



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **May 12, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Matt Castle, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Jude Apple, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Paul Dinnel, Kevin Anderson
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Kari Odden, Pete Haase, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Amy Wilcox, NWSF; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Sasha Horst, NWSC

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** March 10, 2022, MRC meeting minutes and April 13, 2022, MRC Project Planning Retreat Summary were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** Aundrea McBride announced there are two new nearshore projects coming through the Skagit Watershed Council's grant cycle: Similk Bay Nearshore Restoration near the Swinomish Golf Course, and the Bowman Bay Feasibility Study for the Pocket Estuary Restoration project.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held April 22 via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.

- **MRC Grant Amendments:** Half of the state funds under the current MRC grant must now be spent by June 30, 2022, which will require an amendment to shift funds around.
- **NWSC Program Coordinator Position:** currently open for applicants.
- **Eelgrass Protection- Social Marketing:** The NWSC will be developing a social marketing toolbox and site monitoring plans for MRC's eelgrass protection/voluntary no anchor zones.
- **Green Crab Detection Presentation:** P. Sean McDonald gave a presentation on the new E-DNA methods for sampling water to detect the presence of green crabs. It will be a great opportunity to do more widespread monitoring that is less labor-intensive.
- **Puget Sound Day on the Hill:** The event was canceled and will need to be rescheduled.
- **Passport to Marine Adventure Project:** The NW Straits Foundation is creating an app that will include georeferenced project sites to visit in partnership with local businesses.
- **Salish Sea Conservation Corps:** The NW Straits Foundation is developing a Salish Sea Conservation Corps program to help support the NWSF and MRCs needs.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- **May 27** (10:00am-12:00pm):** 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 runs March 1 through May 24, 2022; twelve Tuesdays, from 1:00-5:00 pm, in-person at Padilla Bay's Stevens Center room. The sessions have been a mixture of online and in person presentations. There are 24 trainees slated to graduate this year. Geographically the registrants hail from Anacortes, Sedro Woolley, La Conner, Mount Vernon, Burlington, Bellingham & 2 from Snohomish & Seattle. The Advisory Committee is coordinating SSS Graduation Materials (i.e. certificates, letters of congrats, SSS t-shirts, and name pins) for the May 24th last session and graduation at Padilla Bay. Planning is underway for the annual SSS picnic on Saturday, July 16th at PBNERR for all Stewards. This year it will be a "bring your own lunch" event (to cover Covid unpredictability) and there will be an educational component. The Advisory Committee works continually to keep volunteers informed of current volunteer opportunities available through the

SSS electronic news bulletin, “The Wave” and Facebook. Since 2014 the 235+ Salish Sea Stewards have contributed over 40,000 hours of service to Salish Sea projects.

