



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the December 10, 2020, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) GoToMeeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Kathy Thornburgh, Jay Lind, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Kevin Anderson, Matt Castle, Diane Hennebert, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Brian Robson, Darla Gay Smith
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell
- **Others in Attendance:** Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Lee First, Twin Harbors Water Keepers; Liz Schotman, Surfrider Foundation; Seth Ballhorn WDFW; Birdie Davenport, WDNR; Todd Woodard, Samish Indian Nation; Kimberly Cauvel, SVH; Sasha Horst, NWSC

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:** November 12, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** None

Seabed Mining: *Lee First, Twin Harbor Water Keepers / Liz Schotman, Surfrider Foundation*

Lee First (Twin Harbor Water Keepers) and Liz Schotman (Surfrider Foundation) are working in collaboration with Pew Charitable Trust to bring awareness to a new and growing threat to our oceans, seabed mining. Seabed mining is an emerging industry which involves extracting hard minerals and rare earth metals from the sea floor. Industry representatives claim that seabed mining is necessary to meet the growing demand for electronics and green technologies. Although industrial-scale seabed mining isn't currently happening in our oceans now, there is an experimental seabed mining operation going on along the coast of New Guinea. Seabed mining activities such as bulldozing seamount crusts, toppling massive sulfide towers, suction dredging the seafloor for minerals, and plucking up manganese nodules that rest on the abyssal plain are all very destructive practices that would likely destroy critical habitat and marine ecosystems. Industrial-scale mining operations would also contribute to underwater noise pollution, light pollution, release harmful effluent, release carbon stored in deep sea sediment which would climate change and create sediment plumes which would displace and kill marine life. It is anticipated that the environmental impacts of industrial-scale seabed mining would be wide-spread and long lasting and possibly irreversible. It could also jeopardize the recreational and fishing industries and cultures that depend on them. Todd Woodard pointed out that seabed mining would also be a huge concern to tribal treaty fishing rights. Unlike Oregon which banned seabed mining practices in state waters back in the 1990's, Washington State currently has no specific regulations in place that would protect our coast, up to three miles offshore, from the environmental and economic consequences of seabed mining. In an effort to prevent seabed mining from ever happening here in Washington State waters, Twin Harbor Water Keepers, Surfrider Foundation, and Pew Charitable Trust are working collaboratively on a campaign to ban seabed mining before it starts. They are asking businesses that depend on a healthy ocean to consider signing on to a [letter](#) addressed to state lawmakers, to show opposition to seabed mining in Washington State. They are also working on a letter for non-profit organizations and individuals to sign. Individuals can also help by consuming less and fixing things that break or repurposing things to help reduce the demand for products of seabed mining. Consumers can also put pressure on lawmakers, manufactures and retailers to provide products that use less of these mined materials or find alternative sources for them, and implementing a circular economy that is capable of recycling these materials. For more information about seabed mining check out these websites: <http://twinharborswaterkeeper.org/2020/10/27/why-you-should-care-about-seabed-mining/>; <https://www.surfrider.org/coastal-blog/entry/seabed-mining-the-next-big-threat-to-the-ocean/>; or <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/seabed-mining-project>

Habitat Restoration Project Options for Skagit Wildlife Area Island Unit: *Seth Ballhorn, WDFW*

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is seeking public input on an estuary restoration project that is being considered on the Skagit Wildlife Area Island Unit to address the aging tide gates and dikes, anticipated sea level rise,

and changing habitat needs. The project area covers approximately 270 acres on two diked islands located in the south fork of the Skagit River between Steamboat and Freshwater Sloughs. The Island Unit is a popular location for waterfowl hunting that is only accessible by boat and is part of the 17,000-acre Skagit Wildlife Area. WDFW manages the site and plants crops for waterfowl. It is a priority area for restoration because it was historically a tidally influenced estuary that provided critical rearing habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon. Estuary restoration would not only benefit Chinook salmon, it would also benefit Southern Resident Killer Whales, shorebirds, and recreational fishing opportunities. WDFW is conducting a high level alternatives analysis of different project options based on a set of common criteria including: state requirements and policies, costs and funding, fish and wildlife needs, community values, and climate change resilience, with input from the Island Unit Advisory Group including tribal reps and other stakeholders. The alternatives range from no restoration to restoring the entire 270-acre site. Doing nothing and letting the dikes and tide gates fail on their own was not a viable option for WDFW. The different project alternatives include the following: Alternative 1: No Restoration (replacing tide gates and raising dikes); Alternative 2: Partial Restoration of 170 acres (West Island tide gates replaced/dikes raised, East Island dikes removed/new channels); Alternative 3: Partial Restoration of 110 acres (dikes removed in areas to be restored, channels constructed, remaining dikes raised, and tide gates replaced in levee setback); and Alternative 4: Full Restoration of 270 acres (all dikes and tide gates removed and channels constructed). Each restoration alternative is expected to provide a benefit to all criteria in the alternative analysis except for waterfowl hunting. Aundrea McBride said the Skagit Watershed Council will be submitting a letter in support of Alternative #4 for full restoration. Aundrea also shared that the waterfowl hunting community has been very outspoken about their opposition to the restoration project, so it's important for WDFW to hear from others who are in support of this project, especially since we have lost 80% of estuary habitat for salmon and there are few opportunities for restoration in the Skagit River. Betsy pointed out that there is not enough time for the MRC to formulate a letter and get approval from the County Commissioners before the deadline, but individual MRC members can submit comments on their own. A Final Alternatives Analysis Report will be released in early 2021 that will identify a preferred alternative that contains a summary of comments and updated information. To review the proposed alternatives and provide feedback, visit the [WDFW Island Unit project webpage](#). People can submit comments on the draft alternatives analysis report through December 16 online, via email (skagitWLA@DFW.WA.GOV), or by mail to WDFW North Puget Sound Regional Office in Mill Creek.

Tommy Thompson Trail Trestle and Causeway Project Status: *Birdie Davenport, WDNR*

The Tommy Thompson Trail Trestle and Causeway Grant Proposal was prepared as part of a collaborative effort by several partners including: Birdie Davenport- Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), John Lunsford- City of Anacortes, and Todd Woodard- Samish Indian Nation. The primary goals of this multi-phase project are to restore full tidal circulation and natural habitats (i.e. extensive eelgrass beds, mudflats, channels, and salt marsh) in the southern portion of Fidalgo Bay by removing the Tommy Thompson Trail Trestle and causeway that are currently impeding natural processes. This popular section of the trail would be replaced by a more sustainable elevated structure with single steel pilings to minimize the ecological footprint. The project is intended to be funded and completed in 3 phases. This current grant proposal is for Phase 1: Engineering and Design. The Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) funding request for \$205,000 will enable the City of Anacortes and partners to create permit ready plans to facilitate construction grants. The US Army Corps of Engineers will share the cost for the pre-construction engineering and design plans in-house (\$155,000). At least one public meeting will be scheduled to present the project design and take public comments. Birdie and Todd said it would be good to have support from MRC members at the public meetings. The Phase 1 project ranked #36 out of 42 project proposals in the ESRP's \$20 million capital budget request for 2021-2023. If they are granted at least \$15 million, this project will be included on the list of projects for funding. Birdie said it would be helpful to have the support of elected officials. Pete said the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Stewardship Committee plans to produce a letter in support of this project to the city and state legislatures. The next two funding and implementation phases will include: Phase 2: Remove and Replace Trestle and Phase 3: Remove and Replace Causeway. Phases 2 and 3 would involve the removal of approximately 42,400 CY of causeway riprap fill starting at the end of Weaverling Spit and 1,660 feet of the creosote timber trestle to restore tidal flow and longshore sediment transport to 300 acres of Fidalgo Bay. This was determined to be the best option according to the feasibility study and cost benefit analysis completed by the Samish Indian Nation. Todd said they will be looking into the possibility of reusing some of the non-contaminated material removed from causeway and trestle for other projects rather than hauling it to the landfill. The City or Port might have some uses for the riprap. Paul recommended mobilizing volunteers to collect oysters at the project site prior to removing the trestle and causeway and relocate them somewhere else in Fidalgo Bay or Padilla Bay. In addition, creosote from the trestle has been leaching into the sediments so Paul recommended dredging at least two or three feet of the contaminated sediment after the trestle is removed and then back filling with clean clam gravel material that

will attract and protect clams and other bivalves for future recreational harvesting. The more bivalves in Fidalgo Bay, the better the water quality.

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

The last NWSC meeting was held October 29, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm). Around 25 people attended. No meeting in November, so there isn't much to report on.

- NWSC Representative: Pete reminded the MRC that we will need to elect a new NWSC Representative in January. Pete said he is happy to continue as the NWSC Alternate Rep.
- NWSI 22nd Anniversary Virtual Happy Hour: November 20, 2020 4pm-5pm via Zoom. Around 50 people attended the event which features highlights of the MRC's accomplishments for the year in addition to regional successes. Caroline Gibson was presented with the Environmental Leadership Award for her role in elevating the focus on kelp in Puget Sound.
- 2021 Annual Conference: Date tentatively set, **November 19 - 20, 2021**.
- 2021-2023 MRC Grant Project Proposals and Evaluations: Commission staff will provide support to the MRCs to help strengthen project proposals. Science Advisory Member Kathy Wolf can provide direction to MRCs on building measures of success in social marketing and outreach efforts.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom)- December 11

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

- Passport to Marine Adventures: explorer series for friends and families creating a virtual PDF scavenger hunt, the "Passport to Marine Adventure", will release in 2021. It is an inventive way to get the public to visit restored sites in all seven counties.
- GIS Story Map: to be released in 2021. NWSF worked with Samish Indian Nation on creating a Story Map in ArcGIS that illustrates the Foundation's work with partners in the Straits including projects at March's Point in partnership with Skagit MRC.
- Nearshore Projects: Continued permitting process for Lummi Quarry Restoration. Finalized salmon recovery funding agreements for design and permitting for Hoypus Point Restoration (Cornet Bay- Final Phase) and Polnell Point Armor Removal (NAS Whidbey).
- Nearshore Monitoring: In 2020 monitoring was conducted mostly by staff due to COVID 19. They regularly monitored large woody debris, beach slope and beach wrack. In 2021, we will continue with these processes in 2021 in addition to a beach seining. 2020 monitoring data is being compiled and uploaded to the appropriate databases and will be included in a report in collaboration with UW that will be finalized in March 2021.
- NWSF Shore Friendly Living Video Series #2: The Foundation just released episode #2 in the Shore Friendly Living video series, featuring Hugh Shipman and the impacts of shoreline armoring and managing shoreline erosion. View the video on the Northwest Straits Foundation's YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZAmPBAAd_KI.
- Salish Sea Strings Virtual Holiday Fundraiser: December 17 at 6pm. This event will feature musical performances from local Bellingham artists including The McHughs and The Rhetorician & The Duper Humans, and interviews with scientists working on marine projects throughout the Salish Sea.
- NWSF Board Members- Dec 22: Jay's term expires and three new board members will be appointed. MRC members will no longer be represented on the NWSF Board.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards: The SSS Advisory Committee met on *November 18* to continue planning for the 2021 Salish Sea Stewards Training which will commence on **Feb 23 - May 25, 2021**. 10 virtual classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 3:30pm with two speakers and 3 optional field sessions for small groups will be held 1pm -5pm. The SSS Advisory Committee finalized the SSS 2021 promotional materials and new Registration Form which were both posted on the MRC website: www.skagitmrc.org. The SSS Advisory Committee will be recruiting for the upcoming training in numerous publications, arranging for newspaper coverage and updating social media sites to fill the training with a goal of 26 trainees. Sara Brostrom, SSS Training Program Coordinator, is working on obtaining 20 Speakers for the 10 Training Sessions with the help Padilla Bay's Susan Wood and Chandler. In March, the SSS Advisory Committee will explore possible steps to SSS volunteer coordination with a goal to keep all Salish Sea

Stewards informed, engaged and connected. To that end, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson on the Committee is nearing completion of a new Master SSS Volunteer List and is working on *Volgistics* category revamping & project vetting.

