



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **March 10, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Jodi Bluhm (Alternate for Matt Castle), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Jude Apple, Kari Odden, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Paul Dinnel
- **Others in Attendance:** Kristin Murray, SFEG; Leah Robison, NWSC; Jason Morgan, NWSF; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Jeff Whitty, NWSC

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** February 10, 2022, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held February 25 via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were shared with the MRC.

- **NWSI/MRC Conference- Nov 18-19, 2022:** A tentative in-person conference is scheduled for Nov 18-19, 2022, at Maple Hall in La Conner. A decision is pending public health recommendations.
- **REEF Volunteer Fish Survey Project:** Presented by Christy Pattengil-Semmens. The REEF Volunteer Fish Survey Project is a citizen science opportunity for those who dive or snorkel. For more information: <https://www.reef.org/what-reef>.
- **Puget Sound Day on the Hill:** Still in planning. No dates have been set.
- **Maritime WA National Heritage Area:** A draft management plan for this area has been released and is open for public comment. <https://preservewa.org/programs/maritime-national-heritage-area/mw-nha-get-involved/>.
- **Mt. Erie Rain Garden:** Excavation has begun to install the new rain garden at Mt. Erie Elementary School in Anacortes. This is a NWSF grant funding project.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- March 25 (10:00am-12:00pm):** This meeting will include a presentation from Dr. Drew Harvell. All MRC members are welcome to attend. 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:** The 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program started March 1 – May 24, 2022. Classes are being held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. 26 people are registered to take the in-person training. SSS training participants are no longer required to wear masks and we are no longer restricted by the occupancy limit moving forward. 4 people who were on the waiting list will now be able to attend if interested. The [2022 Training Schedule](#) is available on the Skagit MRC website. Padilla Bay staff are working to resolve the audio accessibility technology issues for our class participants who are hard of hearing. The next SSS Advisory Committee meeting will be held March 28th. The Advisory Committee drafted a proposed statement of work for the SSS Part-Time Volunteer Coordinator proposal for the MRC's consideration for the upcoming congressional funding. The Part Time Coordinator would be focused solely on supporting our 300+ alumni Salish Sea Stewards volunteers, keeping the entire volunteer group informed and active. The Advisory Committee finalized the SSS Program Facebook page "About Section".

