



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the June 11, 2020, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Webex Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Tracy Alker, Jay Lind, Pete Haase, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Kathy Thornburgh, Betsy Stevenson, Phyllis Bravinder, Kevin Anderson, Rachel Best
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Jude Apple, Brian Robson, Diane Hennebert
- **Others Attending:** Sasha Horst, NWSC; Jason Morgan, NWSF

Call to Order and Introduction: Betsy Stevenson called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** May 14, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** Paul shared a photo of a derelict vessel that he and his son discovered while kayaking near Cap Sante Marina. He was concerned that it could become a navigational hazard to boaters. Sasha suggested using the [MyCoast app](#) to report the derelict vessel to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. On a more positive note, Paul said that the Anacortes Marina has replaced several creosote pilings with metal pilings.

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

The last NWSC meetings was held May 29 via Webex Conference Call. The minutes were shared with MRC members.

- **Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) Update:** The NWIFC updated the [State of Our Watersheds](#) report in collaboration with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). The report covers 22 watersheds in western Washington and is a product of the Salmon and Steelhead Habitat Inventory and Assessment Program (SSHAP).
- **MRC Project Presentations:** Snohomish MRC presented “Snohomish Estuary Pilings Inventory”; Whatcom MRC presented “North Sound Stewards”; Clallam MRC presented “Internship Program”; and Skagit MRC presented “Pinto Abalone Restoration”. All presentations are available to download in the Northwest Straits Initiative’s Box.com folder.
- **Virtual Puget Sound Days on the Hill:** Will occur Fridays in June from 1:00-2:30pm. Registration is required and will close 24 hours before each event: <https://www.psp.wa.gov/psdoth2020.php>.
- **Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council Meeting-** June 10 via Zoom.
- **Next NWSC Meeting (Zoom)- June 26 (10am-1pm):** Island, Jefferson, and San Juan MRCs will be presenting projects at the June NWSC meeting.

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

- **NWSF Board Meeting- May 26** – Primarily discussed the Foundation’s finances.
- **Fundraising:** The Foundation’s new fundraising strategy will focus on raising funds for specific projects and are asking each MRC what the top project priorities are.
- **Orca Forum:** The Orca Forum will now be a virtual forum held the last week of June. Caroline has lined up a panel of three speakers.
- **Nearshore Monitoring:** The Foundation secured funding to continue shoreline monitoring for the next two years.
- **North March Point Beach Nourishment Project:** Coastal Geologic Services recently completed the Feasibility and Technical Specifications for the Foundation’s North March’s Point Beach Nourishment Project. The project site is located on the north shore of March Point between the two refinery piers on Fidalgo Bay.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards:** The last class was held June 9th. 21 participants completed the virtual Salish Sea Stewards training and will each receive a Salish Sea Stewards t-shirt, name badge, and certificate in the mail. A survey went out to class participants to help evaluate the program. The new Salish Sea Stewards were provided with a list of potential volunteer opportunities and are learning how to log their hours in Volgistics. Unfortunately, volunteer opportunities are very limited this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so the Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee is looking for other ways to keep the volunteers engaged. The volunteers are all very eager to start volunteer work as soon as possible. Jay and Betsy gave kudos to the Padilla Bay NERR education staff for their ability to quickly modify the Salish Sea Stewards program into a virtual training program. The training was a huge success despite all of the challenges.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** This year's event was originally scheduled for Saturday, August 29, 2020 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort but had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fidalgo Bay Day planning committee recently met to discuss potential alternatives. The Committee decided the best alternative would be to create a Fidalgo Bay Day Activity Guide similar to Trek for Treasure, to help get families outside and engaged in hands-on activities that focus on the marine environment at different locations. Partner organizations will be invited to sponsor a specific activity. We will create an online event page where participants can post pictures and share their experiences (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.).
- **Bowman Bay Restoration:** Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Staff was originally planning on watering the plantings at the site on June 12th but decided to cancel due to all of the rain we've had recently. They still plan on watering on June 26th and again in July and August. The Puget Sound Partnership is going to produce a video about the Bowman Bay restoration for their new online magazine called Making Waves. They will be interviewing NWSF Staff and volunteers who worked on the project.
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** Forage fish surveys have mostly been put on hold until volunteers get the "go ahead" from the various agencies to resume field work. State Parks will currently not allow any volunteer work or research in their parks until after July 15th. The Northwest Straits Foundation is also waiting on permits for monitoring at Bowman Bay and the Kukutali Reserve. Volunteers will need approval from the Washington Department of Natural Resource to resume sampling at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve and will also need approval from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to resume sampling at the Index sites. Volunteers have been given permission to start sampling at Marchs Point as long as they follow the COVID-19 safety guidelines approved by the County and Northwest Straits Foundation. Jason recommended no more than two volunteers for forage fish surveys. Pete said he recently received some new sampling equipment from the Foundation to replace the old equipment that was starting to fall apart.
- **Kids on the Beach:** There was a recent article about the program in the Skagit Valley Herald that was shared with MRC members and the Board of County Commissioners. Annie England with Padilla Bay NERR, did an excellent job developing the KOTB curriculum which includes 30 minutes of virtual activities online and 30 minutes of activities offline. There is a mix of videos, games, coloring pages, science journals, and questions and answers. Nine classes with over 200 elementary and middle school students are currently participating in the program from Sedro Woolley, Concrete, and La Conner Schools in Skagit County as well as Friday Harbor, Mukilteo and Everett! We've had lots of great feedback from teachers and parents participating in the program. A meeting will be scheduled soon to start planning next year's program.
- **Pinto Abalone Recovery:** Paul gave a presentation on the Pinto Abalone Recovery project at the May 29 NWSC meeting. Puget Sound Restoration Fund recently started limited field work again which includes outplants of 3200 juvenile abalone at six sites, and collecting new broodstock for hatchery production. They are currently raising about 5000 abalone in the hatchery for future outplanting this upcoming year. PSRF is working on a detailed QAPP. There was an interesting article about pinto abalone in the Salish Sea Currents online magazine that was shared with MRC members: <https://www.eopugetsound.org/magazine/IS/pinto-abalone>.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration:** Paul and his son retrieved all of the oyster cultch bags from 20 sites around Fidalgo Bay. Preliminary results indicate there was excellent oyster spawning/ settlement last year especially around the Sharpes Corner area. It was the second highest settlement ever recorded in Fidalgo Bay. Oyster larvae are also finally starting to settle in the western area of the Bay near Weaverling Spit and around the marinas, which is very encouraging. Paul put up shell strings around Weaverling Spit and the trestle with Puget Sound Restoration Fund and Samish Indian