- **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 January to discuss the variety of scenarios, options, and alternatives regarding the coronavirus situation. Please let Tracy know if you are interested in helping with the planning process.
- **Bowman Bay Restoration:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson and Tracy Alker will be the new co-lead stewards responsible for maintaining the site. It is anticipated that Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group will provide a few hours of expertise to train the stewards 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.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson replaced Phyllis Bravinder as the new Skagit MRC project lead for kelp. Shannon Point surveys were completed in July, August, and September. The June survey was cancelled due to COVID and the October survey was cancelled due to weather. The Coffin Rocks surveys were completed in June, July, August, and September. Data analyses is expected in 2021, but so far kelp beds appear stable at both locations. A kelp workshop is tentatively scheduled for January 21, 2021 at 2:30pm to discuss the 2020 season survey results and plans for the 2021 season. 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. Dana presented the Kelp Plan to WDFW and the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) Ecosystem Coordination Board. Kelp will be a vital sign in the PSP's 2022-2026 Action Agenda. A webinar featuring kelp monitoring work in B.C. will be held December 10th at 1:30pm ([Zoom Meeting Link \(Note: Zoom login is required\)](#)). The kelp monitoring work of the NWSI will be included in a slide that will be shown at the webinar.
- **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.
- **Kids on the Beach:** It was decided not to do a Kids on the Beach program this fall since the schools were already struggling in trying to figure out how to do their regular programs remotely due to the coronavirus situation. Planning is now underway for the spring 2021 Kids on the Beach program.
- **Pinto Abalone Recovery:** Field work is now complete for the season. The Sub-Award Agreement with Puget Sound Restoration Fund is now finalized for 2020-2021 abalone work. Field work, including monitoring and outplanting of 2,000 juvenile abalone will begin in early 2021. There was an article about the pinto abalone project in Skagit County's Clean Water electronic newsletter with over 800 subscribers!
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration:** Paul attended a three hour Zoom meeting of the Native Olympia Oyster Collaborative (NOOC) group to summarize current restoration activities from Mexico to BC. They discussed next coast-wide steps for restoration, including preparation of one or more research proposals that may include five or so locations on the West Coast. Paul will be discussing future steps with staff at the Padilla Bay NERR.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: *All*

- **Kelp Monitoring in B.C. Webinar: December 10, 1:30pm.** A webinar featuring kelp monitoring work in B.C. will be held December 10th at 1:30pm ([Zoom Meeting Link \(Note: Zoom login is required\)](#)). The kelp monitoring work of the NWSI will be included in a slide that will be shown at the webinar.
- **Northwest Straits 101: December 15, 12:00 noon.** Whether you've been in the Initiative for a long time and are looking for a refresher, or you're a new MRC member, all are welcome during this one-hour Zoom session. Gain an understanding of the Initiative, the roles and responsibilities of the Commission, Foundation and MRCs, and ask questions to Initiative leadership and seasoned MRC members. [Click here](#) to join the Zoom Meeting. Meeting ID: 880 8424 4648. Passcode: 639876. Phone: 253-215-8782.
- **Salish Sea Strings Virtual Holiday Fundraiser: December 17 at 6pm. December 17 at 6pm.** This event will feature musical performances from local Bellingham artists including The McHughes and The Rhetorician & The Duper Humans, and interviews with scientists working on marine projects throughout the Salish Sea.
- **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 in the process of planning a virtual Illuminight event including a contest for luminaries. There is a video on how to make luminaries on the Skagit Watershed Council's Facebook page.
- Stormwater Outfall Monitoring: Dianne reported that Friends of Skagit Beaches volunteers are collecting stormwater samples at outfalls in Anacortes with funding from a two year grant. The data collected will be used by the City to help determine the areas where improvements are needed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held January 14, 2021



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Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Kathy Thornburgh, Jay Lind, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Kevin Anderson, Matt Castle, Diane Hennebert
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Brian Robson
- **Others Attending:** Dana Oster, NWSC; Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (MRC Membership Applicant); Jason Morgan, NWSF; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Lucas Hart, NWSC; Craig Olson, volunteer; Katie Harris, NWSC; Mathew Colston, Island County; Rachel Best, Padilla Bay NERR

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:** October 08, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written after a few minor edits.
- **Public Comments:** None

Harbor Porpoise Study in Burrows Pass: Matthew Colston, Island County Natural Resources

The Island County Natural Resources Department is collecting data in collaboration with Biota Maxima's (formerly Pacific Biodiversity Institute) Harbor Porpoise study in hopes to better understand their birthing cycles, what they eat, and what their status is compared to other marine mammals in Puget Sound. Preliminary results indicate seasonal movement and distribution of this species. Their presence at Burrows Pass is continuous all year with a maximum peak in the winter months with their calves. They migrate to Port Townsend during the summer months. Matthew said they would like to collect enough research data to help get the harbor porpoise listed on the State's Threatened Species list. Biota Maxima's research includes collecting visual observations and acoustic recordings of harbor porpoises to determine their abundance, distribution and behavior at Washington Park in Anacortes. They are also studying how harbor porpoises react to boat noise. Pete pointed out that a group of volunteers used to help collect observation data of harbor porpoises at Washington Park for Aileen Jefferson with Pacific Biodiversity Institute several years ago. The volunteers would likely be willing to help with this effort again if there was an organized and coordinated effort to collect the data. Matthew said they would be willing to train, coordinate, and work with citizen scientists to collect data. Matt Castle said that Cindy Elliser with Pacific Mammal Research was recently seen at Washington Park collecting harbor porpoise observation data with a small group of volunteers. Matthew said that Aileen was planning getting in touch with Cindy if she hasn't already done so. Since forage fish are a major food source of harbor porpoises, Matthew is interested in working in collaboration with Skagit MRC to collect forage fish data in the area where harbor porpoises frequent to see if there is a correlation between their migration patterns and forage fish densities. Pete said Bowman Bay is probably the closest spot where we are currently surveying forage fish, but the Skyline beaches in Anacortes would be a great location to start sampling if we can get permission, permits, and authorization from the NWSC to do so. Matthew will also be looking at historical forage fish maps. More information about the Harbor Porpoise project can be found online at this link. <http://www.harborporpoiseproject.org>.

Northwest Straits Initiative Communications Plan: Katie Harris

Katie provided a brief overview of the Northwest Straits Initiative's (NWSI) Communications Plan and walked the Committee through the draft NWSI Fact Sheet starting with the elevator pitch and 5 key messages. The Communications Plan helps to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the different arms of the NWSI and how they interact. The NWSI Fact Sheet is for MRC members to use as reference to help ensure common messaging when communicating the NWSI's mission as a whole. Katie said if the MRC is interested, she could also help develop an elevator pitch and talking points that are more specific to Skagit MRC to help clearly communicate our work to the Board of County Commissioners and other elected officials. As part of the NWSI Communications Plan, the Commission will start offering the NWSI 101 Presentation more often throughout the year. The next 101 presentation is scheduled for December 15 at noon. The Commission is also developing a toolkit to help with

onboarding new MRC members, outreach materials for special events, and strategies to help grow the NWSI electronic monthly newsletter base. The final Communications Plan and Fact Sheet will be wrapped up by the end of the month. Comments can be sent to Pete or can be sent directly to Katie. Pete suggested including the word “county” when referring to the MRCs since they are all county based entities. Kevin said the names of the Northwest Straits Commission and Northwest Straits Foundation are very similar and might be a source of confusion for some folks outside the organization. Katie and Jason said there has been some discussion about the name confusion, but no good solutions have been identified so far. Katie said she would be happy to come back and talk to the MRC about the final Communications Plan and go over the toolkit materials that will be available in more detail.

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

The last NWSC meeting was held October 29, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm). Around 25 people attended.

- **NWSC Representative:** Pete reminded the MRC that we will need to elect a new NWSC Representative in January.
- **NWSI 22nd Anniversary Virtual Happy Hour:** November 20, 2020 4pm-5pm via Zoom. Stay tuned for the agenda. <https://nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- **Welcome from Rep. Debra Lekanoff:** Debra gave an inspiring talk about the work of the NWSI.
- **Ecology SEA Program Awards:** Allie Simpson received the 2020 First Responder award for her work on European green crab in Drayton Harbor, and Dana Oster received the 2020 Outstanding Achievement award for the Puget Sound Kelp conservation and Recovery Plan.
- **Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Update and Presentation:** The [2020 State of the Watershed](#) update is now available. Washington Hatcheries presentation.
- **Congressman Rick Larsen’s Visits:** Congressman Rick Larsen visited the 5 MRCs in his District to learn about some of the MRC projects that are going on. There was an article about it in the recent NWSI newsletter.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom)- December 11** (no meeting in November)

Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Report: *Jay Lind and Jason Morgan*

- **Passport to Marine Adventures:** The Foundation came up with this new fun idea in conjunction with local businesses to encourage folks to get outside and explore our marine shorelines during the pandemic. It will include three locations in each of the seven MRC counties that are accessible to the public. Particularly places where the MRC or partner in the NWSI has done a project or activity. The passport will be in pdf or online. Participants will get a stamp for their pictures/tags on social media. The Foundation will be reaching out to local businesses for tokens that help get people out and about.
- **Derelict Crab Pot Removal:** After submitting a Letter of Intent, the Foundation has been invited to provide a full proposal for a two-year grant to remove crab pots from Anacortes-Padilla Bay. Because 73% of the crab pots lost in this area are from the commercial sector, the Foundation’s outreach campaign will be focused on commercial crabbers rather than recreational crabbers. The Foundation will be partnering with NRC, Swinomish Tribe (and potentially other tribes) and commercial fleets to give them the tools they need to help reduce crab pot loss and to remove derelict pots on their own. The Skagit MRC voted by consensus to provide a Letter of Support for this project proposal before December 3, 2020, at the request of the Northwest Straits Foundation.
- **Nearshore Monitoring:** The monitoring season has wrapped up for the Foundation. Data is being compiled and analyzed and will be included in a report that will be finalized in March 2021. The report will be co-authored by the Foundation and the UW and will include results of monitoring effort Puget-Sound wide. Bowman Bay seining will resume in January, 2021 with staff support only until its safe for volunteers to help again.
- **Salish Sea Strings:** The Foundation is launching a new series on [November 12](#) at 6pm called Salish Sea Strings. It’s a pre-recorded combination of live music and interview with a conservationist from each of the seven counties that will be streamed on Facebook. The first episode features live music from a rock band from Bellingham, Bob Fossil, and an interview with Jason Morgan. The next episode will be an online holiday party with more interviews and music.
- **Virtual Orca Forum:** The Foundation hosted a virtual orca forum in partnership with Whidbey Island Conservation District, the WWU/Salish Sea Institute, and Island MRC that was attended by 135 households from 4 states and BC. Presenters included Rich Osborne, Jacques White and Deborah Giles.
- **Communications Grants:** The Foundation received two grants totaling \$12K for virtual communications during the pandemic to support community engagement while they can’t connect in person.