- Fidalgo Bay Day- Darla Gay Smith: A planning meeting will be held in April. Darla will contact the Fidalgo Bay Resort after the MRC meeting to see what dates are available to reserve the facility in August or early September. We will also be looking into alternative locations to host the event just in case we are unable to have it at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Pete will look at the tides to try to find a few dates that will work for the beach seining demonstration. Darla will also reach out to the Shannon Point Marine Center to see what dates the touch tank might be available. It is still uncertain whether the Skagit River Salmon Festival is happening this year. In the past we've always tried to pick a date that doesn't compete with that event. As soon as we pick a date and location, we will be reaching out to past participating organizations to gauge their interest and comfort level in participating in-person.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: At last month's Kelp workshop, the Department of Natural Resources indicated they were interested in expanding the parameters of kelp surveys to include more kelp beds. The kelp data will be used as a vital sign at the Puget Sound Partnership. There has been a lot of interest from volunteers to help with the surveys. Some of the experienced lead kayakers are discussing the possibility of providing training for volunteers who want to become leads to survey new kelp beds. The MRC Kayak Kelp Survey season kick off meeting will take place this spring where they will talk more about the survey parameters and adding more kelp beds. Surveys won't start again until June 2022.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Parts of the beach area are still closed to protect a new northern elephant seal pup. The mother has already left the area. The pup is hunting on its own now and getting fatter but isn't quite ready to head out to the ocean on yet. All planting and plant maintenance activities at Bowman Bay is temporarily put on hold until the elephant seal pup is gone.
 - Bowman Bay Pocket Beach Restoration Letter of Endorsement: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) is seeking funding for a feasibility study/design to restore the pocket estuary and replace the Pass Lake culvert to improve flushing and has requested a Letter of Endorsement for their grant proposal from the Skagit MRC. A Letter of Endorsement is required as part of the grant application. The SFEG drafted the letter that was shared with the MRC. The Committee was asked to vote via email on whether they were in support of submitting the Letter of Acknowledgement. However, we did not receive enough votes for a consensus in time for the March 1, 2022, deadline for the first grant application. Several MRC members expressed concerns about the project proposal and letter, particularly with regards to the preliminary design portion of the project. It was pointed out that applying for both feasibility and design could be taking money away from other projects if the project isn't feasible. With so many unknowns about the feasibility, it might be better to just apply for the feasibility study first and not include design. On the other hand, SFEG's proposal is for a small amount of around \$70k, and the grant application period was extended due to a lack of applications. Kristin said she would check to see if she can scale the project back by dropping the design portion of the project from her grant application to avoid potentially tying up funds. There were also questions about benefits to salmon and potential water quality impacts with opening Pass Lake to Bowman Bay. Kristin said for now, SFEG's proposal is just focusing on the marsh restoration at Bowman Bay and not replacing the culvert at Pass Lake. The consensus of the Committee was to revise the Letter of Endorsement to only include the Feasibility Study, not the preliminary design. Catey volunteered to draft a new letter with input from Kari and Jude and will send it to the rest of the Committee for review and approval. The final ESRP grant is due May 11, 2022.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Monthly forage fish surveys continue. In Fidalgo Bay and around March's Point it seems like there has been more surf smelt spawning and egg viability than we've seen in the past this time of year.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase: The intern Trevor is a college graduate who is mentoring a 7th grader from Shoreline, Julia, to collect and analyze forage fish data at several locations along March's Point. Field work occurs monthly between Feb-October. Last month they observed lots of newly hatched surf smelt swimming around under the microscope. Julia was able to get some great video of the newly hatched surf smelt swimming around with her smart phone. Trevor and Julia will present results to the MRC in January 2023.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Four schools are participating in the spring KOTB program this year with 360 students: Sedro-Wooley, Conway, Concrete, and Anacortes middle schools. The level of involvement ranges from fully virtual to in-person.
 - Anacortes is completely virtual.
 - Sedro Woolley will be in-person and will be going on a field trip to Padilla Bay on March 29th, 30th & 31st 11am-2:00 pm.

- Conway is set to have two classes go on a field trip to Fidalgo Bay on April 13th, 10am-1:30 pm.
- Concrete will be a mix of virtual and in-person. The in-person portion will include an in-class visit with forage fish eggs. The other will be a field trip to Fidalgo Bay on April 27th, 10:30-1:30pm.
- La Conner Middle School and the Swinomish's Between Two Worlds aren't interested in participating this year.

The program will not host a research symposium on site, but Annie is encouraging students to create virtual presentations. We plan to have the symposium next year. Media coverage - Kimberly Cauvel is planning on coming to one of the Sedro-Woolley days and one of the Concrete days. We have a total 13 volunteers signed up to assist with our In-Person field days. No plans for the Fall KOTB program yet. Annie will reach out to teachers in the next few months.

- **Pinto Abalone Restoration- *Paul Dinne!*** Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF), WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Shannon Point divers have been conducting routine annual surveys of the various seeding plots during the last 3 weeks, including 4 Skagit County sites. Those sites continue to be in good shape population wise. This month the dive team will be assessing the possibility of adding a few new sites for seeding, including one or two in Skagit waters. Or they could decide not to add new sites and continue to oversee some of the already established sites (4 Skagit sites were overseeded in 2021). PSRF has about 9,000 juvenile abalone ready to be deployed in the next few months.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration – *Paul Dinne!*** Field work will start up again in April or May 2022 with abbreviated monitoring again this year. More intensive monitoring is planned in 2023 if federal appropriations funding is approved. Paul will present on the native oyster restoration project as part of the 2022 Salish Sea Stewards training program on March 29.
- **Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- *Diane Hennebert!*** It is anticipated that the QAPP will be completed in late March. Sampling will take place after the first flush in the fall of 2022 (late September-October).

