



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the September 9, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Betsy Stevenson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson, Jodi Bluhm, Diane Hennebert, Sara Brostrom (Jude Apple's Alternate), Jay Lind
- **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Kari Odden, Pete Haase, Paul Dinnel, Jude Apple, Catey Ritchie, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Annie England, PBNERR; Sasha Horst, NWSC; Aundrea McBride, Skagit

**Call to Order and Introduction:** Betsy Stevenson called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** August 12, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

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

*The last NWSC meeting was held August 27, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm). 20-25 attendees. Meeting highlights were shared with MRC members in the meeting packet email.*

- **NWSC Meeting Introduction:** Clallam County Commissioner, Mark Ozias, gave an introduction. He was very knowledgeable and complimentary of the MRCs.
- **Shoreline Maser Program Learning Group:** Barbara Bennett of Island MRC is coordinating a Shoreline Master Program (SMP) learning group for anyone interested in being involved in the next round of SMP updates. The group will meet in September.
- **Meeting with Senator Patty Murray- Sept 7:** Sen. Patty Murray met with Commission Staff at Padilla Bay to discuss the reauthorization effort of the Northwest Straits Initiative. The reauthorization could mean a boost of more consistent funding for the MRCs.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Retreat (via Zoom) September 23 (1:30-3:30pm) and September 24 (10am-1pm):** The agenda will be available soon. There will be no regular Commission meeting in September.
- **MRC Conference via Zoom- Nov 18, 2021 (3:30pm):** The conference will be a virtual series this year and the theme is Climate Change Action at the Local Level. More details coming soon. MRC members are encouraged to attend at least one virtual session.
- **Caroline Gibson Memorial:** A memorial for Caroline Gibson will be held October 24, 2021 (4-7pm) at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Masks and covid vaccinations will be required for everyone's safety. All are invited to attend and celebrate Caroline's wonderful life and legacy.

### Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith:** The Stewards Advisory Committee did not meet in August because they decided to take a month-break before starting to plan for the 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program. Training will likely be a hybrid format. The Committee is working on a General SSS Planning Timetable template as well as a detailed 2022 Program Planning Timetable. There are currently 304 Trained Salish Sea Stewards on our Master List. The Committee is mindful of keeping the Trained SSS volunteers informed & active! A picnic was originally scheduled for Saturday August 28, 2021 at Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (1 - 3pm). However, due to the rising number of COVID cases, the SSS Advisory Committee decided to cancel the picnic. Instead, the Committee and Padilla Bay are considering hosting a virtual gathering this fall with an educational component.

- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: There are three kelp bed locations that are currently being surveyed by MRC volunteers including: Shannon Point (2 kelp beds east and west), Biz Point, and Coffin Rocks. Kimberly Cauvel, Environmental Reporter with the Skagit Valley Herald, recently wrote an excellent article about the kayak kelp surveys after participating in a survey with volunteers at Coffin Rocks on August 5. Here is the [link to the article](#). The article sparked some interest from folks wanting to get involved including an individual who is an experienced kayaker with a data analytics background. He volunteered to help analyze the kelp data. Dana and Allie presented to the Hole in the Wall Kayak Club at their meeting on September 8<sup>th</sup>. Several club members expressed interest in participating in the surveys next year and possibly taking the lead in surveying new sites in Skagit County. Surveys are wrapping up for the season. The Coffin Rocks survey team just finished up their last survey on September 4<sup>th</sup>. On August 20<sup>th</sup>, volunteers surveyed the two kelp beds at Shannon Point and their last survey of the season is scheduled for September 17<sup>th</sup>. The Biz Point survey crew surveyed on August 26<sup>th</sup> and their last survey of the season is scheduled for September 16<sup>th</sup>. They observed several sea stars on the rocks during their survey. All kelp beds at all three locations surveyed appear to be very dense and healthy. Lots of new growth this year.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The first maintenance event was held July 19<sup>th</sup> and the second plant maintenance event was held August 17<sup>th</sup> to coincide with the nearshore monitoring at the Bowman Bay nearshore restoration site and on September 8<sup>th</sup>. On August 17<sup>th</sup>, 400 gallons of water from the County water truck was used to water the plants at the site. 31 volunteers, including students from the Salish Sea School, participated in small groups at the nearshore restoration event at Bowman Bay. Lisa Kaufman presented an overview of the restoration project to the volunteers and public onlookers. Volunteer activities included 2 hours of weeding (very few weeds to pull) and mulching with compost over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the shoreline restoration area, picking up trash, forage fish spawning surveys, and beach seining. The plants are looking a little dry and sun damaged but hanging in there. The watering has helped a lot. Soil testing at the restoration site indicated a lack of nitrogen so a compost mixture of cow manure and mulch was applied to add nitrogen back into the soil and to help retain moisture around the plants. On September 8<sup>th</sup>, the SFEG AmeriCorps crew planted 500 dune grasses in just one and a half hours! The County water truck will be used to water the plants tomorrow. Tracy and Lynne will attend the final walk through with SFEG staff and the last plant maintenance event of the season with Shell Refinery staff on September 24.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue with good spawning results. The new Salish Sea Stewards class of 2021 will get a chance to attend field training on September 8 and 18 in small groups of 5 or so members each day for lessons and experience doing forage fish surveys at the Fidalgo Bay RV Park. There was a nice article in the Anacortes American about the forage fish surveys. Pete and Kevin were both quoted in the article. Pete thanked Kevin for arranging the interview.
- Kids on the Beach – Annie England: We have the tools and materials we need to transition from an in-person program to a hybrid or virtual learning format as needed. School just started, so nothing is set in stone yet. Annie is still waiting on a confirmation from the teachers. Ideally, Annie would like to provide a fall program that focuses on forage fish since forage fish eggs are more plentiful in the fall so kids are more likely to find them. But the program will likely be postponed until spring because things will hopefully be opening up more for in-person learning and field trips. There are several ideas being tossed around for the spring program including: Batellaria, eelgrass, beach seining, etc.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: No updates.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinnel: No updates. The 2021 Annual Pinto Abalone Report will be finalized by the end of September.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Tracy Alker: The MRC Grant funds for Fidalgo Bay Day will be used to update our MRC display booth. Tracy drafted a concept design for the 8' pop-up- curved exhibit booth that was reviewed by Betsy, Pete, and Lynne. The text is very minimal with several colorful photos to help highlight the MRC and the work we do without being too project specific including: Restoration, Protection, Monitoring, Education/Outreach, Community Science, and Stewardship. The concept design was also shared with MRC members at the MRC meeting. Tracy asked for feedback on the text and photos used. Revisions and final design will be made based on feedback received.

**2021 - 2023 MRC Grant:** *Tracy Alker*

The Committee reviewed the draft 2021-2023 MRC Grant Agreement prior to the MRC meeting. Each MRC will be awarded an additional \$8,000 for year one (Oct 1, 2021 - Sept 30, 2022) in the new MRC Grant Agreement. Tracy proposed that most of the additional funds be allocated towards the Bowman Bay Restoration project under a sub-award agreement with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group. The Bowman Bay restoration site needs additional shrubs and trees planted this fall/winter to fill in ground cover and help provide some protection to the other plants that are struggling. In addition to monthly weeding, compost should also be applied and the watering should be increased to twice a month next summer. The Committee voted by consensus in favor of allocating \$7,383 of the funds towards the Bowman Bay Restoration and the remaining \$617 allocated towards MRC Operations.

**Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:** *All*

No announcements.

**The meeting adjourned at 9:40am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held October 14, 2021**

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