



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **July 14, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Jay Lind, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Kevin Anderson
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Jude Apple, Betsy Stevenson, Diane Hennebert, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Cindy Elston, SCPW; Julia Schielke, MRC Intern; Lisa Kaufman, NWSF; Allie Simpson, NWSC; Kristen Murray, SFEG; Dana Oster, NWSC; Trevor Derie, MRC Intern; Nathan Woods, NWSC

**Call to Order and Introduction:** Lynne called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** June 9, 2022, MRC meeting were approved by consensus as written.
- **Public Comments:** none

## MRC/Salish Sea School Intern Intros and Updates - Pete Haase, Trevor Derie, Julia Schielke

Pete introduced Trevor Derie and Julia Schielke. Trevor is a MRC-Salish Sea School intern working on a project called STaRS (Students Training as Research Scientists) and is mentoring Julia, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student in the STaRS program. They are doing a year-long forage fish survey at Marches Point, which has been ongoing since January. They have 3 stations set up with various variables such as gravel size, freshwater vs saltwater, and shading, and will monitor changes over time. After sampling ends in November, they will start putting together a report and a presentation. They have not seen any big spawnings yet, but have seen some hatchlings and scatterings of live eggs.

## Northwest Straits Foundation Update – Lisa Kaufman

Lisa provided an update on the projects the Northwest Straits Foundation has been working on in Skagit County including:

- **Crab Pot Removal:** The survey was completed in the spring in Anacortes, and over 300 crab pots were identified for removal. Lisa is not sure when the removal will occur or if it already has.
- **Catch More Crab Program:** The catch more crab program is currently underway. All materials have been distributed and posted on Facebook and other social media. We hosted a crabber workshop online, which allowed for more participation across a broader audience, and it was well attended as always.
- **Clayton beach:** Not a lot has been going on, but Hailey and Jason are working on developing a monitoring plan. We also had a meeting with eelgrass folks at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and DNR thinks that once the armor is removed, eelgrass will move landward into the intertidal zone. We also discussed potential expansion of the project to include a large drench hole used to fill the area behind the rocks and pilings, which DNR sees as a big restoration opportunity for eelgrass. In regards to phasing the project by removing the upper 800 ft of the armor first, DNR expressed concerns that it may scour out the eelgrass. NW Straits Foundation has been reaching out to tribes for permission to start investigations and get core samples. This project will be funded by congressional funds, thanks to the Skagit and Whatcom MRCs, and \$75,000 from USDF&W Coastal Program, which will move them along towards feasibility and preliminary designs. The project will spend 2 more years gathering information, getting consultants out on the ground, and developing preliminary designs.
- **Shoreline Landowner Workshops:** NW Straits Foundation hosted a vegetation management workshop in partnership with the Swinomish Tribe and the Washington State University in May. We also brought in a video crew to create 3 or 4 segments on vegetation management for shore friendly living, which should be completed by the end of September. ESRP funding can now be used for their workshops and other direct outreach to landowners, but not for

videos or contractors. We will be doing a video on smart development and are hoping to do a workshop on coastal & climate resiliency. We are hoping to expand outreach audience and workshop topics in the future.

- Rain Garden: The rain garden has been completed. Dianne is watering and maintaining it. Erosion is occurring on one side of the rain garden, but Lisa is not sure if anything will be done to resolve this.
- Nearshore Monitoring: Jason, Haley, and Jessy are doing summer monitoring with volunteers. They have already monitored the Similk Bay site, and they added the sites in the south and central Puget Sound for DFW as well.
- Marine Passport: The Marine Passport is live and you can download the app off of the NW Straits Foundation website. Jessy and Brook are working on refining all the information on each site and working with a select number of local businesses to create a local partnership with rewards for app users.
- Salish Sea Conservation Crew: Brook and Dawn are working on transitioning the AmeriCorps investigation into a pilot effort to create the Salish Sea Conservation Crew. This will be a long-term effort to help get resources available to local MRCs and NW Straits.

## Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: The 5-person Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee met on June 15, 2022. We are actively recruiting 3 new members to the AC from the 2022 graduates over this summer, and are reviewing feedback from this year’s training program while refining next year’s Salish Sea Stewards training program. The traditional July picnic for all Salish Sea Stewards is planned for this Saturday, July 16, 2022, noon-3pm at Padilla Bay. The event is for all stewards and members of SMRC, and will be hosted by PBNERR who is also providing food, the venue, and a program. 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 2022 Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Committee last met online on for their 5th meeting on June 29, 2022. 18 organizations have confirmed participation with educational booths. Activities will include the Shannon Point Marine Center touch tank, a no-host salmon barbeque, beach seining demonstration, many kid-friendly aquatic-themed crafts, and educational booths. We are also working with Taylor Shellfish for oysters & clams/blue mussels to grill and are working to get chowder donations from local Anacortes Restaurants for a chowder contest. Friends of Skagit Beaches will be running the passport program and childrens’ art contest.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue. We are recruiting a few new volunteers, and are starting to have discussions about rethinking our current sites and other potential sites that could benefit from sampling. In Fidalgo Bay, historically summer is extremely prolific for surf smelt spawn. This summer we have not seen any indication of new spawning in the last few weeks which is extremely unusual. Also, this week high school students interested in marine science are learning to do forage fish surveys through a program jointly run by Skagit Valley College and Mount Vernon High School and Burlington-Edison High School. Some of the students will be writing reports and giving presentations at the end of the program.
- Kids on the Beach – Pete Haase: The early planning has begun for next year, albeit slowly because teachers are on summer break right now. We are expecting to have some programs set up for the fall and a couple for the spring, but we will have more to report in September.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneel: Nothing new to report. The field work is complete, including site survey monitoring for survival and growth at various outplant sites. PSRF did scouting for new outplant sites including several in Skagit County waters. They had 2 induced abalone spawns in June that resulted in 5 new families of juvenile abalone. They also outplanted about 8,000 juvenile abalone this spring, but none of them were in Skagit County and Skagit MRC funds were not used. This was based on scheduling restrictions, but Skagit County will likely be involved next year. They are working on preparing an annual report in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel: There hasn’t been any new work. The work from April and May was summarized in the previous minutes.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling – Diane Hennebert: No updates.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: We started in June and have completed 2 kelp surveys. We currently survey three sites: Shannon Point, Bowman Bay Coffin Rocks, and Biz Point. Julie Ledbetter from the Department of Natural Resources will be visiting each kelp survey site across the state and has submitted potential dates for her to visit. Brad Smith and Dale Fournier will be moving back to the east coast. Brad leads the kelp surveys at Shannon Point, and Lynne will be taking over the Shannon Point surveys for the rest of the season. There are 5 new kayaker volunteers who have joined the teams. Kelp is growing slowly this year.

- Shannon Point: 2-3 new kayakers, last survey was July 1<sup>st</sup>, next surveys are August 12<sup>th</sup> and September 9<sup>th</sup>.
  - Shannon Point West: A low density but continuous kelp bed which was widely spaced with no clusters, small and narrow blades, no crabs or epiphytes.
  - Shannon Point East: The kelp bed was much larger than last month, more dense and clustered, but still no crabs.
- Coffin Rocks: 2 new kayakers. Last survey was June 25<sup>th</sup>. Kelp was healthy and there was new growth with scattered bulbs, saw lots of silvery baitfish jumping on the surface and a seal. Next surveys are July 25<sup>th</sup>, August 25<sup>th</sup>, and September 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Biz Point: Kelp bed was more narrow than ever previously observed, only a few small heads present below the water outside of the perimeter. Saw 15 sea stars that appeared bleached.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group has a sub-award agreement with the MRC to continue the plant maintenance work on the Bowman Bay Restoration project. On June 27<sup>th</sup> they had 7 volunteers and 3 staff who weeded, watered plants, and installed water bags around trees that were previously planted. They also worked with the forage fish team and Michelle was there with her educational outreach kiosk to help show the connectivity between the beach restoration project and forage fish eggs. On July 13<sup>th</sup> they had 21 volunteers and 4 staff who weeded, spread 150 pounds of fertilizer, and watered. Many of these volunteers were from Glacier Peak Institute. The next volunteer maintenance party is August 8<sup>th</sup>, where they will also be spreading mulch and they may be working with the forage fish team again. They will be watering on September 1<sup>st</sup> and September 17<sup>th</sup> as needed. The final walkthrough is planned for September 30<sup>th</sup> with SFEG and SMRC staff. The SFEG riparian restoration manager who has been overseeing the implementation of this project, Adam Airoldi, is moving on to State Parks and his replacement is Nathan White, a previous SFEG senior restoration technician.

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

*The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held June 24, 2022, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.*

- The NW Straits will be hosting an outdoor Collaborative Conservation Workshop on September 16 at Padilla Bay Reserve that replaces the annual conference in the fall. Each of the MRCs need to select a project to highlight at the conference. Members should think about a good project to highlight. Skagit MRC will need to fill out the form once the project is decided, which is due August 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Congressional Funds will not be awarded to the MRCs until January 2023.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- July 29 (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/>.

#### **Miscellaneous Announcements:** *All*

- MRC Grant Progress Reports and Volunteer Hours Due-July 15: MRC members were asked to send Tracy hours for MRC related projects, meetings, workshops, etc.(unless the hours are recorded in Volgistics) and project progress reports as soon as possible.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:51am. The next MRC meeting will be held August 11 via Microsoft Teams.**