MRC Project Proposal Update and Retreat Discussion: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

It is anticipated that each MRC will receive an additional \$200k in federal appropriations funding by March or April 2022, depending on Congress. The funding is just a one-time deal for MRC projects that are shovel ready and can be completed by the end of 2023. Lynne developed a new, easy to follow, three-pronged approach for MRC members to evaluate and prioritize MRC projects.

STEP 1: STEP 1 is now complete! Project Leads were contacted by the Planning Team to provide initial project info for the 20 projects on the MRC's wish list. After completing the initial screening process following a set of criteria, it was determined that 6 of those projects are a "No Go" at this time, 2 projects were dropped because they did not have an MRC Project Lead (*Pre-Season Crabber Outreach and Educational Videos*), and 11 projects are a "Go" and have moved on to STEP 2.

<u>Project</u>	<u>MRC Lead/s</u>
1. Salish Sea Stewards Part-Time Coordinator	<i>Jude and Darla</i>
2. Shoreline Landowner Workshops	<i>Betsy</i>
3. Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance	<i>Lynne</i>
4. Olympia Oyster Monitoring	<i>Paul</i>
5. Derelict Crab Pot Removal in Samish Bay	<i>Jay and Matt</i>
6. No Anchor Zone/Eelgrass Protection	<i>Kevin</i>
7. School Rain Gardens	<i>Diane</i>
8. Clayton Beach Restoration	<i>Paul</i>
9. Samish Island Conserve Interp Sign	<i>Kari</i>
10. FB Trestle Replacement Outreach	<i>Pete</i>
11. Green Crab Removal/Outreach	<i>Lynne</i>

STEP 2: MRC Project Leads were asked to complete the Project Info forms from the NWSC's Request for Proposals for each of their projects prior to the March 10 MRC meeting. The Project Info Packet and Evaluation Forms will be emailed to the MRC members after the meeting and will also be available to download from the Google Drive folder.

- **MRC Action Item:** All MRC members are asked to complete the Project Evaluation Forms and email them to Lynne (lwenberg9@gmail.com) or Tracy (tracya@co.skagit.wa.us) or upload them to the Google Drive folder by **Monday**,

April 11, 2022. The project ranking and scoring will be kept confidential. Project leads should abstain from rating their own projects.

STEP 3: A Project Planning Retreat will be held in-person at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center on **Wednesday, April 13, 9:00am-11:00am**. The retreat will be facilitated by NWSC staff (Lucas and Allie). The purpose of the retreat is to review the project evaluation/ranking results and different funding scenarios, discuss the risks and benefits of each scenario, provide clarifying information as required, vote on preferred scenario, and authorize the final list of MRC projects/budget to proceed.

Skagit Water Weeks: *Tracy Alker*

Skagit MRC has been invited to participate in the 6th Annual Skagit Water Weeks, a month -long celebration of events that highlight the value of our local water resources during the month of May. The events can be live or virtual. The application deadline is March 18th. This would be a great opportunity to do some outreach for European Green Crabs, Recreational Crabber Outreach, and Shoreline Landowner Outreach, in partnership with the NWSC and NWSF. Below are some ideas that are being discussed.

European Green Crab Outreach: This outreach event would be in partnership with the Northwest Straits Commission staff, Leah and Jeff. Lynne volunteered to help plan the events as the Skagit MRC Project Lead:

- Social Media Participation- using #SkagitWaterWeeks on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook: The NWSC's WCC Crew members helping with the green crab trapping and removal effort in Samish Bay would each create a social media post related to something they learned while working on the green crab project. They would post with images and facts about green crabs and local water bodies.
- Virtual Education for Adults (video or live):
 - Partner with NWSC to create a short video about European green crab ID and reporting, molt hunts as you walk the shoreline, etc. that could be posted to Facebook and shared on the water weeks page.
 - Padilla Bay Aquarium/Touch Tank Tour. We could piggyback on Padilla Bay's touch tank tour event and set up a green crab outreach booth with a live green crab specimen (if possible), or several molts.
- European Green Crab Webpage: We could create a European Green Crab webpage on the Skagit MRC website with links to tools and resources.

