



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the June 9, 2022, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Paul Dinnel, Kevin Anderson, Kari Odden, Pete Haase, Catey Ritchie, Matt Castle
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Jude Apple
- **Others in Attendance:** Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Dana Oster, NWSC; Kristin Murray, SFEG; Jodi Bluhm, Samish Indian Nation; Catherine Houck, FBAR Committee; Allie Simpson, NWSC; Todd Woodard, Samish Indian Nation; Birdie Davenport, WDNR; Jonn Lunsford, City of Anacortes

**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:** May 12, 2022, MRC meeting were approved by consensus as written.
- **Public Comments:** Congratulations to Pete Haase for being named Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFS) 2022 Volunteer of the Year for his involvement in forage fish surveys. Pete is being recognized for his work in recruiting, training, coordinating, and leading an army of volunteers in forage fish surveys, and organizing and hosting public outreach and education events for schools and other special events. There will be an Awards Ceremony in August.

## Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith:** This year's Salish Sea Stewards Training ran from March 1 – March 24. 24 of the original 26 2022 new trainees graduated this year. Sara Brostrom of the Coastal Training Program at Padilla Bay is the Stewards Training Coordinator. Planning is underway for the annual SSS picnic on Saturday, July 16<sup>th</sup> 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. MRC members and the Friends of Skagit Beaches are invited. The Advisory Committee works continually to keep volunteers informed of current volunteer opportunities available through the SSS electronic news bulletin, "The Wave" and Facebook.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day- Darla Gay Smith:** The event date has been set for **Saturday, August 20, 2022**, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. So far 10 organizations confirmed participation this year. Activities will include the Friends of Skagit Beaches Passport Activity & Children's Art Contest, the Shannon Point Marine Center touch tank, beach seining demonstration, educational booths, a no host-salmon BBQ, and hopefully Taylors Shellfish oysters & clams/blue mussels to grill. So far, the volunteers haven't had much luck in getting chowder donations. All the local restaurants were hit hard by the pandemic. The FBD Planning Committee met virtually on June 6<sup>th</sup>. The next planning meeting will be held June 29. The Committee consists of 4 MRC members, 3 veteran volunteers, and 4 Salish Sea Stewards recent graduates.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:** The kelp survey season is now underway! We currently survey three sites: Shannon Point, Bowman Bay Coffin Rocks, and Biz Point. Two of our experienced kayak volunteers, Brad Smith and Dale Fournier, will be moving back to the east coast soon. Brad leads the kelp surveys at Shannon Point. Brad held a shakedown cruise in May to make sure the equipment is working properly and as a bit of a refresher training on the protocols. 7-8 kayakers attended the shake-down cruise including 5 new kayaker volunteers who will be helping with the surveys this year. The first official surveys this season were held June 3 at Shannon Point, June 12 at Biz Point, and June 25 at Bowman Bay. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 Floating Kelp Indicator Workshops on June 7 via Zoom. The purpose was to get feedback in the development of the new Vital Sign indicator for floating kelp canopy area.
- **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 shoreline restoration area. The plant maintenance work was put on for

a while until the new elephant seal pup was fully weaned and removed from the area. Four monthly work parties are scheduled this season: May 18, June 20, July 13, and August 8, 2022. This effort will coincide with the Forage Fish Surveys as a public outreach opportunity. The work party on May 18 consisted of 2 WCC Americorps, 1 volunteer intern, SFEG crew lead, 2 new Salish Sea Stewards trainees, and MRC Project Lead, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson. They planted plant 10 Sitka spruce, 10 Douglas Fir and 20 Scouler's willow, a bunch of salal, and did some heavy mulching. On May 19<sup>th</sup> two volunteers conducted a survival assessment the following day to help determine the maintenance needs going forward. The plants at the site look pretty good, but there has been some erosion. The site still needs more shrubs and trees to protect the understory. Soil tests indicate the soil is low in nitrogen. Todd suggested adding early successional trees like alder to fix nitrogen. Kristin said SFEG is considering doing that. Some alder trees have planted themselves at the site.