Nation. Paul also deployed shell tiles to monitor oyster settlement at two week intervals throughout the summer with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Paul worked with the NWSF on a video that highlights Olympia oyster restoration as part of their Salish Sea Fresh video series. Brian Robson and Shell Puget Sound Refinery allowed for access at their RV Park to do some filming from that location as well. The video will include some drone footage of Fidalgo Bay.

- **Kayak Kelp Surveys:** The County approved the COVID-19 guidelines for volunteers to resume field work. Kimberly Cauvel is interested in writing an article on the kelp surveys. One of the lead volunteers, Brad Smith, scheduled a kelp survey at Shannon Point on June 18th or 19th with a small team of volunteers. Five new Salish Sea Stewards volunteers have expressed interest in helping with the kelp surveys, but they will need to have some additional training out on the water before they can participate in the surveys. A special training for the new volunteers will be organized sometime this summer. The **Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery plan** is now available online and was shared with MRC members (<https://nwstraits.org/our-work/kelp/>). NWSC staff and MRC members were instrumental in the creation of this plan.

No Anchor Zone Regional Project Proposal Discussion: All

The NWS Commission is looking into the possibility of applying for funding to support the voluntary no anchor zones as a regional project if there is enough interest from MRCs. Skagit MRC members said they would like to learn more about Jefferson MRC's No Anchor Zone project before committing to doing something similar in Skagit County. Sasha will send the link Jefferson MRC's No Anchor Zone presentation and other MRC Symposium documents. One potential location for a no anchor zone in Skagit County is the area outside of Cap Sante Marina, but further investigation would be needed to determine who owns the property and how far the eelgrass beds extend.

Skagit Land Trust Project Proposals Update: Kathy Thornburgh

The Skagit Land Trust is in the early stages of exploring two potential projects including the acquisition of shoreline properties on Fialgo Bay and Samish Island with Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) grant funding. The SLT will likely be seeking letters in support from several different stakeholders including Skagit MRC. Kathy will invite Kari Odden to the next MRC meeting to provide more details about the project proposal. Project information will be forwarded to MRC members prior to the next MRC meeting.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: All

- **WDFW Samish River Unit Parking Proposal:** Public comment period closes July 2, 2020.
- **US Navy Northwest Training and Testing EIS/OEIS Proposal:** Public comment period closes June 29, 2020.
- **MRC Webex Symposium- June 18th, 3:30pm:** The next one will feature Snohomish MRC. They will be highlighting their piling removal prioritization project and a restoration feasibility study at Pigeon Creek. Don't forget to register!!
- **Tuesday Evening Zoom presentations – 7pm** hosted by Friends of Skagit Beaches in collaboration with the Anacortes Library. The presentations are recorded and links past presentations are posted on the Friends of Skagit Beaches website: <https://skagitbeaches.org/>. The next talk scheduled:
 - June 16, at 7pm "Living Light in the Pacific Northwest" presented by Chandler Colahan.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 am. The next MRC meeting will be a Webex video-conference call held July 9, 2020