



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the June 10, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) MS Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Paul Dinnel, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Jude Apple, Darla Gay Smith, Catey Ritchie, Diane Hennebert
- **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Kevin Anderson, Matt Castle, Jay Lind
- **Others in Attendance:** Adam Airolidi, SFEG; Jessica Huybregts, ECY

Call to Order and Introduction: Betsy Stevenson called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions. Due to technical difficulties, the meeting was switched from GoToMeeting to Microsoft Teams.

- **Approval of Minutes:** May 13, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus, with one minor edit to the Kelp Survey update.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

Vessel Sewage No Discharge Zone (NDZ) / Pumpout Don't Dumpout Outreach Campaign: Jessica Huybregts

Vessel Sewage No Discharge Zone: The Washington State Department of Ecology established a vessel sewage No Discharge Zone (NDZ) for Puget Sound and certain adjoining waters around three years ago to help protect public health, water quality, and sensitive aquatic resources. The NDZ rule is enforceable and prohibits sewage from being discharged from all boats within the designated body of water, whether its treated or not. The NDZ area includes all of Puget Sound, Lake Union, Lake Washington, the Northwest Straits region, and the area east of New Dungeness Lighthouse and all the way up to the Canadian border. Vessel sewage must be stored or disposed of at an onshore or mobile pumpout facility or discharged in the open ocean beyond three miles from shore.



Pumpout Don't Dumpout Outreach Campaign: Ecology's Pumpout Don't Dumpout Outreach Campaign was launched in May – June 2021, in partnership with the Washington State Parks Clean Vessel Act Grant Program, Washington Sea Grant, Pumpout Washington, and Clean Marina Washington. The social marketing study and outreach campaign was funded by a National Estuary Program (NEP) grant. The goal is to remind boaters that Puget Sound is a [No Discharge Zone](#) and encourage everyone to properly dispose of their boat sewage at pumpouts. Outreach materials and strategies for getting the message out include: magazine advertisements, metal signage to place at boat launches, social media posts, boating outreach events, a free pumpout navigation app that shows where the closest pumpout facility or restroom is, and [Sam the Clam video](#). MRC members and other organizations can help spread the word:

- Snap a photo of yourself pumping out and post it to social media by tagging **@EcologyWA** with the hashtags **#PumpoutWA** and **#PugetSoundNoDischargeZone**. Or email your pictures to justine.asohmbom@ecy.wa.gov
- Follow and join the conversation on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and share links.
- Get on social media with the [template kit](#).
- Get free [signs](#) for your marina or boat launches. Send a photo of your sign when it's up!

Dye Tab Pilot Program: Ecology also plans to launch a new voluntary dye tab pilot program in the fall of 2021 to encourage marina managers and vessel owners to use dye tabs to identify vessel sewage system leaks. The dye tabs will be provided free of charge.

Enforcement Plan: Illegal sewage dumping, spills and leaks can be reported online through the statewide Environmental Incident Report Form (ERTS), or email nwroerts@ecy.wa.gov, or call 206-594-0000. If caught illegally dumping vessel sewage, Ecology will provide boater education for the first offense. For the second offense, Ecology will provide a warning letter and additional boater education. If it happens a third time, there will be a Notice of Violation with a monetary penalty. The NDZ rule will be included in the statewide boater education manual and training program. The Coast Guard will inspect vessel sewage valves to make sure they are closed and aren't leaking. Ecology will also assist Counties in creating a County Ordinance for marine sewage management, provide training for different agencies, and provide online presentations to help with compliance of the NDZ rule.

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: *Diane Hennebert*

The last NWSC meeting was held April 30, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm). Meeting highlights were shared with MRC members in the meeting packet email.