- **Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:** Monthly forage fish surveys continue. Survey sites include: Fidalgo Bay, March Point, Bowman Bay, Kukatali Preserve, and our 3 index sites. Surf smelt spawning activity is starting to pick up now after a pretty quiet winter. There were some huge spawns right on the boat ramp at the Fidalgo Bay RV Park. Todd Woodard said they were seining at the custom plywood site recently and caught a bunch of adult surf smelt that were very ready to spawn. The NWSC is hosting a forage fish training with WDFW on July 13 in Port Townsend. Contact Leah Robison for more information: [robison@nwscraits.org](mailto:robison@nwscraits.org).
- **MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase:** We contracted with the Salish Sea School to hire an intern, Trevor Derier to carry out a forage fish study at March Point for the MRC that started in February. Trevor is also very active with the Pacific Mammal Institute. Trevor is mentoring a young 7<sup>th</sup> grader participating in the "Students Training as Research Scientists" (STaRS) program with the Salish Sea School. They will be invited to the next MRC meeting in July to introduce themselves and present an update on their project. The 7<sup>th</sup> grader will be giving her final presentation in January along with the other STaRS participants.
- **Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:** The KOTB program is now done for the year. Four schools participated in the spring KOTB program this year with 360 students: Sedro-Wooley, Conway, Concrete, and Anacortes middle schools. A report will be finalized in September. Planning is now underway for the fall KOTB program.
- **Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinneel:** Field work is now complete. The data analysis and annual report will be finalized in September.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel:** Field work just got started a few weeks ago. Volunteers collected bags of oyster cultch to monitor for new oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay and deploying new bags that will be collected next spring. Data indicates 2021 had the second highest rate of oyster settlement recorded in Fidalgo Bay. Volunteers also put out shell strings prepared by Puget Sound Restoration Fund at the trestle and Weaverling Spit. Bags of oyster seed were collected in Fidalgo Bay by the Swinomish and Padilla Bay NERR crews and relocated to Kukatali and Padilla Bay. They also deployed new cultch bags in Fidalgo Bay to collect more seed next year or the following year, depending on the amount of oyster settlement.
- **Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- Diane Hennebert:** The QAPP will be completed and submitted for review and approval within the next two weeks. Sampling will take place after the first flush in the fall of 2022 (late September-October).

#### **Trestle Feasibility Study Discussion: Todd Woodard, Jonn Lunsford, and Birdie Davenport**

Todd, Jonn, and Birdie presented an update on the Trestle Project and how it might relate to support from the MRC. The Committee discussed some of the questions that have been brought up regarding funding needs, match requirements, project timeline, and the education and outreach component, etc. The total match requirement for the \$355k grant received by the City of Anacortes for the Trestle Feasibility Study is \$110k, of which they currently have \$52k of match. The funding they currently have available will be used for cultural resources and physical surveys as well as geotechnical work and initial engineering. They are still short approximately \$58k of match. Birdie suggested that if the Skagit MRC could allocate \$58k to meet the remaining match requirement, it could specifically be used to pay for the concept design, public meeting, and possibly project management or permits. However, it is still unclear whether MRC congressional funding can be used towards match. The project timeline is 2 years beginning 2021 – December 2023: studies and surveys (April – Aug 2022); concept design and public meeting - late 2022 (if the MRC can provide the \$58k); geotechnical work (Jan – March 2023); plans, designs, and estimates (April – August 2023); and permits (August – December 2023).

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

*The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held May 27, 2022, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.*

- **New NWSC Staff:** Nathan Woods was recently hired as the new Program Coordinator for the Commission. He will be leading meeting planning and logistics and providing support to our network of regional partners.
- **NOAA Funds:** We have been assigned a NOAA liaison for the congressional funds. The Commission is hoping to have some answers to many of our questions soon (timing, allowable projects etc).
- **MRC Conference Feedback:** The Commission is asking for feedback from MRCs regarding an in-person indoor MRC Conference in November and/or an outdoor gathering in late summer or early fall. Per consensus, the Skagit MRC is in support of attending an in-person indoor Conference in November if masks are required and an outdoor gathering if masks are optional.
- **Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda:** The PSP Leadership Council will vote on approval of the new Action Agenda in June.
- **Jefferson MRC ROV Derelict Crab Pot Survey:** Jeff Taylor of the Jefferson MRC gave a presentation on their pilot project to survey for derelict crab pots with an ROV. Here are to links to short videos: [Side scan sonar survey of Adelma Beach](#) and [Tank testing ROV](#).
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- June 24 (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/>.

### **Derelict Vessels Discussion: All**

The Northwest Straits Commission may have the opportunity to do an interagency agreement with DNR for derelict vessel removals and/or [vessel turn-in](#) events using congressional funds. The vessels that DNR listed as primary targets are represented by blue dots in the map that was shared with the Committee. Several Skagit MRC members expressed interest in this work but need more time to determine if there any derelict vessels in Skagit county that might stand out as primary MRC interests. If derelict vessel removal is identified as a top priority by the MRC for congressional funding, the MRC would need to determine how much of the \$200,000 to allocate towards vessel removal. MRC members were encouraged to attend the Derelict Vessels Discussion meeting with the NWSC and other MRCs via Zoom on Friday, June 10<sup>th</sup> at 2pm.

### **Clayton Beach Feasibility/Design Letter of Support: All**

The Northwest Straits Foundation is applying for ESRP grant funds for the Clayton Beach Restoration Feasibility and Design and is seeking letters of support for the grant from Skagit and Whatcom MRC. Lisa Kaufman will be drafting the letter that will be shared with the MRC for approval.

### **Miscellaneous Announcements: All**

- **Shoreline Landowner Workshop:** vegetation workshop, beach walk. Thousand Trails. 25 people in attendance plus a waiting list. Lots of people signed up for technical site visits.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:51am. The next MRC meeting will be held July 14 via Microsoft Teams.**