- Fidalgo Bay Day- Darla Gay Smith: Fidalgo Bay Day is Skagit MRC's signature educational event that has taken place each year since 2004. The purpose of this free event is to increase public awareness of the marine environment and foster environmental stewardship. Hundreds of visitors, mostly local, attend this event each year. Planning meetings were held April 6 and April 29. The next meeting will be held this Friday, May 13. The Committee consists of 4 Skagit MRC Members, 3 Veteran Volunteers and 4 current Salish Sea Trainees (total of 11). The Resort did not accept reservations until April, so we have been playing catchup on 5 months of planning. We invite any and all of the Skagit MRC members to join us in planning and volunteering. The event date has been set for **Saturday, August 20, 2022**, 11am-3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility has been reserved. The Shannon Point Marine Center confirmed the availability of their touch tank and volunteers for Fidalgo Bay Day. Rosie James and her Samish family will offer a no-host salmon BBQ. A Save the Date notice went out to past participating organizations to gauge interest in hosting a booth at this year's event. So far there seems to be a lot of interest in participating in FBD this year. Friends of Skagit Beaches will be running the Passport Program & Childrens' Art Contest. We will be working with Taylors Shellfish for oysters & clams/blue mussels to grill with our oyster guru Paul Dinnel and his special sauce and enticing several Anacortes Restaurants for chowder donations.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The NW Straits Commission held the Kelp Kickoff on April 14 for all MRC teams performing kelp surveys. At the session, Julie Ledbetter from DNR expressed her desire to go out with a team from each county, and as such, she requested all teams to submit their proposed survey dates for the season. A Kickoff Summary of this meeting was emailed to participants on April 21 providing requisite safety videos, liability waiver forms and KoboTool Box protocols for data collection as needed to begin the annual kelp survey season. The three Skagit MRC Kelp Teams, ie, Bowman Bay (Bob Weathers – Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto – Lead) and Shannon Point (Brad Smith – Lead) are gearing up to start surveys in June. Six potential new volunteers / experienced kayakers have offered to join the Skagit teams this year and will be vetted by team leaders prior to determining their assignments. Brad Smith is planning to hold a “shake down” cruise on May 27 in advance of the regular season for the Shannon Point team and will extend the offer to new volunteers for familiarization and to better understand capabilities. Unfortunately, we will be saying goodbye to Brad Smith and Dale Fournier soon as they are moving to Massachusetts later this summer. Brad will be training Lynne Wenberg-Davidson to become the Shannon Point team lead for the remainder of the season until a permanent team lead is determined.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance project is focused on enhancing existing vegetation, interplanting with trees and shrubs, expanding ground cover and increasing structural diversity and reducing erosion in the area of the previous beach restoration. Volunteers and trainees may include community volunteers, school groups and SFEG and MRC staff. SFEG is working with Skagit MRC to coordinate volunteer events with other MRC activities. For 2022, the project has been on hold this spring as Bowman Bay State Park has been closed to the public during the birth and development of Emerson, the Elephant Seal, born to Elsie Mae in February. Emerson has been seen laying in the grass and wandering the park, but experts observed he was not spending enough time in the water or feeding. Last week, it was determined that Emerson was becoming too socialized with humans, so he was relocated by boat to an undisclosed location. The next day he was observed swimming around exploring his sea environment and doing very well. Now that Bowman Bay beach is accessible again, Adam Airoidi from SFEG has scheduled four monthly work parties beginning on May 18. This effort will coincide with the Forage Fish Survey volunteer team who will be collecting and processing samples nearby. The SFEG Crew will include two WSC Americorps members, one volunteer intern to plant 10 Sitka spruce, 10 Douglas Fir and 20 Scouler's willow, plus dune grass if possible. They also plan to install 12 watering bags to help the trees stay moist during the dry season. Two additional volunteers will conduct a survival assessment the following day. The next work parties are scheduled for June 20, July 13 and August 8, 2022. The NW Straits Foundation's “Restoration Effectiveness in Puget Sound: Shoreline Monitoring Case Study Report”, which includes the Bowman Bay Restoration site monitoring results, is now available [here](#).
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Monthly forage fish surveys continue. It is a very low time for spawning but will begin picking up soon. Pete Haase gave a presentation to the Salish Sea Stewards class on May 17 and encouraged interested folks to come along on upcoming surveys and see if they want to get more involved. The forage fish survey crew provided demos at the RV Park on May 21 as part of Skagit Water Weeks. The NWSC is hosting a forage fish training with WDFW on July 13 in Port Townsend. Contact Leah Robison for more information: robison@nwsraits.org.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase: The intern project continues with monthly forage fish survey field work and periodic zoom data analysis practice. The young 7th grader doing her Forage Fish Student Training as Research

Scientist (STaRS) program with the Salish Sea School and her mentor our MRC Intern Trevor Derie are now “on their own” with a full set of gear and their monthly survey out around March Point. We are hoping to have them give an “in person/zoom” brief visit to the MRC meeting once school is over for the year. It has been a worthy and interesting and enthusiastic effort so far!

- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Four schools participated in the spring KOTB program this year with 360 students: Sedro-Wooley, Conway, Concrete, and Anacortes middle schools. The Anacortes middle school program was completely virtual. The other schools KOTB programs included two in-person classroom visits, or remote classroom visits, and two or three field days with hands on experience collecting and analyzing scientific data at the beach with the help of volunteers. Sedro Woolley field trips took place at Padilla Bay where they collected data on invasive snails and beach seining. Conway and Concrete Middle School field trips recently took place at Fidalgo Bay where they collected forage fish eggs and examined them under a microscope and collected beach seining data. At the end of the program the students will give presentations, but they will not be participating in a science symposium this year.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinne!: Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) with the help of WDFW and Shannon Point Marine Center divers finished doing juvenile abalone outplants (~7,500) at 8 sites last month and surveyed a variety of potential new seeding sites, several of those being in Skagit County waters. They also conducted new brood stock collections from sites throughout North Puget Sound. They like to rotate brood stock animals to keep them fresh. Time lapse cameras were also installed at about a half dozen sites to monitor predation patterns. The new Abalone Recovery Plan has now been reviewed and passed by the Fish & Wildlife Commission. And PSRF/WDFW are considering establishment of several new "Index Sites" to better monitor restoration progress. The data analysis and annual report will be finalized in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinne!: Field work starts next week. Volunteers will be collecting and deploying bags of oyster shell to monitor for new oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay. They will also be putting out shell strings prepared by Puget Sound Restoration Fund at the trestle and Weaverling Spit. The Padilla Bay Reserve crew will collect the 50 or so settlement bags set out in Fidalgo Bay last summer and relocate those seed bags into south Padilla Bay.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- Diane Hennebert: Diane Hennebert started working on the QAPP. She was able to get ‘as built’ drawings from WSDOT for the Sharpes Corner drainage system to try to figure out the best locations to collect storm samples. A site visit will be conducted to make sure the sampling locations can be easily and safely accessed by the volunteers before finalizing the QAPP. The QAPP will likely be complete next month. Sampling will take place after the first flush in the fall of 2022 (late September-October).

MRC Project Prioritization Retreat Follow-up Discussion: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

The MRC Project Planning Retreat was held virtually on Wednesday, April 13, 9:00am-11:00am. The retreat was facilitated by NWSC staff (Lucas and Allie). The retreat provided an opportunity for the Committee to get some clarification regarding some of the comments and questions raised from the project evaluations. However, there were a few things that required some additional clarification following the retreat including:

- NOAA Funding Guidelines: Unfortunately, we still have not received any funding guidelines from NOAA. It is still anticipated that we will receive congressional funds by August 2022 and we will have 12 months to complete the projects once the grant starts.
- Needs Assessment: In anticipation of continuing to receive this same level of funding on an ongoing basis, Lynne suggested sponsoring a comprehensive needs assessment to identify and prioritize MRC projects in the future. Lynne started researching the different approaches that other MRCs have taken for identifying needs/gaps, and future projects. She also reached out to other organizations for some insights and recommendations that could help us in improving our approach of project identification and prioritization including the Skagit Land Trust and the Skagit Watershed Council. The MRC discussed the possibility of forming an MRC technical executive committee to identify future projects, review project proposals, and make recommendations to the rest of the Committee.
- Trestle Replacement Project: Jude contacted Jonn Lunsford with the City of Anacortes, Birdie Davenport with the Department of Natural Resources, and Todd Woodward with the Samish Indian Nation to invite them to the next monthly MRC meeting to provide an update on the project status, funding needs, match requirements, the education and outreach component and timeline, and how the MRC can support the project moving forward.
- Samish Interpretive Signage: Lucas followed up with the NWSC Executive Committee with questions about whether the project fits the NWSC funding policies. The Executive Committee determined that the project did not meet the NWSC funding guidelines for the MRC’s congressional funding.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- [Skagit Water Weeks](#)- The Skagit MRC is co-hosting several events and learning opportunities for Skagit Water Weeks in partnership with the Northwest Straits Commission and the Northwest Straits Foundation including:
 - [Tips and Tricks to Keep you Pots and Catch More Crab](#)- featuring a series of educational videos and a virtual crabbing workshop, **June 30th**.
 - [Shore Friendly Living](#)- featuring a series of educational video series and resources for Shore Friendly Living as well as a FREE Vegetation Management Workshop and Beach Walk for Shoreline Landowners on **May 25th, 10am-2pm** at the SneeOosh Beach and Thousand trails Meeting Room.
 - [European Green Crab Invasion Investigations in Samish and Padilla Bays](#)- featuring educational resources and a series of twitter and Instagram posts by the NWSC's Washington Conservation Crew to share what they've learned about the green crab trapping effort and other interesting green crab facts. The NWSC will be hosting an educational booth and giving a presentation **May 25** (6:00-7:30pm) at the Terramar Brewery-Distillery.

The meeting adjourned at 10:12am. The next MRC meeting will be held June 9 via Microsoft Teams