



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the September 8, 2022, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson, Kari Odden, Pete Haase, Catey Ritchie, Matt Castle
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel
- **Others in Attendance:** Cindy Elston, SCPW; Kristen Murray, SFEQ; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Hannah Williams, Skagit Land Trust

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** August 11, 2022, MRC meeting were approved by consensus as written.
- **Public Comments:** Skagit MRC will be proposing a letter of recommendation in support of the Skagit Land Trust for the Rose Foundation's Puget Sound Stewardship and Mitigation Fund grant. The grant would be used to help recruit, retain, and onboard stewards through reimbursement of volunteer travel and tool costs, along with potential internship stipends. Edits were suggested, which included switching the order of two paragraphs and adding a sentence clarifying that the grant will be applied to travel reimbursement for land stewards to Skagit MRC's Salish Sea Stewards program, in addition to tool costs and a potential stipend for interns. Once edits are completed, the letter of recommendation was approved by consensus.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held August 26, 2022, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.

- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meetings via Zoom- **September 30** (10:00am-12:00pm) and **October 28** (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/>.
- Congressionally Directed Spending the Northwest Straits Commission was awarded congressional funding through NOAA for 2023. Funding will be available to the MRCs January 1 – December 31.
- Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization: Senator Murray continues to lead the effort. Preliminary plans indicate the bill may be introduced in the US Senate after the August recess.
- Northwest Straits Initiative Collaborative Conservation Workshop: The workshop will be held at Padilla Bay on September 16th. Senator Lovelett agreed to speak.
- Derelict Vessel Removal: The project is moving forward and they are compiling prioritization lists to decide where to spend the funds.
- Speed Dating with a Scientist: At each meeting, a guest speaker who works in the field of marine science gives a short presentation. Chris Mantegna from the University of Washington presented about her Yellow Island Intertidal Monitoring Project for underserved groups. They take the students out to Yellow Island and do monitoring.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: This fall, the Advisory Committee will be focusing on the implementation of a part-time paid stewardship coordinator position. This role will help provide support and coordinate volunteer opportunities with stewards. The Advisory Committee took its traditional month off in August. In September, they will begin reviewing feedback from last year's trainees and presenters and will start the process of planning and refining the 2023 training program. There are 342 stewards, and since 2014 they have contributed over 40,000 hours of service.

