



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **February 9, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Catey Ritchie, Darla Gay Smith, Diane Hennebert, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Betsy Stevenson, Kari Odden
- **Others in Attendance:** Allie Simpson, NW Straits commission; Cindy Elston, SCPW; Holli Watne, Skagit Watershed Council; Jason Morgan, NW Straits Foundation; Jenn Johnson, SCPW

Call to Order and Introductions: Lynne called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: January 12, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

Public Comments: No comments

Derelict Crab Pot Removal Update: *Jason Morgan, NWSF*

Year 2 of the derelict crab pot removal project has been completed. In 2018, 614 crab pots were identified. Of those, 480 were removed or disabled. In 2022, 343 crab pots were identified, and 335 of those were removed. The substrate of the bottom is mucky with poor visibility, and some of the crab pots were stuck in the sediment, so they were not able to recover all identified pots. 73% of pots removed were commercial crab pots. The distribution of identified pots was similar between 2018 and 2022, except for the southeast portion near Hatt Island, which is no longer a high-density area.

The high percentage of commercial pots provides an opportunity to switch focuses from recreational to commercial groups. Many commercial crabbers are also commercial divers. The NWS Foundation is considering employing them to do the work so they can see the issue first-hand and gain skills to do the work on their own.

In 2016, they produced the Puget Sound Lost Crab Pot Prevention Plan. This year they will be holding 2 workshops to update the plan, with various stakeholders including commercial crabbers. Derelict crab pot surveys will begin in early March but is weather-dependent. They will be extending the removals to the lower Samish Bay. The removals will hopefully be done before the start of recreational crabbing season in mid-July. They will continue working with the commercial crabbing fleet to develop different types of communication plans to bring awareness to the issue.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held January 27, 2023, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC and shared at the February 9th MRC meeting.

- The Commission has passed a budget plan for 2023-2025, which will include funding for MRCs in the next grant cycle in the amount of approximately \$192,500 per MRC annually for the next two years if the proposed 2023-2025 state budget passes.
- The Northwest Straits Commission conference will be held on November 3-4, 2023, at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. The Commission is seeking members interested in participating in the Conference Planning Committee. Contact Caitlyn (blair@nwstraits.org) for more information about the committee or to join the group.
- The PUGET SOS bill was passed by Congress as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. The bill creates a Puget Sound recovery program office at the EPA and puts Puget Sound on the same level as other nationally significant water bodies, such as Chesapeake Bay. The bill also codifies the Puget Sound Task Force, which is made up of 13 federal agencies operating under a Memorandum of Understanding, working together on the Puget Sound Action Agenda.

- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting - February 24 – in-person in Snohomish County. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- Northwest Straits Retreat – March 30-31 - in-person at La Conner Country Inn for members of the Commission and Foundation board. Lynne Wenberg-Davidson will be attending the retreat as the Skagit MRC representative.

Project Status & Discussion

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Cindy Elston: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been set for Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility and Shannon Point Marine Center’s touch tank has been reserved. MRC member Darla Gay Smith and the Skagit County intern, Cindy Elston, will co-lead the event this year. Skagit County recently hired a new Education/Outreach person who will help develop new promotional materials for FBD. The first planning meeting is scheduled for February 23.
- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: 2023 SSS training runs from February 7th through April 25th. Classes are held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. There was a recent article about the Salish Sea Stewards training program in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#). The speaker schedule is available on the [Skagit MRC website](#). On the first day of class MRC Members of the SSS Advisory Committee presented an overview of the Salish Sea Stewards program and Lucas Hart gave a presentation on the Northwest Straits Initiative. The SSS Advisory Committee developed a new ‘Volunteer Buddy System’ to help support the new Salish Sea Stewards volunteers after they complete the training and introduce them to some amazing volunteer opportunities. Erin Merklein was recently hired by PBNERR as their Education / Outreach coordinator for 3 days a week and the new PT Volunteer Coordinator for the Salish Sea Stewards program for 2 days a week starting in March.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue at the 3 index sites and 2 restoration sites.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: Planning is underway for this year’s program.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Planning is underway for the spring program. There are 75 6th graders from Sedro-Woolley who will be participating, with 3 field days at Bayview State Park and an in-class visit. Concrete has participated in the past but likely won’t participate this year because there is a new teacher. They are working on different creative ways to include Anacortes schools such as partnering with the Salish Sea School, because if one class signs up, all classes must participate, and we currently don’t have capacity and manpower to do this.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Hatchery maintenance is ongoing. Puget Sound Restoration Fund is on-schedule to begin field work this month. The Environmental Reporter from the Skagit Valley Herald wrote an article about the abalone: [Chance of survival is looking good for Washington's only abalone | Marine Biology | goskagit.com](#)
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Field work will begin in April or May. Paul is working on preparing the QAPP Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for sampling to be done this summer in conjunction with Puget Sound Restoration Fund.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Lynne has attended the series of kelp workshops that were held in January. WDNR has developed an [interactive map](#) showing the 172 sites with up to 30 years of data across the state. Skagit MRC’s Shannon Point kelp bed monitoring sites are in one of Washington Department of Natural Resources’ (WDNR) Puget Sound sub-basins that has insufficient data. Skagit MRC’s kelp team will be meeting with WDNR next week to talk about what insufficient data means and how they can resolve it. The upcoming Puget Sound Kelp Restoration Recovery Plan Development Workshop is scheduled for March 1st-2nd which Lynne plans to attend.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Plant maintenance will start in the spring under the leadership of the NWS Foundation.
- Green Crab Outreach – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The green crab outreach is a small project focusing on educating shoreline landowners in areas where green crab could be found. We plan to do direct outreach to shoreline owners, and will have a meeting with NWS staff at the end of this month.
- School Rain Garden – Dianne Hennebert: There is potential for partnership with La Conner Schools and the Between Two Worlds program. Diane will start reaching out to the schools to talk about potential sites and aim for fall construction, which is the ideal time for planting.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement – Tracy Alker: The Interlocal Agreement between the County and City of Anacortes has been drafted and is currently under review. A meeting to develop the education/outreach plan will be held with the MRC project leads and the City of Anacortes after the Agreement gets signed.