- NWSF Partnership Project Plan: The Foundation created a template to use for project collaboration with the MRCs to create consistency, transparency and accountability for projects funded in whole or part by the Foundation.
- Virtual NWSF Retreat on Nov 28

MRC Chair / Vice-Chair Meeting Report : Jay Lind

Jay attended the MRC Chair/Vice-Chair meeting to discuss how other MRCs are continuing communication and engagement with MRC members during these challenging times. All MRCs are holding regular meetings virtually and all MRCs had to adapt to COVID-19 restrictions to continue with projects.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards: A final report for the 2020 Salish Sea Stewards program is now complete. The 2021 training will start February 23- May 25. The training will be based on a hybrid model with virtual and in-person beach experiences for small groups. 10 virtual classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 3:30pm and 3 field sessions will be held 1pm - 5pm. Sara Brostrom is working on securing speakers for the 10 training sessions. The 11 member SSS Advisory Committee is working on publicity flyers and the registration form and will be updating social media sites and arranging for newspaper coverage of the upcoming training to try to reach our goal of 25 class participants. The SSS Advisory Committee will continue to meet every month through March to help plan and coordinate the 2021 SSS Training Program. The Committee is also exploring the possibility of recruiting volunteers to take on some of the tasks of a Volunteer Coordinator, to keep the larger group of Salish Sea Stewards informed, engaged, and connected. They are also consolidating a master volunteer contact list, updating the categories in Volgistics for reporting volunteer hours, and developing a vetting process for accepting submissions in The WAVE. Padilla Bay NERR education staff recently hosted the first virtual Salish Sea Stewards social on October 14th. Around 19 people attended this event which provided an opportunity to introduce the new class of 2020 Salish Sea Stewards to the veteran volunteers. They shared some of their experiences and stories and enjoyed a virtual tour of the Padilla Bay Aquarium room with their new touch pool exhibit. Padilla Bay received a lot of positive feedback from the attendees. Salish Sea Stewards were also invited to attend a virtual Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve meeting on November 4th with the Friends of Skagit Beaches to learn about volunteer opportunities.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: The Fidalgo Bay Day 2020 Scavenger Hunt was extended through October 31, 2020. The event website will stay up and running through October 2021. Over 280 people visited the website and 150 Activity Guides were printed and distributed, but only one family reported that they completed the activities and nobody completed the online survey. The project report has been finalized and is available on the Skagit MRC website (www.skagitmrc.org). A Fidalgo Bay Day Subcommittee planning meeting will be scheduled soon to start planning next year's event. The 2021 event date is tentatively set for Saturday, August 28 (11am-3pm) and the Fidalgo Bay Resort facility has been reserved. Jay suggested also reserving the facility for Friday, August 27 for setup, assuming we will be able to host part of the event indoors. It is still unclear what the coronavirus situation might be, so we will need to consider a variety of scenarios, options, and alternatives and we are looking for some ideas. Please let Tracy know if you are interested in helping with the planning process.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Plant maintenance at the Bowman Bay restoration site is done for the season. We will need to try to recruit and train one or two lead volunteer stewards to maintain the site. It is yet to be determined whether or not a contract will be needed next year. The Puget Sound Partnership just released a new video and article about the Bowman Bay restoration project in their new online magazine "[Making Waves](#)" this week. There is also an article about kelp.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Kelp surveys are now finished for the season. Our survey sites include Biz Point, Shannon Point, and Coffin Rock. Each site was surveyed at least three times between June and September. Brad Smith deserves an extra shout out for taking time to try to engage the new Salish sea stewards in the kelp surveys. 2-3 new Salish Sea Stewards participated this year and there are even more interested in participating next year. Brad is also considering leading a scouting mission to a potentially new kelp bed survey site at Hope Island. Dana said the NWSI is primarily interested in sites that are more in inland/sheltered waters, rather than those that have a lot of ocean mixing. The river outflow influence can also have local effects on kelp. Dana and Suzanne are currently working on processing the kelp data and plan to schedule a virtual meeting in December for all the kelp volunteers to share data summaries and talk about the next season.

- Forage Fish Surveys: Forage fish surveys continue at all of our restoration sites and 3 index sites with a smaller number of volunteers and using COVID-19 safety protocols. Four new Salish Sea Stewards have been out a few times to help with the forage fish surveys this year. Spawning season is really starting to wind down for surf smelt at our survey sites. On October 17, the Salish Sea School students learned all about forage fish from the volunteers at the Fidalgo Bay resort. Craig Olsen brought his microscope with the giant screen for kids to get a close look at the surf smelt eggs. Some were freshly hatched larvae and others were right at the stage of hatching!
- Kids on the Beach: The final report for the 2019/2020 Kids on the Beach program is now complete. Program materials are available on Padilla Bay's Facebook page for educators and the [Skagit MRC website](#). Planning is underway for the 2020/2021 Kids on the Beach program. Under the current circumstances, it has been difficult to get teachers and students actively engaged in the KOTB program materials. Instead of trying to get the program in the schools this fall, Annie will focus on implementing the KOTB program next spring. Annie has also been working closely with coordinators of the Swinomish "Between Two Worlds" program on a bridged learning opportunity where Tribal youth will serve as mentors for middle school students during the late fall, winter, and spring forage fish KOTB investigations.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Field work is now complete for the season. The report is now available on the [Skagit MRC website](#). Field work will start up again in February 2021. The Sub-Award Agreement with Puget Sound Restoration Fund has been drafted and waiting for signatures.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Field work is finished for the season. The data has been collected and processed. Overall, oyster settlement appears to be pretty average for the year. Paul wrote an article for the Skagit County Clean Water electronic newsletter that currently has over 800 subscribers. Jay said there was also a recent article on Olympia oysters in Fidalgo Bay in the Skagit Valley Herald and the Vancouver Washington newspaper.

Project Planning Discussion: *Tracy*

The Northwest Straits Commission recently released their 2021-2023 MRC Grant Proposal Timeline. The draft project list from MRCs is due January 2021. It is uncertain what the funding will look like at this time so we will need to consider what we can get done under various funding scenarios. Tracy asked the Committee to start thinking about what our priorities are and if there are current projects we would like to continue through 2021-2023 and if there are any new project ideas to add to our wish list. Priority will be given to those projects that have MRC Project Leads to help carry out the project. Although no decisions were made at the meeting, the Committee expressed interest in continuing all of our current MRC projects under the next MRC Grant, with the exception of Bowman Bay which will not likely need any funding. Pete suggested two new project ideas to consider including a Skagit MRC Intern, similar to Clallam MRCs intern program, and stormwater sample testing at outfalls for contaminants.

MRC Membership Application (Lynne Wenberg-Davidson): *Betsy*

The Committee voted unanimously by consensus to make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Lynne Wenberg-Davidson as the newest member of the Skagit MRC. Lynne will be replacing Phyllis Bravinder as the new MRC Project Lead of the Kayak Kelp Surveys.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: *All*

- Salish Sea Strings- The Melody of Conservation: The Northwest Straits Foundation's virtual fundraiser airs Nov 12 at 6pm, streaming live on Facebook, featuring an interview with Jason Morgan, and musical guest [Bob Fossil](#).
- San Juan MRCs Oil Spill Risk Consequences follow up discussion- November 19th at 4pm: This meeting will be a follow-up discussion from San Juan MRCs symposium discussion on their oil spill risk consequences assessment, to review existing resources and consider what roles MRCs can play in oil spill prevention and response.
- Northwest Straits Initiative Happy Hour- Celebrating 22 years: November 20, 2020 from 4pm-5pm via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held December 10, 2020



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the October 8, 2020, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) GoToMeeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Kathy Thornburgh, Jay Lind, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Kevin Anderson, Matt Castle
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Diane Hennebert, Brian Robson
- **Others Attending:** Dana Oster, NWSC; Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, SSS; Silvi Thorstenson, WSU Shore Stewards

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:** September 10, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** Silvi Thorstenson manages the WSU Skagit County Extension's Shore Stewards program and is interested in collaborating with the Skagit MRC and Northwest Straits Foundation.

Phyllis Bravinder's Letter of Resignation: *Betsy Stevenson*

Phyllis Bravinder offered her letter of resignation to the MRC. Phyllis has been actively involved with the MRC since 2016. She was the MRC Project Lead for Kelp Surveys, served as our NWSC Alternate Rep, and served on several MRC subcommittees, and contributed countless volunteer hours helping with various projects and special events. Jay said Phyllis was a valuable member with her optimism, dedication, and reliability. Everyone shared Jay's sentiment. She will be greatly missed!

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

The last NWSC meeting was held September 24, via Zoom conference call (10am – 1pm). 23 people attended.

- **NWSC Representatives:** Pete reminded everyone that his second term as the Skagit MRC representative on the NWSC will end the end in January and a new MRC rep will need to be appointed. Pete said Phyllis was his NWSC Alternate, but he thinks he can cover the rest of the NWSC meetings through the end of the year. He is willing to be the NWSC Alternate for the next NWSC Representative in 2021.
- **European Green Crab Update:** The green crab team trapped over 200 green crabs in Drayton Harbor and over 1,000 on the Lummi Peninsula. The team will start ramping up trapping efforts on the Lummi Peninsula where they are seeing the larger numbers.
- **NWSI Communications Plan:** The internal Communications Plan for the NWSC has been finalized. A one page fact sheet and elevator speech about the NWSI will be provided to the MRCs. MRC members are encouraged to memorize the elevator speech and attend the NWSI 101 session that is usually offered at the annual MRC Conference, but will likely start being offered twice per year. MRC members are also encouraged to subscribe to the electronic [NWSC newsletter](#) to stay better informed.
- **NWSC/NWSF MOU Discussion:** The primary topic of discussion at the September 24 NWSC meeting was the NWSC/NWSF Memorandum of Understanding. The MOU was approved by the NWSC Executive Committee and the NWSF, but requested additional feedback from the MRCs before making it official.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom)- October 29**

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

- **Passport to Marine Adventures:** The Foundation came up with this new fun idea in conjunction with local businesses to encourage folks to get outside and explore our marine shorelines during the pandemic. It will include three locations in each of the seven MRC counties that are accessible to the public. Particularly places where the MRC or partner in the NWSI has done a project or activity. The passport will be in pdf or online. Participants will get a stamp for their pictures/tags on social media. The Foundation will be reaching out to local businesses for tokens that help get people out and about.

