



Summary of the January 14, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) GoToMeeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Kathy Thornburgh, Paul Dinnel, Matt Castle, Diane Hennebert, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Brian Robson, Darla Gay Smith
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Jay Lind, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson
- **Others in Attendance:** Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Allie Simpson, NWSC; Catherine Houck, SSS volunteer

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** December 10, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** None

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

The last NWSC meeting was held December 11, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm).

- **NWSC Representative:** Pete reminded the MRC that we will need to elect a new NWSC Representative soon.
- **Actions to Impacts:** Dana gave an update on the Actions to Impacts diagram to help illustrate the benefits of our work and how it can be used as a communication tool for a broader audience.
- **Eelgrass No Anchor Zone Grant Update:** The NWSC did not receive the grant for expanding the eelgrass No Anchor Zone project to other MRCs. They will continue to look for other grant opportunities for this project.
- **2021-2023 MRC Grant RFP:** Pete and Tracy will be meeting with NWSC staff this Friday to discuss Skagit MRC's project proposals and the RFP process for the next two-year MRC Grant (2021-2023). The project proposals that will be discussed include several ongoing projects: Fidalgo Bay Day, Salish Sea Stewards, Kids on the Beach, Pinto Abalone and three new projects: MRC Intern, Stormwater Sampling (Sharpe's Corner outfall), and Flower Farm Interpretive Signage.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom)- January 29**

MRC Officer Elections

- **NWSC Representative and NWSC Alternative:** Diane expressed interest in the NWSC Representative position, but would be unable to commit until 2022 due to other obligations. The election was postponed until the February 11 MRC meeting since no other MRC members expressed interest in the position. Pete will continue to serve as the NWSC Representative until a new person is elected. Both Pete and Paul volunteered to serve as the NWSC Alternate if nobody else is interested. Pete encouraged MRC members to sit in on one of the NWSC virtual meetings to learn what it's all about. NWSC meetings are open to the public so anybody can attend. Tracy or Katie can forward meeting materials to those who are interested in attending.
- **MRC Chair and MRC Vice-Chair:** Betsy volunteered to serve one more term as MRC Chair if nobody else is interested. Jay said he would be willing to continue as MRC Vice-Chair until the position is filled, but strongly recommended appointing someone new. Jay has already served as Vice-Chair and Chair for a few years. He said the MRC Vice-Chair is the easiest position in the world because there isn't a huge time commitment. The Vice-Chair might be asked to lead one or two meetings if the Chair is unable to. Because there wasn't any interest at the time of the meeting, the MRC Vice-Chair election will be postponed until the February 11 MRC meeting.

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

- **NWSF Shore Friendly Living Video Series #2:** The Foundation's newly released episode #2 in the Shore Friendly Living video series "Managing Shoreline Erosion: Bulkheads or Natural Solutions" was recently posted in Skagit County's Clean Water electronic news bulletin that goes out to over 800 subscribers. The Foundation is planning for a virtual landowner workshop in January or February.
- **MRC staff/Chair Workshop with the Foundation:** The Foundation is hosting a virtual roundtable workshop on January 21 for MRC staff and Chairs to discuss collaboration with the NWSF in 2021 and beyond. Some of the services provided by the Foundation include applying for and managing grants and private donations, contracting, liability insurance, and project management, etc.