Shore Friendly Outreach: This outreach event would be in partnership with Lisa Kaufman - Northwest Straits Foundation, and Catey Ritchie with the Swinomish Shore Friendly programs. Betsy volunteered to help plan the events as the Skagit MRC Project Lead:

- Shoreline Landowner Workshop (virtual, video, or in-person): either a general coastal processes version with a beach walk or a vegetation workshop.
- Shore Friendly Webpage: We could create a Shore Friendly webpage on the Skagit MRC website with links to tools and resources and videos for Shoreline Landowners.
- Shore Friendly Living Video Series: Share the links on the Skagit MRC webpage and place emphasis on site visits and community beach walks and designate dates ahead of time for specific areas around the shoreline.

Crabber Outreach: This outreach event would be in partnership with Jason Morgan- Northwest Straits Foundation. Darla volunteered to help plan the outreach events as the Skagit MRC Project Lead:

- Crabber Outreach Webpage: We could create a Crabber Outreach webpage on the Skagit MRC website with links to tools and resources and videos for recreational crabbers. We would share links to educational videos and/or past workshops. We can highlight one specific video each week during the entire month of May for Skagit Water Weeks.
- Crabber Outreach Rack Cards: We could distribute outreach rack cards to local businesses that sell crabbing licenses and equipment and list the locations where folks can get the outreach materials on the MRC website.
- Crabber Outreach Workshop: Jason plans on doing another virtual crabber outreach workshop in late June/early July but could do an in-person one with more of a Skagit County focus.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- **Clayton Beach Site Visit- March 10:** The NWSF scheduled a site visit with the ESRP grant team on Thursday, March 10th from 2:30 to 3:30pm. The tide should be around a +2 so it will be a great opportunity to see the armor, pilings,

and edge of the eelgrass bed. The purpose of this site visit is for the ESRP group to determine if the NWSF can move to the full proposal and provide assistance and input to make the application stronger. The full proposal isn't due until early June and there will be another virtual site visit with the technical review team after it is submitted. MRC members are welcome to attend.

- **DNR Derelict Vessel Removal Program Presentation- March 10:** On March 10th at 1:00 the DNR Derelict Vessel Removal Program Manager, Troy Wood, will be giving a virtual Teams presentation about their removal program. This presentation is the result of Clallam MRC's recent update to their County Commissioners who expressed interest in providing resources toward vessel removal in their county. DNR can reimburse counties, cities and ports up to 90% of vessel removal costs. However, House Bill 1700 and Senate Bill 5598 aim to increase their budget. the additional 10% of vessel removal costs can be met through in-kind support.
- **Northwest Straits Initiative 101 Virtual Presentation- March 17, 2022, 3:30-5:00pm.** Northwest Straits Commission Director Lucas Hart and Northwest Straits Foundation Director Don Hunger will give an introduction to the Northwest Straits Initiative. Learn what the Initiative is, the roles and responsibilities of the Commission, Foundation and MRCs, and ask questions to Initiative leadership and seasoned MRC members. This informal event is a great refresher for veteran members, and an opportunity to ask burning questions!
- **Reef Check Kelp Forest Monitoring Training Course-** The Reef Check Kelp Forest Monitoring Training course is designed to provide participants with the skills and experience to complete the Reef Check Kelp Forest Monitoring survey protocol accurately. In addition to direct survey methods, the training will address safe diving practices, techniques of research diving, sampling design and theory, general marine ecology including species identification and interactions, and the importance of monitoring to meet marine management needs. Trainings include a combination of online in-person training, recorded lectures and at-home work, and in-person ocean field sessions. Following completion of the training, all participants will have the skills necessary to complete the training examination allowing them to collect data that will be eligible to obtain a Reef Check Kelp Forest Monitoring Specialty Certification (NAUI). Folks can learn more (and register) [here](#). And the Reef Check team has scholarships available that they are keen to use, so folks should ask for support. I've also attached a flyer that Reef Check created for the program.

The meeting adjourned at 10:51am. The MRC Project Planning retreat will be held April 13, 2022, at Padilla Bay, instead of the regular monthly MRC meeting that was originally scheduled for April 14, 2022. The April 14th MRC meeting has been canceled.