- Crab Pot Removal: After submitting a Letter of Intent, the Foundation has been invited to provide a full proposal for a two-year grant to remove crab pots from Anacortes-Padilla Bay area with a commercial crabber targeted outreach campaign. They will be partnering with NRC, Swinomish Tribe (and potentially other tribes) and the State commercial fleet.
- Salish Sea Strings: The Foundation is launching a new series on November 12 called Salish Sea Strings. It's a pre-recorded combination of live music and interview with a conservationist from each of the seven counties. The first episode features live music from a rock band from Bellingham, Bob Fossil, and an interview with Jason Morgan.
- NWSF Board Members Update: Jay's term as a Foundation Board Member is up in December and will no longer be able to provide updates to the MRC. He recommended inviting Foundation staff to provide the updates at MRC meetings. Betsy thanked Jay for all of his years of service on the Foundation's board and for always keeping the MRC informed.

NWSC/NWSF Memorandum of Understanding: *Pete Haase*

To help provide some clarification regarding the roles, responsibilities, and areas of collaboration between the Northwest Straits Commission and the Northwest Straits Foundation, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was created. This document is also meant to serve as a tool for MRC members and others to understand the relationship between these two arms of the Northwest Straits Initiative. MRC members have been asked to review the document and provide comments to Lucas and Don by October 16th. Tracy forwarded the MOU to Skagit MRC members prior to the meeting for discussion. The overall consensus was that the MOU was well written and a valuable process because it helps eliminate some of the confusion. MRC members commented that the MOU explained the collaborative relationships, but it would also be good to be more explicit in describing the differences between the two parties. Others said it would be helpful to have a similar document that provides more clarification about the Foundation-MRCs working partnership.

Voluntary No Anchor Zone Update and Discussion: *Dana Oster*

Jefferson MRC initiated the Voluntary No Anchor Zone back in 2004 to protect the eelgrass beds and shellfish beds from anchor scour. Navigational buoys were deployed to delineate eelgrass beds and good depth zones to encourage boaters to voluntarily comply and anchor in deeper water outside of the eelgrass beds. Dana started looking into ways to collaborate and expand this into a regional project after Jefferson MRC's presentation at the MRC Symposium sparked a lot of interest from other MRCs. [Jefferson's No Anchor Zone video](#) is available on the NWSC Vimeo and YouTube pages. Dana applied for a two year grant for this project and made it through the first cut with the initial letter of intent. She is now in the process of writing a full proposal and has been making the rounds to all of the MRCs who have expressed interest and put forward potential sites for this regional project. The full proposal is due November 6. Dana will not be seeking letters of support because the funders are only interested in letters of commitment for match (in-kind and non-federal funds). If selected, the funding for the two year grant would start January 2021. The NWSC would lead regional management of this project in collaboration with the NWSF and MRCs. Dana would be the regional Project Manager and Lisa Kaufman would take the lead in permitting. Katie Harris would develop a social marketing campaign and branding. The MRCs would each need to appoint a project lead and or a subcommittee, identify key community members to do consultations with, and help with community engagement.

Dana said the first year of the grant would focus on an in-depth analyses of the feasibility of the potential sites to determine what the stressor are, if buoys would be beneficial, and what the vessel use in the area is and if it is causing anchor scour of the eelgrass beds. Skagit MRC is considering the Cap Sante Marina as a potential location for this project. Kevin said the Port of Anacortes would be very supportive of this community project and could provide photos/videos of vessel use at the Cap Sante Marina as well as eelgrass survey data. Volunteers could also help count vessels in the area or take underwater video of the eelgrass beds before buoys are deployed to get a snapshot of the "before". Dana said there is a volunteer pilot with Island MRC who could take aerial photos of the eelgrass bed.

In Year two, the potential sites brought forward by the MRCs would be ranked as tier 1 and tier 2 priority sites. Tier 1 sites are those locations that would benefit the most and have lots of community support. The tier 2 sites are those locations where it is unclear if there is community support or if the buoys would be effective. Paul pointed out that the area around the Cape Sante Marina is really shallow so boats might have to anchor out at a substantial distance which could be an issue. Dana said if this is the case, we could try to find project partners who would be willing to provide mooring buoys for vessels to tie up to. Or another potential option would be to allow anchoring in a smaller designated area within the eelgrass bed to help limit the

amount of damage. In some locations maintenance or replacement of buoys and mooring lines might also be required due to excessive biofouling. Volunteers could be recruited to monitor buoys for maintenance needs. Buoy maintenance would require experienced divers. Dana suggested reaching out to local dive groups to see if there might be any interest in adopting a site to help monitor and maintain the buoys. Another possible option might be to take the large buoys out during the winter months and replace them with little marker buoys like they do in Port Townsend. The project details will continue to get fleshed out as we move forward if we are awarded the grant.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards:** A final report for the 2019/2020 Salish Sea Stewards program will be available before the end of this grant period in September. Some of the new volunteers have recently gotten involved in the forage fish surveys, kelp monitoring surveys, the Friends of Skagit Beaches stormwater outfall monitoring project, and four joined the SSS Advisory Committee. The SSS Advisory Committee met on Sept 23rd to continue planning for 2021 Training starting mid Feb/early March. The training will be based on a hybrid model with virtual and in-person beach experiences. The Committee will be working on publicity flyers and forms for several months and will be updating social media sites and arranging for newspaper coverage of the upcoming training. Background checks will continue to be paid by the trainees. Although there is a recognized need for volunteer program coordination, it is outside the scope of work in Padilla Bay's contract. They do not currently have the staff capacity to take on that task. The Committee is exploring different options to help fund a Volunteer Program Coordinator position or designate one or more volunteers to fill that role to keep the larger group of Salish Sea Stewards informed, engaged, and connected. Padilla Bay will host a virtual social for all of the Salish Sea Stewards on October 14th.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** The Fidalgo Bay Day 2020 Scavenger Hunt was extended through October 31, 2020 to give families more time to complete the activities to earn a certificate. Although the MRC grant ended September 30, we were able to use funding from Skagit County Clean Water Funds to keep the event website up and running through the end of October. Tracy will try to find out how much it will cost to keep the website up and running through next year. So far we've had over 280 unique visitors to the site, but we have no idea how many actually completed the activities. We distributed over 150 Activity Guides. The Activity Guides were also available on the event website as well as the MRC website. We created an Instagram account and an online survey to help evaluate the event, but so far we haven't gotten any feedback. Tracy is working on the 2020 Fidalgo Bay Day Final Report. We will need to schedule a Fidalgo Bay Day Subcommittee meeting soon to start planning next year's Fidalgo Bay Day event. Let Tracy know if you are interested in helping with the planning process.
- **Bowman Bay Restoration:** Plant maintenance at the Bowman Bay restoration site is done for the season. Skagit MRC will need to recruit and train one or two lead volunteer stewards to maintain the site. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group created a "Hand Book" for volunteers to use as a guide for maintaining the site. The NWSF staff will resume beach seining at Bowman Bay in January.
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** Forage fish surveys continue at all of our restoration sites and Index sites with a smaller number of volunteers. There has been a lot of spawning activity in Fidalgo Bay with good survival rates. Several new Salish Sea Stewards are helping with the forage fish surveys this year. Amy Eberling will be bringing students from her class to look for forage fish eggs at Fidalgo Bay for a couple of hours in October. Craig Olson will bring his microscope so the students can get a closer look at the eggs.
- **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. Planning is underway for the 2020/2021 Kids on the Beach program. According to feedback received from teachers, the students are having a difficult time engaging in the virtual setting. Annie is working with teachers on more fun and engaging program materials with a little less hard science. She is developing a program with a mix of live virtual classroom instruction along with pre-recorded videos of beach seining and forage fish spawning surveys to help engage students in collecting data. Annie has also been working closely with coordinators of the Swinomish "Between Two Worlds" program on a bridged learning opportunity where Tribal youth will serve as mentors for LaConner middle school students during the late fall, winter, and spring forage fish KOTB investigations.
- **Pinto Abalone Recovery:** Field work is now complete. The final report is now available on the [Skagit MRC website](#).

- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Field work is finished for the season. The data has been collected and processed. Overall, oyster settlement appears to be pretty average for the year. Paul Dinnel gave a virtual presentation on Native Olympia Oyster Restoration in Fidalgo Bay on October 7, 2020.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Kelp surveys are now finished for the season. We will need to find a new MRC Project Lead for the kelp surveys to replace Phyllis. Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, a recent Salish Sea Stewards graduate, expressed interest and requested additional information.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: *All*

- Orca Recovery Forum: Orca Recovery Day is Saturday, October 17. As part of that region-wide effort, the Northwest Straits Foundation will host an Orca Forum on October 14 and an Orca Trivia Night on Thursday night, October 15.
- Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve and FOSB meeting Nov 4th- The Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Citizen Stewardship Committee is hosting an informational Zoom volunteer recruiting meeting on November 4th to help drive their existing projects forward. The meeting is open to MRC members. Contact Eleanor Hines for more information at eleanorth@re-sources.org.
- Congressman Larsen Visit- October 14th (9:30am) at Padilla Bay- Congressman Larsen is visiting with the MRCs in his district to learn about the projects the MRCs are working on and the impact of federal funding support. Skagit MRC scheduled a visit on October 14th at Padilla Bay to highlight the Salish Sea Stewards and Kids on the Beach programs in collaboration with Padilla Bay NERR. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic mandates, the visit will be limited to just 5 people. MRC member and Padilla Bay NERR Director, Jude Apple will host the visit at Padilla Bay. Susan Wood will share information about the Salish Sea Stewards program, Annie England will share information about the Kids on the Beach program, and Sasha Horst will share information about program funding.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held November 12, 2020



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the September 10, 2020, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) GoToMeeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith (MRC Member Applicant), Brian Robson, Kathy Thornburgh, Matt Castle, Jay Lind, Jude Apple, Rachel Best
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Diane Hennebert, Paul Dinnel, Phyllis Bravinder, Kevin Anderson
- **Others Attending:** Dana Oster, NWSC; Amy Eberling, Salish Sea School

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:** August 13, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** No Comments.

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

The last NWSC meeting was held August 28, via Zoom conference call (10am – 1pm). The meeting was extended to three hours to provide opportunities for additional conversations in break-out groups at the end. Over 28 people attended. The meeting highlights and minutes will be shared with MRC members when they become available.