- MRC presentations: Island and Snohomish MRCs gave a presentation on the Joint Port Susan Stewardship Area Plan. San Juan MRC gave a presentation on the Derelict Vessel Prevention Program and No-Anchor Zone Monitoring projects.
- State of the Salish Sea Report Now Available: https://cedar.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=salish_pubs
- Crabber outreach extended to ferries: This year the Northwest Straits Foundation will be adding crabber outreach and education to the WA Ferry system. 25,000 rack cards will be distributed on the ferries and a 30 second video will be cycled through on screens located on all ferries and ferry terminals.
- Virtual Crabbing Workshop- June 30th, 6pm -7pm: Hosted by the Northwest Straits Foundation. The flyer with registration information is on the [Foundation's website](#) and is also posted on the Skagit MRC website and the Salish Sea Stewards Facebook page and went out in The WAVE, the Salish Sea Stewards electronic news bulletin.
- NWSF New Shore Friendly Video: <https://youtu.be/BAZK0FV88tA> "Restoring the Connection between Land and Water" focuses on marine ecosystems and impacts of shoreline armoring, featuring Bowman Bay.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom) June 25, 2021: All MRC members are welcome to attend. Several MRCs will be presenting project proposals. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards- Darla Gay Smith: 38 participants completed the Salish Sea Stewards "virtual" training program on June 3. There are now 304 Salish Sea Stewards that have successfully completed the training program since 2014. Darla Gay gave kudos to Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve staff, particularly Jude Apple and Sara Brostrom, for administering the virtual classroom portion of the program with all the challenges of 2020-2021. This year's course ran an extended 4 months. The remaining field training portion will be accomplished by project sponsors for specific tasks. Graduation packets were distributed to class participants including a t-shirt, name badge, congrats letter, and a Certificate of Completion. Citizen Science volunteer opportunities are slowly starting to open back up again but are mostly limited to a core of pre-trained volunteers. The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee proudly welcomes two new 2021 Salish Sea Stewards graduates to join the Committee which will bring the total to 13 members. The Committee will start brainstorming to find funding for a part-time paid coordinator. Lynne thanked Darla Gay for doing such a wonderful job as Project Lead for the Salish Sea Stewards and keeping the AC team on task. Lynne also gave kudos to Chandler for updating and maintaining Volgistics to make it easier for volunteers to post hours and to make it more accurate in tracking volunteer hours.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The survey teams are up and running and have scheduled surveys. The kelp beds that are surveyed in Skagit County include: Shannon Point, Biz Point, and Coffin Rocks. The Coffin Rocks survey team conducted their first survey this week and has another one scheduled in July and August. The Shannon Point survey team is planning to survey tomorrow, June 11, but might have to be postponed due to a small craft advisory. Lynne is still waiting to get an update from the Biz Point survey team. A reconnaissance survey will be conducted at the Hope Island kelp bed as a potential new survey site. Betsy thanked Lynne for stepping in as Project Lead and participating in the surveys.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue at our 3 MRC restoration sites and our 3 Forage Fish Index sites as well as the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve. Surf smelt spawning activity is picking up rapidly, especially in Fidalgo Bay. On May 24th the forage fish survey crew hosted a small group of kids from a private school in Bellingham. The volunteers brought the forage fish interpretive stand and the kids got to participate in the forage fish surveys and looked at eggs under microscopes. Later this month, a few kids from the Salish Sea School will be doing something similar. Eventually, the new class of Salish Sea Stewards will get to have an orientation on forage fish surveys out on the beach, after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Jude said he will be able to provide a good summary of the spring KOTB program next month. Some of the KOTB presentations from Conway 8th graders were put together on Prezi: <https://prezi.com/view/RYhlWJzxtgtYBplmDyl/>. A few of the loom videos from Concrete 7th/8th graders were also posted: [Watch Video Alex J. KOB Template - Google Slides - Watch Video Kelsey x Kelsey KOB Template - Google Slides - Watch Video](#). La Conner's Swinomish 'Between Two Worlds' 9th grade (30 students) recently completed the program in June. It was a modified/shortened version. The La Conner Weekly News recently wrote an article about the collaboration between Kids on the Beach and Between Two Worlds.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery – Paul Dinnel: The Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) and WDFW finished up monitoring and outplants of 10,000 juvenile abalone at 10 different restoration sites in the San Juan Archipelago, including 4,000 abalone at sites in Skagit County waters. That is twice the number of abalone they had planned on outplanting. PSRF now has around 50,000 time-lapse images that they will be analyzing for predation. They are also looking at the oceanographic data collected from the sensor arrays that were deployed at six abalone restoration sites. The data collected includes temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, light intensity, and sedimentation. They will have one more field session to collect additional oceanography data this summer.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: It has been a very busy month with native oyster restoration. Paul and his son collected bags of shell that were distributed in Fidalgo Bay to monitor last year's oyster settlement. So far last year's oyster settlement appears to be moderate. It's not great, but good enough to keep the oyster population going. Paul said it's typical to have some good years and others that aren't so good. They also replaced the bags of shell with new bags to monitor this year's oyster settlement. Paul and his son also deployed stacks of tile that they will be monitoring at two-week intervals throughout the summer. Paul went up to Chuckanut Bay to help with Whatcom MRC's native oyster restoration project and put out stacks of tile for monitoring oyster settlement. Paul is also working with the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to try to restore the native oyster population in the southern channels of Padilla Bay. They found a good location that looks very promising for oyster restoration. Around 200 bags of shell were purchased from the former Blau Oyster Company which were loaded on to the County dump truck by volunteers and hauled to a farm on south Padilla Bay for the oyster restoration project. 50 shell bags will be deployed in Fidalgo Bay to collect oyster seed to outplant in Padilla Bay next spring. Brian Robson with Shell Puget Sound Refinery gave permission to use the RV Park to access the tide flats to put the bags of shell. Jude thanked Paul for coordinating the project.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Tracy Alker: The MRC decided to cancel Fidalgo Bay Day this year due to the pandemic. The Fidalgo Bay Day grant funding will most likely be used to upgrade the MRC booth for future outreach events. The MRC is also considering doing a much smaller scale outreach event later this summer but will need to play it by ear. The Fidalgo Bay Resort is also not allowing any events at their facility this year so it would have to be held at a different location.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Lynne is the new MRC Project Lead for Bowman Bay and will be directly involved in maintaining the site. Lynne and Tracy visited the restoration site with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement staff recently to try to come up with a plan for maintaining the riparian vegetation at the site this year. Lynne and Adam Airolidi, the new Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Riparian Restoration staff person, reviewed the project goals, design plan, the MRC grant agreement, and previous scopes of work for the restoration project to get up to speed. Adam developed a plant maintenance plan for 2021 with the MRC grant funding that is available for Bowman Bay. A new sub-award agreement between the County and SFEG will need to be drafted for plant maintenance work through September 30, 2021.