- **NWSF Board Members:** Two new board members were appointed in December. Jay's term expired and he was given a huge thanks and the board sent him a beautiful Pendleton blanket for his many years of service. They also approved an *Emeritus Board* amendment to the board's by-laws, and then unanimously approved Jay and Anne Murphy's nominations as Emeritus non-voting members.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards:** The 2021 Salish Sea Stewards training program will commence on Feb 23 – June 1, 2021. 10 virtual classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 3:30pm with two speakers and 2 optional field sessions for small groups from 1pm -5pm. The 2021 SSS Training Program flyer and new Registration Form are posted on the MRC website: www.skagitmrc.org. We sent out flyers and press releases to 19 organizations, newsletters & newspapers with a goal to recruit and train at least 25 new SSS volunteers. Sara Brostrom, SSS Training Coordinator at Padilla Bay, is nearing completion of securing 20 Speakers for the 10 training sessions. MRC & SSS Advisory Committee member Lynne Wenberg has completed a Master SSS Volunteer List and is working on revamping *Volgistics*, an online system for reporting and tracking volunteer hours. We currently have a strong, hard-working, 11-person Advisory Committee that bring many talents to the group. The Committee recently met with the SSS Training Coordinator on December 10 and January 20 to continue planning the 2021 SSS program. In March, the Advisory Committee will focus on the first steps to developing Volunteer SSS Coordination to hopefully implement a future part-time SSS Coordinator. We look forward to keeping all of the Stewards informed, engaged & connected.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** The 2021 event date is tentatively set for Saturday, August 28 (11am-3pm). The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility has been reserved. A FBD Planning Committee meeting will likely be scheduled sometime in February to discuss the different possible scenarios, options, and alternatives depending on COVID-19 safety restrictions for public events. A decision will need to be made soon so that we can start planning and promoting the event. Please let Tracy know if you are interested in helping with the planning process.
- **Bowman Bay Restoration:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson and Tracy Alker are the new co-lead stewards responsible for maintaining the plants at the site in 2021. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group recently hired a new Restoration Technician who will provide guidance on how to properly maintain the site and will provide a walk-through with the lead stewards at the end of the season to see how the plants are doing and if any additional plantings or watering will be needed in 2022. Paul Dinnel shared recent photos he took at Bowman Bay a few days before and after the big storm and king tide event on January 13. The boat launch was inundated with large logs. Although the dune grass did a good job of protecting the shoreline from erosion, there were areas in between the dune grass and along the boat launch that had a fair amount of erosion. The picnic area was also flooded where the dune area was breached to the north of the parking lot. Several big trees were also down. Catherine Houck made the suggestion to move the footpath trail further east, through the grassy field and move the native plantings further east between the shore and trail to provide a larger area to accommodate winter storms and driftwood accumulation.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys:** Surveys will likely start up again at the three different kelp beds in June or July 2021. The kelp beds include: Shannon Point, Biz Point, and Coffin Rock. Brad Smith, one of the kelp survey leads, is interested in possibly adding the kelp bed at Hope Island as a new survey site. Claudia Ross-Kuhn, a Salish Sea Steward volunteer, reported seeing a large kelp bed along the Samish Island shoreline if the MRC is interested in surveying additional locations. She said there is a deep point at the tip of Point Williams just to the north of that kelp bed where there are usually a lot of salmon. Dana said she thinks this would be a great location because it is in a more sheltered area that has direct influence from the river. Whereas Samish is more similar to the other sites we are currently surveying because it has lots of currents and exchange of oceanic water.
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** All forage fish survey sites continue to be surveyed as planned with small groups and all COVID-19 safety precautions. Spawning season is pretty much done until spring except in Fidalgo Bay where it is common for light spawning to continue into February. This is sand lance spawning season, but we have yet to find any sand lance eggs at any of our sites.
- **Kids on the Beach:** The Kids on the Beach program will likely be completely virtual this spring, but things could change. The two KOTB spring programs include a beach seine program geared toward Elementary students, and a forage fish program geared toward Middle School students. The KOTB program manager, Annie England, created three videos that will enhance the KOTB virtual field trip experience. These videos include a beach seine at Bayview State Park, a beach seine off of Marches Point, and a video of forage fish volunteers taking samples at Fidalgo Bay. Teachers set to participate in the KOTB 2021 spring program include: Charlie Huddleston, Sedro Woolley 6th Grade; Ron Haywood, Conway 8th Grade; Sacha Buller, Concrete 7th and 8th Grades; and Jen Willup and Dean Dan, La Conner/Swinomish 9th Grade- Between To Worlds. The 4 day virtual spring KOTB program will include: Day 1: Virtual intro to forage fish or beach seine. Day 2: Virtual field day via video, kids will collect data. Day 3: Virtual unpacking data and preparing for presentations. Day 4: Symposium. The symposium will hopefully include different schools

connecting virtually although this may not be possible. Charlie, from Sedro-Woolley, already said this will not work for his class.

- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Mostly just hatchery work going on right now to raise the juvenile abalone for outplanting. Field work, including monitoring and outplanting of 2,000 juvenile abalone will begin in February or March 2021 when there is minimal algae cover at the site.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Not much happening right now. Routine field work will start up again in April or May.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: *All*

- Maritime Washington National Heritage Area Public Information Session- **January 14th at 4:00pm**: The Maritime Washington National Heritage Area was designated by Congress in 2019. The Washington Trust is creating a management plan for the heritage area and are seeking input from local communities. There may be a role for MRCs to engage in this process. A public information session will be held January 14th at 4pm. A link to sign up for the information session can be found at the bottom of this article: <https://www.thedailyworld.com/news/public-input-sought-on-maritime-washington-national-heritage-area/>, and here: <https://www.preservewa.org/programs/maritime-national-heritage-area/mw-nha-events/>.
- PSEMP Workgroup Sand Lance Mini Symposium: **January 14 (9am-12:30pm)**. The Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program (PSEMP) Forage Fish & Food Webs Workgroup symposium will consist of seven speakers across a range of topics on the importance of Pacific sand lance to the food web and ecosystem, followed by a panel discussion. Login link: tinyurl.com/PSEMPSymposium.
- Puget Sound Marine Waters Annual 2019 Report: Details the effects of climate change and trends on Puget Sound, marine life, and seafood consumers: <https://www.psp.wa.gov/PSmarinewatersoverview.php>
- North Sound Riparian Conference: **January 19 (9:30am-4pm)**. The conference is for riparian restoration practitioners and other interested folks. There will be two sessions: the morning session focuses on adapting riparian restoration for climate change, and the afternoon session on working in wetlands. The program is sponsored by Skagit River System Cooperative, Skagit Watershed Council, Skagit Land Trust, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and Skagit County (our Skagit Riparian Working Group). Registration is open to the first 100 participants.
- Storming the Sound: **January 29 (9am-4pm)**. Regional environmental education conference will be virtual this year. Planning is underway. The planning team will create an online space for discussion, thinking, inspiration, and sharing. Please send your ideas for sessions to Susan Wood (swood@padillabay.gov), and let her know if you're willing to facilitate the conversation.
- Illuminight 2021 Event: **January 29**. Skagit Watershed Council is hosting a virtual Illuminight event on Facebook, at 6pm on Friday, January 29th. They will also post a recording of the event on their [website](#). This January, you can get a free luminary globe kit at Tri-Dee Arts, in Mount Vernon and at the Museum of Northwest Art in La Conner while supplies last. You can also enter their luminary-making contest for a chance to win a prize! All entries must be received by midnight on January 22nd. Winners will be announced at the 2021 virtual Illuminight Winter Walk event which will be streamed live on Facebook.
- Sound Waters University - **February 6, 2021**: Sound Waters University a, "One Day University for All", brought to you virtually by Sound Water Stewards of Island County, on February 6, 2021. Discounts available for students, teachers, military, and AmeriCorps. Attendance is limited, register today at www.soundwatersuniversity.org. All information can be found here <https://www.soundwatersuniversity.org/>.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held February 11, 2021