- **NWSC Representatives:** Pete reminded everyone that his second term as the Skagit MRC representative on the NWSC will end the end in December this year and a new MRC rep will need to be appointed. He said he has really enjoyed being a part of the NWSC and highly recommends other MRC members consider giving it a try.
- **NWSC Committee Reports:** The Executive Committee is formalizing a policy about using and providing matching funds. We have to be careful not to use the same matching funds for more than one opportunity, particularly when it comes to federal or state money. The Science Advisory Committee discussed how the framework for Actions to Impacts can be scalable to the MRC level and how the MRCs work ties into the work of the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification.
- **Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Update:** The updated [State of Our Watersheds Report](#) will be published in December, 2020. The last report was released in 2016.
- **County Budget Discussion:** Several Counties are struggling with budget shortfalls due to COVID-19 that could have a future impact on the MRCs. Project funding for MRCs is currently stable through September 30, 2021.
- **MRC Symposiums:** The MRC Symposiums are now done and were very successful. Planning for future symposiums is currently underway.
- **Puget Sound Partnership Update:** PSP is trying to determine how they can help partners, such as the MRCs, in implementing projects or campaigns designed to change attitudes and behaviors. They will be sending a questionnaire to the MRCs to identify the barriers and challenges that are faced in social marketing approaches.
- **Kelp Aquaculture:** Emily Buckner from NOAA presented their recent research on the environmental benefits and risks of kelp aquaculture.
- **NWSI Communications Plan:** The Communications Plan is progressing quite well. The final report to the NWSC will occur in September. NWSC staff are evaluating how the contractor may be able to help implement communications actions from the plan.
- **Next NWSC Meeting (via Zoom)- September 24**

The Salish Sea School Update: *Amy Eberling*

The Salish Sea School just launched their first student summer program this year “The Guardians of the Salish Sea”. They awarded over \$12,000 in scholarships to underserved students from grants and donations. The mission of The Salish Sea School is to create student leaders in marine conservation. Their boat-based and island excursion programs include an unplugged experiential science curriculum, research and citizen science, mindfulness in nature practices, natural journaling, environmental service projects, and advocacy /writing to state legislators. This year they held six sessions with 22 students ranging in ages from 10 to 17. Each session was four days long from 9am to 5pm. The 22’ boat was launched out of Cap Sante

Marina in Anacortes with a different research adventure and action each day. The sessions included: a [eBird Survey](#) using a smart phone app; a tufted puffin survey at Smith Island; intertidal exploration; nearshore habitat exploration; plastics impacts on our oceans followed by a beach cleanup and plastic nurdle search; stormwater pollution and rain gardens; biomagnification in marine mammals; harbor porpoise survey; visit to the Center for Whale Research; squid and salmon belly dissection; and writing letters to elected officials. At the end of the four day session, the students each received a hat with the trident symbol and were told to remember they are protectors of the sea. Amy said this year's program was a huge success, thanks to the help of volunteers, partner organizations, donations, and sponsors. The long-term goal is to make this a year-long program, not just a summer camp. For those who want to get involved, The Salish Sea School is interested in forming focus groups to start brainstorming the next steps beyond the summer Guardian of the Sea programs.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards:** We held the first virtual Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting on August 26, to start planning for the 2021 SSS training. Sara Brostrom, the Coastal Training Program Coordinator for Padilla Bay and SSS Training Coordinator, reported on the 2020 Salish Sea Stewards training survey results. 100% of the participants agreed that the virtual training went well overall. Most of the new SSS graduates expressed concern about meeting their 40 hour volunteer obligation because of a lack of opportunities due to Covid-19. The Advisory Committee recognized there is a need to have one person who is dedicated in the role of the volunteer coordinator to continue to keep the volunteers engaged and connected. The Advisory Committee will try to fill that role for now. SSS Advisory Committee meetings will continue to be held once a month to help plan and promote the 2021 SSS training and recruit speakers and new class participants. The 2021 training will begin mid-February or early March and will likely be virtual.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** The Fidalgo Bay Day 2020 Scavenger Hunt finally launched last week! 14 organizations that have participated in the past contributed to the scavenger hunt activity guide book that can be downloaded from the event website: www.fidalgobayday.com. Hard copies are also available at the new Skagit Valley YMCA in Mount Vernon, the Burlington Library, the Boys and Girls Club, and in the front entryway of the Skagit County Administrative Building in Mount Vernon. The YMCA said the activity guide has been pretty popular and they even posted it on their Facebook page. Flyers with the QR Code have been posted at Washington Park, at the food Co-op and at the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort kiosk. We will be able to track the number of visits to the event website and QR Code scans. A reporter from the Skagit Valley Herald is interested in writing an article about this year's event.
- **Bowman Bay Restoration:** Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group staff hosted a volunteer plant maintenance work party on August 21 with a small number of volunteers. They also did the year-end walk-through of the site with Tracy and several new Americorps last Friday. The site is looking great! Watering might not even be necessary next year and weeding parties can be reduced to just two or three.
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** Forage fish surveys continue at all of our restoration sites and Index sites with a smaller number of volunteers. More extensive surveys are taking place at Bowman Bay. Four surf smelt eggs were found at Bowman Bay but they did not appear to be viable. There has been a lot of spawning activity in Fidalgo Bay with good survival rates. Two new Salish Sea Stewards are helping with the forage fish surveys this year. Amy Eberling will be bringing students from her class to look for forage fish eggs at Fidalgo Bay for a couple of hours in October. Craig Olson will bring his microscope so the students can get a closer look at the eggs.
- **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. Planning is underway for the 2020/2021 Kids on the Beach program which will likely be virtual again.
- **Pinto Abalone Recovery:** Field work is now complete. A final report will be completed before the end of this grant period in September.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration:** Paul will be giving a free virtual presentation on Native Olympia Oyster Restoration in Fidalgo Bay hosted by the Padilla Bay Foundation on October 7, 2020 at 4pm -5pm. Jude will forward the registration information to MRC members.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys:** Kelp surveys took place in July and August at Shannon Point, Coffin Rocks, and Biz Point and will continue through September, despite having several weather delays. Some of the new Salish Sea Stewards

participated in the surveys. John Freeto has been working on a few short video narratives at the Biz Point kelp beds that will be included in social media posts about kelp.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: *All*

- Orca Recovery Forum: Orca Recovery Day is Saturday, October 17. As part of that region-wide effort, the Northwest Straits Foundation will host an Orca Forum on October 14 and an Orca Trivia Night on Thursday night, October 15.
- Voluntary No Anchor Zone Grant Application Update: The NWSC and NWSF applied for the NEP Coastal Watershed Grant with a letter of intent to expand the Voluntary No Anchor Zone project to other county MRCs. They recently received an invite to submit a full proposal which is due November 6th. Dana said she will be reaching out to the MRCs in the coming weeks as they iron out the details for the full proposal.
- Presentation on "Restoration of the Native Olympia Oyster in Fidalgo Bay": Please join the Padilla Bay Foundation on October 7, from 4pm – 5pm, for a free virtual presentation on Olympia oyster restoration in Fidalgo Bay presented by Paul Dinnel. The presentation is made possible by the Lane Christopher Smith and Benjamin Fisher Aguero Memorial Fund. To register for this free event, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/PBFolympicOysterTalk>.

MRC Membership Application: *Darla Gay Smith*

The Committee voted unanimously by consensus to make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Darla Gay Smith to the Skagit Marine Resources Committee to replace Rachel Best. Rachel will continue serve as Darla's alternate as needed.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held October 15, 2020



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



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the July 9, 2020, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Webex Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Kathy Thornburgh, Betsy Stevenson, Phyllis Bravinder, Kevin Anderson, Rachel Best, Jude Apple
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Brian Robson, Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind
- **Others Attending:** Kari Odden, Skagit Land Trust; Lucas, NWSC; Sasha Host, NWSC; Lynne Wenberg, Salish Sea Steward; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Lisa Kaufman, NWSF; Jason Morgan, NWSF

Call to Order and Introduction: Betsy Stevenson called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** June 11, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** Aundrea McBride shared three project proposals within the Skagit Delta that are currently being considered by the Skagit Watershed Council for potential grant funding that might be of interest to the MRC: 1) Pocket estuary re-creation in the Swinomish Channel to help increase fish production; 2) Habitat re-creation in the South Fork involving excavating more channels to increase fish capacity; 3) Invasive cattail monitoring in the Skagit Delta to investigate vegetation changes over time and links to fish abundance. There are several other projects that are also being considered for funding, but they are located further up in the watershed.

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

The last NWSC meetings was held June 6 via Webex Conference Call. The meeting highlights were shared with MRC members.

- **NWSC Staff Update:** State employees, including Commission staff, will be furloughed one day per week in July and then one day per month through November.
- **Communications:** The External Relations Committee contracted with a firm, Maui Foster and Alongi to conduct a Communications Audit to identify key challenges and to develop and implement a communications plan to improve internal and external communications. The Committee is working on a strategy to create connections with business interests and strengthening relationships with County Councils/Commissions.
- **Actions to Impacts:** The Science Advisory Committee has expanded their focus to look at social values rather than just ecosystem values when measuring actions to impacts for various projects.
- **Northwest Straits Foundation Update:** The Foundation developed a 2021 Visioning Strategy and more video content to replace in-person workshops (e.g. Salish Sea Fresh video series and Virtual Crabber Outreach Workshops). The Foundation is applying for grant funding for rain gardens in partnership with several MRCs including Skagit MRC, if interested. Lisa will give an update on NWSF projects at a future MRC meeting.
- **Green Crab Monitoring:** NWSC has become involved in green crab monitoring in Drayton Harbor and recently hired temporary staff to take the lead. Paul said that he and many other volunteers have been involved in green crab trapping in Skagit County under the leadership of Washington Sea Grant for several years now. Although MRC funds were used to purchase traps and to pay for volunteer coordination many years ago when the project was first initiated, it is not currently an MRC project. The Samish Indian Nation's Department of Natural Resources is also monitoring green crabs at the Sharpes Corner site in Fidalgo Bay with the Washington Sea Grant Crab Team.
- **Year-Two MRC Project Budgets:** The Commission approved the 2021 MRC budget and projects.
- **MRC Project Presentations:** Several MRC's presented their 2020-2021 projects including: Jefferson MRC project presentation "Olympia Oyster Restoration"; Island MRC project presentation "Needs Assessment and Communications Plan"; and San Juan MRC project presentation "Community-Based Efforts for Southern Resident Killer Whale Conservation". All presentations are available to download in the Northwest Straits Initiative's Box.com folder.