Administrative Update: *Tracy Alker*

- 2021 – 2023 MRC Grant Application: The application was finalized and submitted on June 8th and is currently being reviewed by the Northwest Strait Technical Advisory Committee. Tracy thanked the MRC Project Leads for helping with the project proposals. The MRC will likely get approved for an additional \$8,000 for year 1. The Committee will need to decide where those funds should go.
- MRC Presentation- June 8th: Tracy gave a presentation to the Board of County Commissioners on June 8th. She provided a brief history of the NWSI, an overview of the MRC, and 2020 project highlights. The presentation was well received with lots of positive feedback and great questions. The Commissioners seemed impressed by the work. The presentation can be viewed on Skagit 21.
- County staff schedule update: The County Natural Resources Division staff will be transitioning back to the office on a hybrid schedule, two days a week starting in July. Tracy will be working in the office Tuesdays and Thursdays and working remotely Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Tracy asked when the MRC might be interested in meeting in person again. The Committee decided to play it by ear.
- Crabber Outreach: Tracy asked if there was any interest from the MRC to conduct crabber outreach at the public boat launches during the opening weekend of crabbing season this year. Darla Gay said she has performed crabber outreach in the past and is willing to take the lead this year because she feels that crabber outreach is very important. Darla will try to recruit volunteers to help with crabber outreach through the Salish Sea Stewards electronic news bulletin, The WAVE.

Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: *All*

- No announcements.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held July 8, 2021