- Shore Friendly Workshop – Catey Ritchie: The NWS Foundation will be hosting a meeting later this afternoon to start planning the Shore-Friendly Workshop for shoreline landowners in Skagit County in partnership with Skagit MRC and the Swinomish Tribe. Jason Thomson is the shore-friendly lead with the Swinomish Tribe. We will be discussing different possible workshop dates, facility locations, agenda topics and speakers in coordination. The landowner workshop will likely be held in the end of April or early May.
- Clayton Beach Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Clayton Beach access is currently closed due to pedestrian overpass construction. The NWSF is moving forward with the project design. WDNR will do an eelgrass survey there this summer.

Opportunities to Connect with High School Students: *Pete Haase*

The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee is interested in looking for ways to get high school students more engaged in programs like the Salish Sea Stewards and other volunteer opportunities in the marine environment. It is difficult for students to carve out time for anything because they have such busy schedules. The SSS committee decided to keep it on the backburner and revisit the problem periodically, while watching what other organizations are doing to get more young people engaged. Various ideas were brought up during the discussion, including:

- Students simply don't know that these opportunities exist
- We could reach out to groups of students such as in Earth/Green/Science/Key clubs, AP Environmental Science classes, etc. because they are always looking for projects to get involved in
- Barriers to participating, such as transportation, other commitments, and opportunities occurring during school hours. Potential to create a mini version of the SSS training program to bring to clubs and classes
- Offer potential scholarships towards educational expenses
- Promote how it helps their education, such as offering a good letter of recommendation or getting mentorship and experience
- Students could use the SSS program as a base to create a new project
- Put recordings from past years of Salish Sea Stewards on the website, YouTube, or social media. Recordings take up a lot of bandwidth, so they are eventually deleted
- Don't have the resources and time to do connecting and recruiting

2023-2025 MRC Project List Discussion: *All*

Current Skagit MRC projects that the Committee would like to continue to get funded in 2023-2025

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| • Fidalgo Bay Day | • Bowman Bay Restoration |
| • Kids on the Beach | • Shore Friendly-Shoreline Landowner Workshops |
| • MRC Salish Sea School Intern | • Clayton Beach Restoration |
| • Salish Sea Stewards Training Program | • European Green Crab Outreach |
| • Salish Sea Stewards PT Volunteer Coordinator | • Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement |
| • Pinto Abalone Recovery | • Olympia Oyster Restoration/Monitoring |
| • School Rain Garden | • Derelict Crab Pot Removal |

New projects that Skagit MRC would like to get funded in 2023-2025:

- Voluntary No Anchor Zone/Eelgrass Protection
- Derelict Vessel Removal
- Skagit Needs Assessment to identify and prioritize potential restoration projects
- Project Coordinator
- Bowman Bay Nearshore Monitoring

The preliminary MRC project list is due to the NWS Commission March 1st. After the NWS Commission releases the Request for Proposals in March, the MRC Project Leads will be asked to develop proposals in more detail which will be evaluated and prioritized by the Committee. The MRC project priority proposals will be submitted to the NWS Commission science technical committee for review and approval. The final grant application will be due in May. Funding starts October 1, 2023.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: *All*

- Salmon: Told With Love: The 2023 Smith Aguero Lecture with FisherPoet Tele Aadsen will be held on Saturday, March 11, 1:00 – 2:30 pm at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Stevens Center. More information and registration is available on the [Padilla Bay Foundation website](#).
- Padilla Bay submitted a request to acquire parcels for restoration planning and scoping in the Samish neck area of Padilla Bay. This would be a great opportunity for restoration and intertidal habitat expansion.
- MRC Executive Planning Committee: At our January MRC meeting we discussed forming an Executive Sub-Committee to help identify and develop new MRC project ideas and prioritization and recruit new MRC members to become Project Leads, etc. It would be great to have at least 3 MRC members on the team. Please consider joining!
- Virtual “Northwest Straits Initiative 101” Session: Don Hunger with the NWS Foundation and Lucas Hart with the NWS Commission are hosting a virtual “Northwest Straits Initiative 101” session on **Wednesday, February 15th** from 3-4:30 PM. This virtual session fills in the important details about how and why the Initiative "works", the rationale behind the organizational structure, and how the Northwest Straits Commission and Foundation complement each other in supporting the MRCs and the goals of the Initiative. [Click here to join the meeting](#). Please feel free to share this invitation
- European Green Crab Public Update Webinar: February 21st, 2pm-3:15pm-
<https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/event/european-green-crab-public-update/>
- Jan 24th MRC Forage Fish Meeting Notes, Presentation, and Recording:
<https://app.box.com/s/7supoj4hxqxes4tdbsidajbq8q0jymil>
- 2022 Technical Report: “Effects of the 2021 Heatwave on Intertidal Clam and Oyster Populations in Washington State”: Skagit MRC’s Paul Dinnel was a contributor of data for this Technical Report. The report is available at [this link](#).
- What’s In My Neighborhood MTCA Map: Ecology created a map that shows where all the MTCA (Model Toxics Control Act) sites are located that some of you might be interested in:
<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/neighborhood>.

The meeting adjourned at 11:10am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually March 9, via Microsoft Teams.