage fish surveys at the three index sites. The NWSF is looking at a potential restoration project on private property in Similk Bay which would also require forage fish surveys. Pete requested additional funding of around \$500 to purchase forage fish survey equipment to replace some of the old worn out equipment.
- **Kids on the Beach:** No updates until the spring when students from Sedro Woolley, Concrete, and Mount Vernon will be participating in science activities on the beach at Padilla Bay that will focus invasive species. Jude suggested the MRC be more pro-active in promoting the Kids on the Beach program as an MRC program, even when recruiting volunteers to assist Annie with the beach activities.
- **Pinto Abalone Recovery:** Surveys started up again this month and will continue over the next month or two. The preliminary results from last year's experimental outplanting of younger and much smaller abalone indicated only a 10% survival rate compared to the 20-25% survival rate of the larger juvenile abalone outplants. However, the caveat is that it is much harder to find the smaller abalone in the rocks and algae than the larger abalone. The smaller abalone also might be staying hidden beneath the rocks for protection until they get a little bigger. More monitoring is needed before any final conclusions can be made. Puget Sound Restoration Fund, in collaboration with Western Washington University, is applying for grant funding to establish abalone grow-out tanks in remote locations from the Manchester hatchery including the Shannon Point Marine Center. They are interested in working with local high school students and community volunteers to help take care of the abalone in the tanks.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration:** Field work will likely start up again in April, 2020 through July. The monitoring will be reduced this year. The larger oyster beds will now only be monitored on a three year cycle. Paul Dinnel was interviewed for an [article about Olympia oyster restoration](#) in the United Press International. Paul has also been asked to present on Olympia oysters for Skagit MRC's Salish Sea Stewards training as well as Whatcom MRC's North Sound Stewards training.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys:** There will be a kelp WebEx meeting on Friday March 6th from 9:30am-11:30am to review the MRCs' 2019 kelp monitoring season data. Surveys will likely start up again in June or July 2020.

MRC Questions for the NWSI Retreat: *Jay*

Each year, the Northwest Straits Commission and Foundation hold a joint retreat, which provides an opportunity to review progress and chart a path to the future. This year there is time dedicated on the agenda for the MRC's NWSC representatives to share how things are going for each of the MRCs on a variety of topics. They are seeking input from MRCs with a list of questions that need to be answered by March 16th in order to prepare for this discussion. The primary goal is to get a better understanding of what is working and what isn't working for each of the MRCs and how the NWSC could help. The Committee reviewed and discussed the questions brought forward by the NWSC. The Committee suggested several ways the NWSC could help support the MRC including:

- The NWSC could provide the MRCs with quality outreach materials that could be used to share information with local elected officials. The outreach materials could include restoration and outreach metrics and maybe a glossy map that shows points of all the MRC funded projects over the years.
- The NWSC could occasionally present to the County Commissioners about the NWSI's work and impacts on a larger regional scale.

- The NWSC could seek additional funding to hire a FT person to help coordinate and manage larger scaled MRC projects.
- The NWSC could help facilitate bigger picture project identification and planning discussions.
- The NWSC could help MRCs better communicate and promote the value of our work. Phyllis said it would also be helpful to have some kind of “elevator speech” to better communicate what the MRC is and the work that we do in order to increase or visibility in the community and garner stronger support and funding. Jay said it is best to keep it simple without going into the complicated details. Jude said there is a great tool available online that can be used to help develop narratives for communicating projects and telling our story using the “And, But, Therefore” statement. Here is the online link: <https://www.sesync.org/for-you/communications/toolkit/and-but-therefore-statement>.

The Committee also identified several potential project opportunities the MRC might like to pursue. But most of the projects identified are very large and would require lots of additional funding, multiple partnerships, and project management skills beyond the capacity of the MRC including: Removing/replacing the Fidalgo Bay trestle; Shoreline restoration of Carstens Conservation Area on Fidalgo Bay; Acquisition of privately owned tidelands to expand the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve; LID projects in Anacortes; A regional pinto abalone restoration project across multiple counties; and possibly the McGlenn Island fish passage project. Tracy will compile all of the MRC responses into a final document that will be reviewed and finalized by the Committee before the NWSI retreat.

MRC Symposium: Jay

The MRC Symposium has been rescheduled for April 3 at Padilla Bay. All MRC members are strongly encouraged to attend. Dana is seeking feedback from the MRCs regarding the draft agenda by March 20th. The Committee discussed the following questions:

- What is the MRC hoping to get out of the Symposium and does the agenda and structure support that?
- Are there suggested changes or additions the MRC would like to see?

In general, the Committee liked the overall agenda and structure of the symposium. However, there were some concerns about not having enough time on the agenda to discuss current MRC projects and what is being done or should be done to address threats to marine resources identified in the survey.

MRC Vice-Chair Election: Jay

No volunteers stepped forward to fill the MRC Vice-Chair position. Jay agreed to continue to serve as interim Vice-Chair until we can find a replacement.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: All

- Friends of Skagit Beaches Winter Lecture Series: The next lecture will be held Friday, February 21, 2020, 7PM at the NW Educational Services District Building in Anacortes (1601 R Ave) - “Saltwater Beavers: Engineers in the Tidal Marsh” presented by Dr. W. Gregory Hood, Senior Research Scientist, Skagit River System Cooperative.
- Padilla Bay Stewards Invasive Snail Monitoring: February 18, 6-9pm. RSVP: Madison McKay madm461@ECY.WA.GOV.
- Padilla Bay Stewards Invasive Control: February 29, 10am-1pm. RSVP: Madison McKay madm461@ECY.WA.GOV.
- Skagit Land Trust Auction & Dinner: March 14, 2020, 5pm-9:30pm at the Swinomish Casino & Lodge in Anacortes.
- Marine Biotxin Volunteer Monitoring Program Training: April 9, 1pm-4pm at Padilla Bay Reserve and April 10, 1:30pm-3pm at March Point. Register by April 3. Contact Kristi Carpenter at kristi@skagitcd.org.
- Proposed Raingarden Map: Pete shared a map with the locations of all of the drainage basins, and the five proposed raingardens in Anacortes.
- Mount Erie Elementary School Raingarden. The project will likely move forward this year. Diane will put together a curriculum about raingardens for students. Anacortes Green Club has expressed interest in constructing the rain garden. Other community volunteers could also help with planting and maintaining the raingarden.
- 2020 City of Anacortes Stormwater Management Plan: Diane is looking for feedback. Comments are due March 6.
- Stormwater Permit Compliance Workshop – February 24th: for boatyard employees in Skagit, Island, and Whatcom Counties. This workshop is not open to the general public.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 am. The next MRC meeting will be held March 12, 2020 at the Skagit County Administrative Building in Mount Vernon.