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith: It was resounding success, with over 36 participating organizations, over 300 attendees, the weather cooperated, and it was stellar. A full update was postponed until October due to technical difficulties.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Volunteers will continue surveying at all the sites in September, October, November, and December. This seems to be a rather odd spawning year for surf smelt and they haven't seen the mass spawning events that they usually have seen in previous years. They do not know the cause, but surf smelt are somewhat sensitive to water salinity, so they may have been impacted by the freshwater input from earlier this year. In addition to MRC surveys, the volunteers also extensively survey Fidalgo Bay for DNR, and are thinking about reducing the number of samples they will be taking in the future. The volunteers have also been asked to help do forage fish surveys at the beach property adjacent to the Samish Island flower farm that was recently acquired by the Skagit Land Trust. It will also be a good opportunity for Padilla Bay staff to get involved in forage fish monitoring along those beaches.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase The monitoring continues. The interns will be monitoring for two or three more months, and then putting together data analysis and presentations. Presentations will be held January 7th and Skagit MRC members are invited. It will also be a good opportunity to learn what other participants in the program have been working on. Pete will talk with the Salish Sea School about doing another year of the program with Skagit MRC support.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: The first Kids on the Beach effort is kicking off with Conway, and classroom and field activity dates have been set for the middle of October. So far, Conway is the only school participating in the fall program. 2-4 more schools will likely be participating in the spring program.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinne: No updates. The field work is complete, and now they are working on data analysis and report writing. A final report will be provided at the end of this month.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinne: No updates.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling – Diane Hennebert: The Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) required by Ecology for stormwater sampling won't likely be completed and approved prior to the first flush this fall or before the MRC grant funding expires. Skagit MRC plans to collaborate with Amy Eberling's Salish Sea School to do the sampling and lab tests this fall because they have funding which does not require the full QAPP. The MRC will re-evaluate whether the full QAPP requirement is worth the \$2,000 MRC grant funds or if it makes more sense to collaborate with the Salish Sea School do the sampling again next year.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The kelp is healthy at all sites. They likely will not be able to survey in October due to weather conditions, so September is their last month of sampling.
 - Shannon Point: Had 6 Kayakers on August 12, and the beds are expanding and getting denser. The last survey at Shannon Point will be tomorrow, September 9th. The depth sounder tool they currently have is very awkward to use. It gets tangled, wrapped around paddles, and is generally difficult to handle. Hall Lee came up with a new tool that he found on Amazon and they will have a new depth sounder tool to share with other teams tomorrow.
 - Shannon Point East: Had dense invasive sargassum kelp along the shoreline, which they have seen in the past but this appeared denser than previously observed. They also saw for the first time *Saccharina latissima*, which had epiphytes all along it. The bull kelp offshore is healthy with long blades but was still fairly dispersed. They saw one osprey.
 - Shannon Point West: Did not see invasive kelps. The kelp was extremely widely spaced but was healthy and had very long blades.
 - Coffin Rocks: The last survey was August 25th. The kelp was healthy. The perimeter track was taken by a new kayaker, so the perimeter looked a little different than previous surveys but they were able to get it uploaded. There will be one more survey in September.
 - Biz Point: The last survey was August 8th. They had 3 kayakers. The kelp was healthy and wider than it was in July. There were lots of bait fish jumping, 11 purple sea stars, and one osprey. There will be one more survey in September.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The last volunteer party of the year was on August 8th. Tracy worked with Skagit County Public Works and arranged a water truck to water the restoration area on August 12th. Nate White with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group will do a final round of watering next week, and a final walk-through on September 30th with Lynne. A final report will be provided. SFEG costs were lower than expected because Adam rigged up a water tank rather than the rental, so there is some money left on the contract. Tracy and Lynne will talk to SFEG and NWSC to see how they can use the funds elsewhere, such as re-planting the conifers we lost.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- Tracy sent a friendly reminder that the funding for our MRC grant (Year 1) expires September 30th. All year 1 grant deliverables, volunteer hours, in-kind services, and invoices are due by Oct 10, 2022. MRC members must submit quarterly hours (July-Sept) by October 3, 2022. Year 2 of the MRC grant starts Oct 1, 2022.
- NOAA Grant Application deadline is- **September 30, 2022!** Cindy Elston will insert the original project proposals into the new NOAA grant application forms and share those with each of the project leads for the following projects before submitting them to the NWSC:
 1. Voluntary No Anchor Zone/Eelgrass Protection
 2. Olympia Oyster Fidalgo Bay-Wide Monitoring
 3. Salish Sea Stewards Part-Time Volunteer Coordinator
 4. School Rain Gardens
 5. European Green Crab Community Outreach/Education
 6. Derelict Crab Pot Removal in Samish Bay (NWSF will provide this proposal)
 7. Clayton Beach Restoration (NWSF will provide this proposal)
 8. Fidalgo Bay Trestle Concept Design/Community Outreach
- Mount Erie Rain Garden: They had a volunteer event to spruce it up before the first day of school. There were a few erosion issues. Interns have been taking care of weeding and watering. A couple of families showed up and fixed it. The signs will be installed when the grounds crew installs the base. It could be a good model for the school raingardens program. The curriculum will involve one lesson in the fall, winter, and spring, so students can see the rain garden in different seasons. There are also some hands-on science activities to see some of the processes involved.
- In-person annual meeting: The monthly meetings will continue virtually, but there is a possibility of making the December 8th meeting in-person. It could involve a tour of the Mount Erie Rain Garden. A poll will be released asking what people want to do.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25am. The next MRC meeting will be held October 13 via Microsoft Teams.