- Puget Sound Partnership Update: Adopted an updated set of Vital Signs and indicators for the 2022-2026 action Agenda. The Puget Sound Days on the Hill are virtual events.
- Next NWSC Meeting (Webex)- July 31

Skagit Land Trust Project Proposal: *Kari Odden*

- The Skagit Land Trust is applying to the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program and the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) for funding to purchase approximately 50 acres on Samish Island for protection, clean it up, control invasive species, and complete a site assessment for future restoration. The property is adjacent to Skagit Land Trust's Samish Flower Farm Conservation Area and contains agricultural lands, wetlands, and 2,500 feet of critical marine shoreline on both Samish (Alice) and Padilla Bays. This project will protect and cleanup critical shoreline, saltmarsh, and tidelands that will benefit forage fish and many bird species. A long-term goal of this project, is to re-create tidally influenced wetlands by setting back the aging Padilla Bay dikes. There might also be a great opportunity to expand conservation classroom programs at the site. The landowner is ready to sell and there is strong community support from the immediate neighbors, the County, Padilla Bay NERR, the Audubon Society, and the Samish Indian Nation. The Skagit Land Trust is also seeking a letter of support from the Skagit MRC. The Committee voted unanimously by consensus in favor of providing letter in support of this project.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards: The last class was held June 9th. 21 participants completed the virtual Salish Sea Stewards training. A survey went out to class participants to help evaluate the program. The new volunteers are all very eager to start volunteer work. Four of the new Salish Sea Stewards volunteers will be joining the Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee. An in-person gathering for all of the Salish Sea Stewards will be scheduled as soon as it is determined safe to do so. Rachel Best announced that Darla Gay Smith will be replacing her as the MRC project lead for the Salish Sea Stewards program. Darla said she is really looking forward to her new role and thanked Rachel for her leadership and all of her hard work during this challenging time. Jude also thanked Rachel for her support and said the Padilla Bay NERR team now has a really good template to work with for planning next year's program.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: As an alternative to Fidalgo Bay Day, we will be creating a Scavenger Hunt Activity Guide that will be similar to the Discovery Passport to help get families engaged in fun educational activities that focus on nature and the environment. It will be promoted in the local papers and online and will be widely distributed to local businesses that are open to the public. Past participating organizations have been invited to be part of the Activity Guide. So far we've heard back from four who have expressed interest in participating. We will create an event website and Facebook page for organizations and participants to share photos and posts about the activities and experiences. We hope to have the Activity Guide finalized by August 13.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Staff watered the plantings at the site on June 26th and will water again on July 10. The shoreline plantings are looking pretty good. The shrubs continue to struggle a little bit. The cedar tree that was planted by the Samish is getting pretty tall. Conifers have voluntarily popped up throughout the restoration area. SFEG is also working on a Bowman Bay Stewardship Guide for volunteers. PSP is working on a short video about the restoration project. The NWSF staff, Parks staff, SFEG staff, and volunteers involved in the project were interviewed for the video. NWSF staff will start monitoring again at the site soon, but without the help of volunteers for now. The Foundation might also do some filming at the site as part of their "Salish Sea Fresh" video series.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Forage fish surveys will be starting back up at Marchs Point restoration site and Fidalgo Bay sites on July 16 with a smaller number of volunteers. They are waiting for permits and permission from various lead agencies to start surveying again at the other sites.
- Kids on the Beach: Annie England with Padilla Bay NERR, did an excellent job adapting the KOTB curriculum into a virtual program that is easily accessible to teachers and students. We will be scheduling a meeting soon to determine the next steps for planning next year's program. A final report will be available before the end of this grant period.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) recently completed a detailed QAPP that has been approved by Ecology. Paul thanked Lucas and Sasha for their assistance with the QAPP process and praised Josh for

all of his hard work to get it done despite his reduced work hours due to COVID-19. A final report will be completed before the end of this grant period in September.

- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Paul and his son are conducting reduced oyster monitoring and restoration work this year. No other volunteers are involved in the field work due to COVID-19 restrictions. They distributed 20 oyster cultch bags around Fidalgo Bay and put out shell strings around Weaverling Spit and the trestle in conjunction with Puget Sound Restoration Fund's sampling methods to monitor oyster recruitment. They also put out shell tiles every two weeks to monitor biweekly oyster settlement in Fidalgo Bay for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Brian Allen with PSRF plans to do some surveys in August and might be looking for a couple of volunteers to help.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Kelp surveys are scheduled to take place July 17 at Shannon Point, July 18 at Coffin Rocks, and July 23 at Biz Point. Phyllis reported that several new Salish Sea Stewards volunteers are very enthusiastic about getting involved in kelp surveys. One of the new volunteers will be going out with the kelp survey crew on July 17 to observe the procedures from a safe distance.

No Anchor Zone Regional Project Proposal Follow-up Discussion: *All*

The NWS Commission is looking into the possibility of applying for funding to expand the Jefferson County MRC's Voluntary No Anchor Zone project as a regional project if there is enough interest from other MRCs. Skagit MRC members expressed interest in potentially implementing something similar in Skagit County and discussed the area outside of Cap Sante Marina as a possible location. If interested in pursuing this project, Paul suggested that the MRC should first assess the usage of boats in the area and conduct eelgrass surveys to determine if the boating activity is actually having an impact on the eelgrass beds. Paul said boat usage could easily be assessed by going out and counting boats and taking photos. Eelgrass beds could be assessed with aerial surveys and diver transects to measure eelgrass abundance and any signs of damage due to boat anchors and chains. Kevin said the Port might have some video feed of boating activity in the area that could be used to assess boat usage. Lisa said the NWSF is currently looking into costs to conduct extensive eelgrass surveys by boat as part of pre-grant application process for this regional project. If awarded grant funding, the NWSF would also take the lead in the permitting process in collaboration with Washington Department of Natural Resources.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: *All*

- Virtual MRC Symposiums: July 23 (3:30pm -5pm) featuring San Juan MRC and August 6 (3:30pm-5pm) featuring Island MRC. You must be pre-registered to attend each symposium.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 am. The next MRC meeting will be held August 13, 2020



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 (SSHIAP).
- **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



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the May 14, 2020, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Webex Meeting

Attendees:

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

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:** April 9, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** Tracy thanked the MRC members for continuing to stay engaged and for finding creative ways to keep our projects moving forward during these challenging times. Tracy reminded MRC members that she can schedule Webex or Zoom meetings for MRC members who would like to discuss topics in more detail.

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

The last NWSC meetings was held April 24 Webex Conference Call

- **Legislative Update:** Senator Liz Lovelett provided the legislative session update and some of the things she would like to bring forward in the future such as proposed changes to carbon pricing, hybridization of ferry systems, and land use issues impacting Puget Sound Protection.
- **Communications Audit and Plan:** The NWSC Communications Committee contracted with a firm for the communications audit and plan development project to help improve communications of the MRCs and increase visibility in the local communities. The firm will be interviewing members from each MRC. Pete Haase was recently interviewed as the representative of Skagit MRC.
- **MRC Economic Interests:** The NWSC discussed filling the economic interest seats of the MRCs. Skagit MRC's economic interest seats are currently filled by Jay Lind, representing the commercial fishing industry, and Brian Robson, representing Shell Puget Sound Refinery.
- **Virtual MRC Symposium Series:** The NWSC is hosting a 1.5 hour Zoom video-conference every two weeks for MRC members to share project information over a seven week period. The first one featured Jefferson MRC and the second one featured Skagit MRC. Betsy provided an overview of the Skagit MRC, Paul gave a presentation on pinto abalone restoration and Pete and Annie gave a presentation on the Kids on the Beach program. Tracy thanked Betsy, Paul, and Pete for the amazing job they did presenting at the May 7th MRC forum. They really made the Skagit MRC proud!
- The next Symposium will feature Whatcom MRC and will highlight their North Sound Stewards and oyster restoration projects on May 21st at 3:30pm. Don't forget to register!
- **Next NWSC Meeting (Webex)- May 29.** Some MRCs will be presenting projects at the May and June NWSC meetings. Paul Dinnel will be presenting Skagit MRC's Pinto Abalone Restoration project at the May 29, NWSC meeting.

Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Report: *Jay Lind and Caroline Gibson*

- **Fundraising:** The Foundation's Fiscal year ends in June 30th. Unfortunately, the Foundation's fundraising and outreach activities that were planned for this spring have been put on hold due to COVID-19. They are now trying to come up with a whole new fundraising strategy for the next couple of years that will focus on raising funds for specific projects. They are working with the MRCs to find out what the top project priorities are for each MRC. The proposed fundraising plan and budget will be approved by the Foundation's Board next month. Unfortunately, they do not

have enough funding right now to support the MRC Opportunity Funds. The good news is, they've applied for and received protection grant funds to keep their staff fully employed.

- Orca Forums: Originally planned to hold forums in Island, Whatcom, and Skagit Counties. The Orca Forum will now be a virtual forum held the last week of June. Caroline has lined up a panel of three speakers. Caroline is seeking feedback from the MRCs regarding the best time to hold the forum. Please let Caroline know whether you would prefer a late afternoon or early evening forum.
- Shore Friendly Workshops: Lisa is exploring options for hosting web-based Shore Friendly workshops.
- Nearshore Monitoring: Most of the nearshore monitoring activities are still on hold for a while as a result of the COVID -19 pandemic. The Foundation staff will likely start conducting some monitoring on their own, without the help of volunteers, until it is determined safe for the volunteers to participate again.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards: 23 participants are taking the virtual Salish Sea Stewards training via Zoom. Some of the presenters were unable to reschedule, so the 40 hour training program was shortened by 6 hours. The class participants were given task assignments and a list of training resources to make up for those hours to help fill the gap. Sara Brostrom was recently hired as Padilla Bay NERR's new Coastal Training Program Coordinator and has taken the lead on the Salish Sea Stewards training program. In addition, Rachel Best has been hired as the new Office Coordinator at Padilla Bay and will be supporting the Salish Sea Stewards program this month as well! The class graduates will each receive a Salish Sea Stewards t-shirt, name badge, and certificate in the mail.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: This year's event was originally scheduled for Saturday, August 29, 2020 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Unfortunately, Fidalgo Bay Day has been canceled this per the recommendation of the Skagit County Department of Health to cancel all large events this summer. The Fidalgo Bay Day planning committee will be meeting next week to discuss potential alternatives.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Beach seining and forage fish surveys at the restoration site have been canceled until further notice due to COVID-19 health concerns. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) has canceled all volunteer activities until mid-July, including the plant maintenance work parties at Bowman Bay. SFEG staff still plan on watering and weeding monthly at Bowman Bay after Phase 2 re-opening.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Forage fish surveys have been canceled until further notice due to COVID-19 health concerns. Although social distancing could be practiced while doing the forage fish surveys, many of the survey sites have been closed to public access. Volunteers are waiting for permission to start monitoring again.
- Kids on the Beach: Annie has been doing great work getting KOTB learning opportunities online. The curriculum includes 30 minutes of activities online and 30 minutes of activities offline. There is a mix of videos, games, coloring pages, science journals, and questions and answers. Annie has also developed a special curriculum just for students that are unable to access the internet. Four teachers and over 200 elementary and middle school students are participating from Sedro Woolley, Concrete, and La Conner Schools.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Field work has been temporarily put on hold during the statewide stay at home order due to COVID-19 health concerns. We are currently working with PSRF on a detailed QAPP required by the MRC Grant. Paul gave a presentation on the Pinto Abalone Recovery project at the MRC Symposium on May 7 and will also be presenting the project at the May 29 NWSC meeting.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Paul gave a presentation on Olympia Oyster Restoration as part of the Salish Sea Stewards training. Paul and his son retrieved oyster cultch bags in Fidalgo Bay to monitor oyster recruitment. There appears to be strong settlement from last year. Paul plans to continue collecting and assessing oyster cultch bags over the next couple of months and plans to put out few new bags this year as well as settlement tiles for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: A kelp survey WebEx meeting was held on May 6th to discuss the 2020 survey season and to discuss safety and volunteer liability coverage through the Northwest Straits Foundation. We will need to confirm county guidelines to start kelp monitoring in light of COVID-19. Before volunteers go out on the water they will be asked to review the safety materials from the NWS Foundation including several videos. On the day of the survey, volunteers will need to go through the safety checklist as a group on shore. Volunteers must sign and return a copy of the volunteer agreement form to the NWS Foundation.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: *All*

- FREE online training – June 9: Skagit EcoNet is offering a free online training, June 9, 2020 at 10:00am: “Brain Rules and Best Practices for Presenting Science and Data” presented by Cathy Angell. It will cover best practices that help staff design presentations that are engaging, with content that will stick in the minds of audience members.
- Salish Sea Ecosystem Presentations Available Online:
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement Update: Washington Department of Natural Resources, the City of Anacortes, the Samish Indian Nation, and the Army Corps of Engineers are working together to move forward on plans to replace the Fidalgo Bay Trestle and Causeway. They recently gave a presentation on the project proposal to the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) for consideration of future funding.
- MRC Webex Symposiums- May 21, 3:30pm: The next one will feature Whatcom MRC. They will be highlighting their Oyster Restoration project. 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 two talks scheduled:
 - May 19, at 7pm “Birds of the Ship Harbor Interpretive Preserve” presented by Neil O’hara.
 - June 2 at 7pm “Culture: The Real History of Deception Pass” presented by Jack Hartt.

