



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the August 13, 2020, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) GoToMeeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Paul Dinnel, Betsy Stevenson, Jay Lind, Kari Odden, (SLT Alternate), Darla Gay Smith (MRC Applicant), Brian Robson, Sara Wheatley, Diane Hennebert, Kevin Anderson
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Kathy Thornburgh, Matt Castle, Jude Apple, Phyllis Bravinder
- **Others Attending:** Katie Harris, NWSC; Lynne Wenberg, Salish Sea Steward; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Lisa Kaufman, NWSF; Craig Olsen,

Call to Order and Introduction: Betsy Stevenson called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** July 9, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** No Comments.

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

The last NWSC meetings was held July 31 via Zoom Conference Call. The meeting highlights and minutes will be shared with MRC members when they become available.

- **NWSI Communications Plan:** A consulting firm is developing the Communications Plan for the NWSI which is close to being finalized. The Commission reviewed the different options for the NWSI elevator speech and ranked their top choices.
- **Actions to Impacts:** The Science Advisory committee is developing a framework for the Actions to Impacts for the larger regional projects of the NWSI that can be scalable to the local levels of the MRCs.
- **MRC Symposiums:** The Symposiums are now done and were very successful. Future symposiums will likely focus on specific topics such as eelgrass protection zones, climate change, native oyster restoration, etc., rather than individual MRCs.
- **Next NWSC Meeting (via Zoom)- August 28**

Northwest Straits Foundation Project Updates: *Lisa Kaufman*

- **Nearshore Monitoring:** Foundation staff have been conducting nearshore monitoring without the help of volunteers in order to maintain safe social distancing requirements.
- **Outreach and Fundraising:** The Foundation has been developing a lot of online content since they are unable to do any of the outreach or fundraising activities in person that they had originally planned on doing including:
 - **Orca Recovery Forum:** Orca Recovery Day is Saturday, October 17. As part of that region-wide effort, NWSF will host an Orca Forum on October 14 and an Orca Trivia Night on Thursday night, October 15.
 - **Salish Sea Fresh Video Series:** The Foundation is seeking feedback on the Salish Sea Fresh video series. The ultimate goal is to find sponsors for future videos that highlight local businesses and their connections to the marine environment, as well as the work of the NWSI and MRCs.
 - **Crabbing webinar and Videos:** The crabbing webinar was well attended and received a lot of positive feedback and continues to get a lot of hits online. It was a great way to reach a large number of people.
 - **Shore Friendly Videos:** The Foundation is working on a series of Shore Friendly videos. Hugh Shipman was interviewed for the first video on beaches and bluffs and the second video on bulkheads and shoreline armoring impacts. NWSF is also working on a shoreline ecology and wildlife video that will tie into the Shore Friendly program. In addition to the videos, the Foundation is looking into the possibility of hosting a Shore Friendly webinar this fall.
- **March's Point Beach Nourishment Project:** The design is now complete. The Foundation is looking at different options for getting the project funded. Beach nourishment projects do not generally rank very high for grant funding. It is a large stretch of beach, so it will likely be an expensive project.

- Grant Proposals: The Foundation is working on several National Estuary Program (NEP) grant proposals for regional projects across several MRCs including eelgrass protection zones, rain gardens, and nearshore restoration. Fundraising has been challenging, but the Foundation continues to look for new funding opportunities to support the MRCs and the Foundation. They are working on nine different grants to submit this fall.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards: 21 participants completed the training through Padilla Bay in June. Program evaluations have been completed by class participants with a lot of positive feedback. 4 new Salish Sea Stewards joined the SSS Advisory Committee. A meeting will be scheduled sometime this month to introduce the new members, review the results of the 2020 program, and start planning the 2021 training program. We now have an excellent template for planning next year's training whether it's virtual or in-class or a combination. The training will likely take place in February or March 2021.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: As an alternative to Fidalgo Bay Day, we have created a Scavenger Hunt Activity Guide and website featuring activities from 14 different organizations. Participants can post photos of their experiences on Instagram at #FidalgoBayDay2020. The event will be promoted in the local papers and online and hard copies of the Guide will be distributed to local businesses that are open to the public. Scavenger Hunt activities are scheduled to take place during the month of September.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Staff hosted a volunteer plant maintenance work party on August 7 with the maximum number of four volunteers. The next work party will be held August 21. The dune grass is doing great, but there are a lot of weeds that need to get pulled. The beach slope is finally starting to become a more gradual grade. Some conifers and alders have planted themselves, so we will wait and see how well they do. The Puget Sound Partnership is working on a short video about the restoration project.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Forage fish surveys have started back up again at all of our restoration sites and Index sites with a smaller number of volunteers. More extensive surveys will be taking place at Bowman Bay in August and September. Two new Salish Sea Stewards will be helping with the forage fish surveys this year. Jen, the lab manager at Skagit Valley College (SVC) and a former Salish Sea Steward graduate, is producing several videos for SVC students in the Environmental Program, including a video on how to conduct forage fish surveys. She will be working closely with Pete and the forage fish survey crew to create the video. The video will also be made available for the MRC to use in future training and outreach. Pete said the best time to catch the forage fish spawning activity and dippers in action in Fidalgo Bay is between 5 and 6pm during high tide.
- Kids on the Beach: A final report for the 2019/2020 Kids on the Beach program will be available before the end of this grant period in September. Annie England with Padilla Bay NERR is now in the process of working with teachers to develop the 2020/2021 Kids on the Beach program for this upcoming school year. Most schools are planning on starting off the school year with virtual classrooms or some kind of hybrid.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Field work is now complete. Hatchery work and data analysis continues. A final report will be completed before the end of this grant period in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Paul and his son continue to conduct bimonthly monitoring of shell tiles for oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay on behalf of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. So far settlement has been pretty low this year compared to last year. Paul and his son also discovered Olympia oysters settling in new areas of Fidalgo Bay where they've never been before including along the outer edges of the channels similar to what we've seen in the higher up channels at Sharpes Corner.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Kelp surveys took place in July and August at Shannon Point, Coffin Rocks, and Biz Point and will continue through September.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: All

- The Skagit Watershed Council recently selected nine out of twelve projects to be awarded grant funding including a nearshore restoration project in the Swinomish Channel. There were a lot of really great project proposals. It was very difficult to decide which projects to fund.
- Skagit Land Trust recently secured an Option to Purchase Agreement from the Samish Island property land owner.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held September 10, 2020