



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **November 10, 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, Jodi Bluhm, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Eduardo Gallo Cajjoa, UW; Molly K Daly, UW

Call to Order and Introductions: Betsy called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: October 13, 2022, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

Public Comments: No comments

UW Migratory Shorebird Research Project Discussion: Molly Daly and Eduardo Gallo Cajjoa

Molly Daly and Elley Donnelly are graduate students in the School of Marine and Environmental Affairs at the University of Washington working on a research project in partnership with Audubon Washington. Their team is interested in researching current management strategies for estuaries in the Puget Sound, specifically in relation to migratory shorebird habitat in Skagit Bay. Their goal is to contribute to the management of migratory shorebird habitat by assessing on-the-ground practices that have been put into effect and identifying any opportunities or barriers to estuary habitat conservation. The primary methods of data collection for this qualitative study include holding stakeholder interviews and analyzing documents. They are interested in interviewing MRC members and other stakeholders including tribes, government agencies, environmental organizations, and individuals from diverse backgrounds, knowledge, and interests to get a better understanding of the different perspectives, partnerships, gaps, and opportunities. Interviews take about one hour and are confidential and anonymous and will be conducted through mid-December. The final results will be documented in a report that will be presented to the UW and shared with the MRC and other stakeholders. More information can be found on their project website: <https://faculty.washington.edu/nives/shorebird%20capstone%20project.html>.

Darla shared information about the annual Puget Sound Shorebird Count coordinated by the Ecostudies Institute that will be taking place Saturday, December 3rd to capture a snapshot of wintering shorebird abundance each year. The survey will be taking place across all sites along the Pacific Flyway including Samish Bay, Padilla Bay, Fidalgo Bay, Port Susan, Skagit Bays, and Whidbey Island. Information about the Puget Sound Shorebird Count can be found here: <https://ecoinst.org/conservation-programs/avian-conservation/puget-sound-shorebird-count/>.

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: Diane Hennebert

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held October 28, 2022, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.

- **Representative Debra Lekanoff:** Provided inspirational opening remarks for the NWSC meeting and shared information about some of the great work she is doing.
- **Backyard Buoys Project Presentation:** Jan Newton with the Applied Physics Laboratory of the University of Washington gave an excellent presentation on the Backyard Buoys project: www.backyardbuoys.org and an overview of the Northwest Association of Networked Ocean Observing Systems: www.nanoos.org. They have mostly been working closely with the tribal communities on the backyard Buoys project. The tribes maintain the buoys and the UW collects the data. The data gives the tribes real time data for making fishing decisions. They can login and see what exactly is happening in their area and can track trends over time.
- **March 30-31 NWSC retreat:** An in-person retreat is being planned. Diane will be unable to attend and is looking for another Skagit MRC member to go in her place.

- 2023 Northwest Straits Conference: to be held Nov 3-4 at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. All MRC members are encouraged to attend.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meetings via Zoom- December 9 (10:00am-12:00pm): The presenter will be Dr. Tessa Francis, Lead Ecosystem Ecologist at the Puget Sound Institute. All MRC members are welcome to attend. For anyone interested in joining the Zoom link is available [here](#). Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

Project Status & Discussion

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been tentatively set for Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 11am to 3pm. The Planning Committee plans to reserve the Fidalgo Bay Resort facility as well as the Shannon Point Touch Tank. Darla announced she can no longer be the lead for Fidalgo Bay Day and is looking for someone else to fill that role. Jude offered to reach out to some of his contacts at the Shannon Point Marine Center to see if there is anyone with an Education and outreach background who might be interested in becoming a member of the Skagit MRC and the new lead for Fidalgo Bay Day.
- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: 2023 SSS training will start February 7th through April 25th. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. The earlier start date is to accommodate spring volunteer opportunities. Promotional materials and the registration form will be updated and posted on the Skagit MRC website: www.skagitmrc.org. The deadline to register is January 31, 2023. The speaker schedule has been drafted and will be posted on the MRC website after it's been finalized. Darla and the rest of the Advisory Committee thanked Sara Brostrom for her efforts in accelerating the 2023 Salish Sea Stewards Training speaker schedule. Sara was recently presented with the prestigious Cathy Angel award at the National Estuarine Conference. Pete and Lynne are planning to meet with Skagit Valley College to begin to explore ways to get younger folks engaged in the Salish Sea Stewards program.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue. Scheduling surveys during the winter months can be a little tricky.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: Interns will continue to collect data through November. The interns will then put together data analysis, a final report, and presentation. Virtual 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.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Jillian, an AmeriCorps with Padilla Bay, is leading the Kids on the Beach program in Annie's absence, while Annie works on her Master's in education. The field program with Conway Middle School was originally scheduled for October 19th at the Fidalgo RV Park but was canceled due to poor air quality from the forest fires. The field program has been rescheduled for November 18th at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Students will be collecting beach seining data and forage fish surveys with the help of volunteers from 8:30am to 1pm. Beach seining will be led by Mira Lutz. Pete said they are looking for more volunteers to help assist the kids with the forage fish surveys and are willing to train volunteers on the job.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel: The [2022 Pinto Abalone Final Report](#) is now complete and available on the Skagit MRC website. Puget Sound Restoration Fund will start field work in February or March 2023.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Field work is complete for the 2022 season. Overall, this year has been a very good year for oyster larval recruitment. We will be conducting a Bay-wide survey in partnership with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund starting in April or May 2023, with NOAA Congressional funding. Bay-wide surveys will only occur at 5-year intervals as funding allows. The last bay-wide survey was completed in 2018.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling – Diane Hennebert: We were unable to complete the QAPP prior to the first flush this fall. Diane will need assistance in completing the QAPP if the MRC wants to get sampling done at Sharpes Corner this spring. Jude recommended looking at other QAPPs that have been approved by Ecology and posted online for similar projects that we could use as a guideline. If we are unable to complete the QAPP in time for spring sampling, we will need to amend the MRC grant and move the funds to another project. Lynne pointed out that Friends of Skagit Beaches volunteers collected samples from the first flush to test for contaminants off HWY 20 near Sharpes Corner and sent it to Edge Analytics for analysis. The Salish Sea School grant funds were used to pay for the samples.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: September was the last month for kelp surveys this season. The Northwest Straits Initiative will kick off the 2023 survey season with a regional meeting in early spring for MRC's to share survey data and get geared up for the upcoming survey season. Eleanor Hines with RE-Sources recently presented the kelp survey program to the Hole in the Wall kayak group in Anacortes in October which sparked some interest from experienced kayakers to help with the kelp surveys.

- **Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:** Skagit MRC partnered with the Northwest Straits Foundation to host a planting party at Bowman Bay on November 3, 2022. 17 volunteers, MRC members, MRC staff, and NWSF staff applied compost and planted over 175 native plants that were purchased with MRC grant funds. Several volunteers also participated in the forage fish survey following the planting party. NOAA Congressional funds will be used to continue plant maintenance activities at Bowman Bay in 2023 in partnership with NWSF. The NWSF has completed three beach restoration projects at Deception Pass State Park including Cornet Bay, Hoypus Point, and Bowman Bay and will continue to manage the plant maintenance activities and monitoring at each site.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- Jude Apple announced the recruitment for a Facilities Maintenance Coordinator at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to replace Mark Olson who recently retired. For more information and to apply, follow this link: <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/washington/jobs/3770459/facility-maintenance-coordinator-maintenance-mechanic-2>

The meeting adjourned at 10:46am. The next MRC meeting will be held December 8, at the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort in Anacortes, followed by a field trip to the Mt. Erie Rain Garden.