The meeting adjourned at 9:48 am. The next MRC meeting will be a Webex video-conference call held June 11, 2020



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the April 9, 2020, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Webex Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Tracy Alker, Jay Lind, Pete Haase, Diane Hennebert, Phyllis Bravinder, Rachel Best, Jude Apple, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Kathy Thornburgh, Betsy Stevenson, Kevin Anderson
- **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Todd Mitchell
- **Others Attending:** Jason Morgan, NWSF; Dana Oster, NWSC; Lucas Hart, NWSC; Kimberly Cauvel, SVH; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Darla Gay Smith, FOSB & MRC Alternate

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:** February 13, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written. Skagit MRC's March 12 meeting was cancelled due to COVID 19 health concerns.

Public Comments: No comments

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: *Pete Haase, Lucas Hart, and Dana Oster*

The last NWSC meetings were held February 28 and March 27, 2020 – Webex Conference Calls

- **NWSC/NWSF Retreat Webinar:** The retreat that was originally scheduled for March 26-27 at Padilla Bay was postponed due to COVID-19. Instead, the Commission hosted a Webex Conference call on March 27. Lucas has been working with Hilary Wilkerson, the retreat facilitator, on putting together a two-hour webinar that will focus on one of the topics that would have been covered at the retreat such as: how the Commission and Foundation can support the MRCs, how to improve communications to help raise a higher profile of the MRCs in the community, and filling economic seats on the MRCs. They will also be discussing the impacts of COVID-19 and making adjustments for moving forward in the face of this pandemic. The date of the webinar has not been set yet.
- **MRC Virtual Project Sharing:** The NWSC is working on a plan to host a 1.5 hour Zoom video-conference every two weeks for MRC members to share project information over a seven week period. The goal is to give each MRC an opportunity to highlight one or two of their projects and to share a short overview about how each MRC works followed by a question and answer period. The presenters from each MRC would be identified ahead of time. Dana is seeking feedback from the MRCs to see if this is something they would be interested in. Several Skagit MRC members expressed interest.
- **Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan:** The Plan is close to being finalized. A notification will be sent out to the MRCs when the final Plan is released later this month.
- **MRC Conference:** The Conference date has been changed to November 13-14 at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. **Note: The Friday after the MRC meeting, the NWSC announced that the 2020 MRC Conference has been postponed and will be rescheduled in 2021. This decision was made due to the recent guidelines and concerns regarding public gatherings, and new fundraising challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.*
- **Next Monthly NWSC Meeting:** April 24 (WebEx Conference Call 10am – 12pm).

Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Report: *Jay Lind and Jason Morgan*

- **NWSF New Video Series:** The Foundation recently released a new video series called “Salish Seafresh” that highlights the local region and the work that we do. The first video featured Aslan Brewery and Nerka Sea-Frozen Salmon in Bellingham. The video can be viewed on the Foundation’s website. www.nwstraitsfoundation.org. The Foundation is in the process of planning their next video that will feature Taylor Shellfish and Semiahmoo Resort and are looking for ways to help fund it.

- **Fundraising and Outreach:** The Foundation's fundraising and outreach activities that were planned for this spring have been put on hold due to COVID-19. They are currently working on different ways to stay engaged and connected with their members including live webinar presentations on various projects and weekly highlights featuring volunteers and staff.
- **Nearshore Monitoring:** Most of the nearshore monitoring activities have been put on hold for a while as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The intertidal monitoring training that was originally scheduled for May 3 will be rescheduled for June or early August. The intertidal surveys that were supposed to take place at the end of May at the trestle and Fir Island have been postponed. The intertidal surveys in Fidalgo Bay and Bowman Bay are still planned for August 2nd and 3rd. Jason said that if these social distancing requirements continue through the summer, he could potentially conduct the beach wrack, large woody debris, and forage fish surveys on his own if necessary as long as he can still get access to the sites. This will be the fifth year of monitoring at Bowman Bay so the original plan was to take next year off. However, if most of the monitoring gets postponed this year, it will resume again next year and then be reduced after that. The Foundation currently has funding for nearshore monitoring through March 2021. Jason applied for additional grant funding to continue nearshore monitoring through March 2023. He has also been busy working on the monitoring data and hopes to get a report finished soon.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards:** 26 participants registered for the Salish Sea Stewards training. Classes started March 10th. All of the speakers and topics were top notch and well received including Sasha Horst and Pete Haase who presented an overview of the NWSI and Salish Sea Stewards. The participants were very enthusiastic and asked a lot of great questions. Unfortunately, due to COVID 19 health concerns, the rest of the classes through March were postponed. The remaining classes will be held through Zoom video-conferencing. The field training will take place later this summer after it is determined safe to do so. The first Zoom class was held August 7, with around 34 participants online. Jude facilitated the class which included a quick overview on how to use Zoom and a presentation about marine debris and beached seabird surveys presented by Hillary Burgess with the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team and a presentation about plankton presented by Chandler with Padilla Bay NERR, followed by questions and answers in the chat box. Darla and Rachel thanked Jude, Susan and Chandler for doing such an excellent job putting the training together and for finding alternative solutions to keep it going! Jude announced that they recently hired Sara as the new Coastal Training Coordinator at Padilla Bay. Sara, will be starting in a couple of weeks and will be involved with the Salish Sea Stewards training program. In addition, Rachel Best has been hired as the new Office Coordinator at Padilla Bay and will be starting May, 1, 2020!
- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** The date for this year's event has been set for Saturday, August 29, 2020 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Skagit County's new intern, Aida Miller, is coordinating Fidalgo Bay Day this year. Jay Lind is the MRC Event Chair. The Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Subcommittee held a meeting on March 2 to get an update on task assignments. We are still in need of volunteers to take the lead in planning and coordinating the chowders and kids craft activities. A half page ad was placed in the 2020 Skagit Valley spring/summer Recreation & Activity Guide that will go out in the Anacortes American, Skagit Valley Herald, and at www.goskagit.com in April and run through August. The Shannon Point Touch tank will likely be available for the event this year, but students and/or volunteers will need to be recruited to help with the activity. Diver Laura confirmed that she will host her virtual reality diving experience. Rosie Cayou's no-host salmon BBQ lunch and fry bread has also been confirmed. The Friends of Skagit Beaches will once again be sponsoring and coordinating the Discovery Passport activity. However, we might need to be prepared to make adjustments for social distancing or cancel the event this year depending on the COVID-19 situation.
- **Bowman Bay Restoration:** Beach seining and forage fish surveys at the restoration site have been canceled until further notice due to COVID-19 health concerns. The next plant maintenance party is scheduled for May 29th to coincide with Skagit Water Weeks, but that will likely need to be canceled as well.
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** Forage fish surveys have been canceled until further notice due to COVID-19 health concerns. Although social distancing could be practiced while doing the forage fish surveys, most of the survey sites have been closed to public access.
- **Kids on the Beach:** The classroom visits for Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley and Concrete School Districts were originally scheduled to take place later this month and the beach activities were supposed to take place in May. The planning, logistics, and curriculum are already to go. However, now that the schools have been closed for the remainder of the school year due to COVID-19, Jude said they will need to discuss other options for moving forward

with the Kids on the Beach program. They might be able to shift the programs that were planned for this spring into the fall. They are also looking into options for a virtual classroom program.

- **Pinto Abalone Recovery**: Surveys started up again in February. Paul said he is waiting for an update from Josh Bouma with Puget Sound Restoration Fund to find out more details about the work that has been accomplished. Josh is currently working on a detailed QAPP required by the MRC Grant.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration**: Paul will be starting field work in a couple of weeks to collect cultch bags in Fidalgo Bay to monitor oyster recruitment. It is uncertain whether or not more cultch bags will be put out for next year. It will likely be a minimal sampling year. Paul has been working on updating data from the work that was done last year and has also been working on his upcoming presentations for Skagit MRC's Salish Sea Stewards training through Zoom.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys**: A kelp WebEx meeting was held on Friday March 6th from 9:30am-11:30am to review the MRCs' 2019 kelp monitoring season data. Surveys will likely start again in July 2020.

MRC Administrative Report: *Tracy*

- **MRC Grant Reports Due**: MRC Grant reports are due this Friday including quarterly progress reports, volunteer hours and the 2019 MRC Annual Report. MRC members were also reminded to submit their volunteer hours if they haven't already done so. Tracy thanked the project leads for reviewing and editing the annual report and thanked Betsy for providing a really nice blurb about the MRC's 20th Anniversary.
- **MRC Grant Amendment**: The MRC Grant has been amended to include the Kids on the Beach and Salish Sea Stewards projects and added funding for year two of our ongoing projects through September 30, 2021. However funding and deadlines for year one projects could not be extended. State funding for the year one projects must still be spent by June 30, 2020. We are working on an Interlocal Agreement with Padilla Bay for the Salish Sea Stewards and Kids on the Beach programs.
- **MRC Project Presentations**: MRCs usually present their Grant projects to the Commission in June. Commission staff will be evaluating alternatives for presenting projects if we are unable to have a meeting in-person.
- **NW Straits Foundations Opportunity Funds**: Deadline for applications was originally May 8, 2020, but has been extended to June 15. Grants are competitive, are not guaranteed, and are funded entirely through individual contributions. Currently, a total of \$20,000 is available. All seven MRCs are eligible to apply. The projects must: engage volunteers in the community, specify a clear marine conservation, restoration, and or/ stewardship goal; and identify outcomes and measurable results.
- **Orca Forums**: Caroline is taking the lead on coordination for the Orca forums. She is working on securing the speakers. They were originally considering having the forums in early June before the funding runs out, but will depend on the status of the coronavirus situation.
- **MRC Staff Meeting**: The major topic of discussion was how each of the MRCs are handling COVID 19. All MRCs have put field work and in-person meetings on hold. The MRCs have been conducting meetings remotely with Zoom, Webex, and conference calls. Some County budgets for MRCs have also been reduced and have had hiring freezes to deal with the COVID outbreak. Volunteer liability insurance coverage within each County was also discussed. Kelp kayaking liability coverage from the NWS Foundation will be requiring basic level of safety training for all participants.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: *All*

- **Photography and Art Contest- April 20th (Earth Day)**: Sponsored by Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group. [Http://www.skagitfisheries.org/event/earth-day-photo-contest/](http://www.skagitfisheries.org/event/earth-day-photo-contest/).
- **Marine Biotxin Volunteer Monitoring Program**: Rescheduled- May 7th and 8th (subject to change). For more information contact the Skagit Conservation District.
- **Free Webinar**: "Restoring Native Oysters on North America's West Coast" April 21, 2020 12:00-1:00PM.
- **Herring Spawning Observations**: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife had to suspend herring spawn surveys due to the Governor's orders to stay at home. They ask that if you observe any activity that looks like herring spawning, please take video and pictures, note the location and date, and send them to Adam Lindquist (Adam.Lindquist@dfw.wa.gov).
- **2019 Report on Forage Fish Surveys in Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve** – The report is now complete. The link to the report was sent to MRC members.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 am. The next MRC meeting will be a Webex video-conference call held May 14, 2020



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.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the January 9, 2020, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting, held at the Skagit County Administration Building in Mount Vernon

Attendees:

- **MRC Members Attending:** Tracy Alker, Jay Lind, Pete Haase, Diane Hennebert, Phyllis Bravinder, Rachel Best, Jude Apple, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Kathy Thornburgh, Brian Robson, Betsy Stevenson
- **Others Attending:** Lisa Kaufman (NWSF), Melanie Del Rosario (NWSF), Kevin Anderson (Port of Anacortes, MRC Member Applicant)

Call to Order and Introduction: Jay Lind called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: December 12, 2019, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

Public Comments: No comments

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

The last NWSC meeting was held December 6 (WebEx Conference Call) and reported at the last MRC meeting December 12.

- No updates since the December 6th NWSC meeting.
- Next Monthly NWSC Meeting: January 31 at Camano Island (10am – 3pm).

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

- NWSF Staff Update: Foundation recently hired new Admin Staff as well as a new part-time Nearshore Program Outreach Assistant. The Philanthropist position still remains vacant.
- NWSF Board Meeting: The next Board meeting will be held tomorrow. They will be introduced to the newest Board member from San Juan Island. Jay said his term on the Board will be ending soon.

Shore Friendly Program Update: *Lisa Kaufman, NWSF*

The Shore Friendly program is a collaborative Puget Sound-wide program that provides education, resources, and incentives to shoreline landowners to reduce the number of bulkheads to protect and improve coastal processes, beach habitat conditions, and prey availability for salmon seabirds, and orcas. One of the biggest barriers to overcome in the Shore Friendly program is the perception of shoreline property owners that bulkheads are the best way to protect their property from erosion. The hope is that through this program, shoreline landowners will find that natural shorelines are much more desirable than bulkheads and will choose to maintain natural shorelines and forego hard armor, or consider alternatives to hard armor. Soft shore alternatives are actually less expensive than repairing or replacing bulkheads.

The NWSF has been providing shoreline landowner outreach in partnership with the MRCs and the Friends of the San Juans for several years now. In Skagit County, the NWSF reached over 240 landowners through workshops, provided 51 site visits with technical assistance, completed one armor removal project design, and 200 linear feet of riprap is planned for removal in 2021-2022. The NWSF recently received funding to continue to build on the outreach and incentives of the Shore Friendly program in 2020. Additional funding will be needed to do technical services training for agencies to share information with landowners. Melanie del Rosairo was recently hired as NWSF's new Nearshore Program Outreach Assistant, delrosario@nwstraitsfoundation.org to assist with the outreach effort.

NWSF's 2020 Shore Friendly program will continue to focus on shoreline landowner workshops, technical assistance, site assessments, and planning for: armor removal opportunities if present and address any barriers to removal, erosion/coastal processes, vegetation, drainage, structure (septic) relocations, and assisting with applying for permits, and mini-grants and cost share. Shore friendly books will also be sent to all of the new shoreline property owners. Incentives to reduce armoring will be provided to landowners who are willing and as funding is available. Incentives will include expert on-site guidance, and assistance with permitting and restoration project design. Lisa is looking for help identifying local experts to provide technical assistance and training especially for structure or septic relocations. She is also looking for help in identifying a few trusted community leaders who could help spread the message about the

benefits of the Shore Friendly program. In addition to partnering with the MRCs, NWSF is also working closely with the Swinomish on this phase of the Shore Friendly program to help them with their outreach.

North March Point Beach Restoration Project (Andeavor/Marathon Refinery Grant) Update: *Lisa Kaufman, NWSF*

Jim Johannessen (Coastal Geologic Services) conducted a site evaluation to look at options for restoration and enhancement. Unfortunately, they discovered that all of the native overhanging vegetation had been mowed down! The overhanging vegetation was one of the main reasons for selecting this site. Marathon managers expressed concern about the vegetation and is investigating what happened. Lisa will be presenting to the Marathon environmental team to teach them about the nearshore habitat and forage fish. Project construction could begin as early as 2021 pending funding. Marathon indicated they would like to see this project through and would likely be willing to help fund the actual implementation of the project. The MRC might also want to consider including funding for project in 2021 MRC grant.

Orca Recovery Events: *Lisa Kaufman, NWSF*

The NWSF's grant for Orca Recovery forums just got extended until June 2020. Over 100 people attended the Orca Recovery forum event in Snohomish County in October. They also created bookmarks with a list of 10 things citizens can do to help orcas that were distributed at the event. Lisa asked if the MRC would be interested in hosting a forum in Skagit County in March or April. She would help get the speakers lined up. The MRC would need to reserve the facility and help promote the event. The Committee agreed to let Lisa know if we want to participate sometime next month.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards:** The Salish Sea Stewards training program is being administered in partnership with Padilla Bay this year. Padilla Staff is currently working on the training schedule and confirming speakers using past training curriculums as a guideline. Training will include both classroom style lectures interspersed with field activities. Classes will be held every Tuesday starting March 10th through May 12th from 1pm-5pm at Padilla Bay. The promotional flyer and application have been updated and posted on the MRC website. Padilla Bay is now sending out "The Wave". Information to be posted in "The Wave" should be sent to salishseastewards@gmail.com.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** The date for next year's event has been set for Saturday, August 29, 2020 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Jay said he doesn't mind being the MRC Project Lead for Fidalgo Bay Day (FBD), but he will need a lot of help to make the event happen. A FBD Planning Subcommittee was established at the last MRC meeting including: Jay, Pete, Phyllis, Rachel, Tracy, and Dianne. Kevin also expressed interest in helping with Fidalgo Bay Day. Matt said he would like to help with the beach seining activity as well as be the liaison for the Fidalgo Bay Resort facility and Samish Tribe, etc. The subcommittee will likely meet sometime in February to come up with a list of task assignments and lead volunteers. Jude said he reached out to the Anacortes Green Club about helping with kids activities. Even though the summer is really busy for the Green Club, they said they would be willing to help. Padilla Bay has all of the supplies for fish prints and would be willing to help organize this activity in addition to bringing their own display. Susan Wood said she would be willing to participate in the planning meetings for FBD as we move forward. Tracy will send Jay a list of subcommittee members to schedule a meeting.
- **Bowman Bay Restoration:** The Sub-Award Agreement with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group has been signed. Plant maintenance work will begin in May or June 2020. After four years of post-construction monitoring, evidence of surf smelt and sand lance were found on the beach at Bowman Bay. Surf smelt spawning at that site was last documented in 2003 by WDFW. Beach seining nets also caught large schools of herring!
- **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). In addition to surveys, volunteers are also involved in outreach and frequently get requests to give talks/demonstrations to the public and school groups. Pete said they get a lot of questions about bulkheads and shoreline armoring when they give their forage fish talks and demos, so it would be great to have the Shore Friendly outreach materials on hand. Pete and Jack Middleton recently gave a talk/demonstration on forage fish at the Skagit Eagle Festival in December. They tied the importance of forage fish to eagles. On January 23, a team of volunteers will be helping with the microscope/ forage fish egg activity at the Sedro Woolley STEM night. Pete said they could use extra help! An intertidal monitoring meeting will be held February 12 at Padilla Bay.
- **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. The activities will focus on invasive species. SeaDoc submitted their proposal for the grant the MRC discussed last month. They were able to find five partners including Padilla Bay as part of the Kids on the Beach Program.

- Pinto Abalone Recovery: The Sub-Award Agreement with Puget Sound Restoration Fund just got signed this week. Field work will start up again in February.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: No update. Field work will likely start up again in April 2020.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: No update. Surveys will likely start again in June or July 2020. The Kelp Recovery Plan is out for public comment. You can read the plan and comment online here: http://bit.ly/KelpPlan_1219. If you would like to receive future updates about the Plan, please contact kelp@nwstraits.org.

Northwest Straits Foundation's Boeing Stormwater Grant Project Update: *Diane Hennebert*

The engineering firm identified five potential sites for bioswales in Anacortes that would benefit Fidalgo Bay. The deliverables including descriptions and cost estimates for each site are now complete and will be shared with MRC members. Each site was prioritized in order including: **#1.** Mt. Erie Elementary School Visitor Parking Lot; **#2.** Longview Avenue-Q Avenue to S Avenue; **#3.** Roadside Bioretention – 36th Street near O Avenue; **#4.** Roadside Bioretention- Q Avenue near 34th Street; **#5.** Roadside Bioretention – O Avenue and 35th Street. Additional funding will be needed for construction for all of the proposed projects. The rain garden signs will be delivered next week, but they won't be installed until after construction. Diane said she has also been involved in a Low Impact Development demonstration project at City Hall in Anacortes.

MRC Membership Applicant: *Kevin Anderson*

The Committee voted unanimously by consensus to make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Kevin Anderson to the MRC. Kevin will replace Sarah Tchang as the representative of the Port of Anacortes on the MRC.

MRC Officer Elections: *Jay Lind*

The Committee voted unanimously to appoint Betsy Stevenson as MRC Chair for a second term. Unfortunately, nobody expressed interest in serving as MRC Vice-Chair. Jay Lind offered to continue serving as interim MRC Vice-Chair for just one more month. However, a new MRC Vice-Chair will need to be appointed at the February 13 MRC meeting.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: *All*

- Friends of Skagit Beaches Winter Lecture Series: The first lecture will be held Friday, January 17, 2020, 7PM at the NW Educational Services District Building in Anacortes (1601 R Ave) - "Blue Legacy: Vanishing Glaciers in Washington's National Parks" presented by Dr. Jon Riedel, Park Geologist, North Cascades National Park.
- Storming the Sound- January 30: 9am-4:30pm at Maple Hall in La Conner. Storming the Sound is a conference for environmental educators in the north Puget Sound region to share their interest and expertise. They are currently seeking presenters. The proposal deadline is January 7. There is a registration fee of \$10. You can register online through Eventbrite. For more information go to: <http://www.pacname.org/regional-chapters/washington/storming-the-sound/#tab-id-1>.
- Skagit EcoNet Meeting: January 21: 2pm-4pm at Padilla Bay.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 am. The next MRC meeting will be held February 13, 2020 at the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort in Anacortes