



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **June 8, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Catey Ritchie, Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Diane Hennebert, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Cindy Elston, SCPW; Jenn Johnson, SCPW; Melissa Ciesielski, Swinomish Outreach Specialist

Call to Order and Introductions: Betsy called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: May 11th, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

Public Comments: None

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report:

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held May 26, 2023. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC and shared at the June 8th MRC meeting.

- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting – June 23th – in-person on Lopez Island. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- Upcoming NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting – July 28th – in-person at Padilla Bay Reserve. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- Northwest Straits Conference – November 3-4th – at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Save the date!

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: The advisory committee met on May 22nd and reviewed results of the 2023 Salish Sea Stewards program survey. They had a high return around 60% with positive results. There were good scores on subjects covered, program organization, and delivery. Word of mouth is spreading, and 7 people have already requested the 2024 training. June 2nd's edition of The Wave had over 11 listings of outdoor beach activities, ranging from trainings, restoration and maintenance work parties, and surveying opportunities. The advisory committee met on June 2nd with Padilla Bay to establish the Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee's Rules of Procedure. Jude reported that Erin Merklein will coordinate Salish Sea Stewards volunteers for 30% of the full-time position which is equivalent to 12 hrs/week. The 2023-2025 MRC grant funding (\$130,000) for the Salish Sea Stewards Training and Coordination will be routed directly to Padilla Bay rather than going directly through the county which is much more efficient. \$3,000 of those funds will be used for Salish Sea Stewards uniforms, training beverages, and volunteer activities.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: No new developments.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Over the last two months, Fish & Wildlife and the Puget Sound Restoration Fund dive teams successfully outplanted 4900 juveniles to 6 sites in late April, mostly 1 year olds. There were 2 new sites that were planted in Skagit County. They also collected new broodstock spawning in the hatchery. The first spawn produced 75,000 larvae, and the next spawn scheduled for June 14th.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Not much to report. This month has mostly been an effort to recruit volunteers, including Cindy Elston. We have around 7-8 volunteers who will be working with Puget Sound

Restoration Fund on June 19th-20th for the first round of surveys. The QAPP has been finalized and approved by Ecology.

- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The 2023 kelp season has begun at the 3 sites: Coffin Rocks, Shannon Point, and Biz Point. The coffin rocks lead, Bob Weathers, has asked to step back as lead, so Steve Olson is taking over. They had a shakedown cruise on May 17th at Seafarers Park to set up equipment and talk safety. The goal is to be as consistent as possible in terms of time of the month, tide, current, etc. Shannon Point east and west beds were surveyed on June 1st, and there was hardly any kelp. The west bed had 20 single kelp bulbs dispersed, with a lot of small kelp bulbs detached and floating. The east bed had 2 small clusters of kelp, 15-20 bulbs each. They also observed a lot of invasive sargassum kelp along the shoreline. There are new protocols this year: they will take 4 water parameter samples and are using new forms to submit data. June 1st is the start of all MRC kelp surveys. On June 17th, Bob Weathers will host a ground-based GPS training for volunteers. The Coffin Rocks survey is scheduled for June 17th, and Biz Point survey for June 25th.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Lisa Kauffman and the NWSF is planning to do a weekly watering at Bowman Bay. They will mostly use staff but will have some volunteer opportunities as well. Thursday, June 15th, is the annual kickoff for the Bowman Bay maintenance (weeding and watering) and forage fish surveys with an interpretive kiosk. Lisa has ideas to better monitor plant health: they plan to divide the shoreline into 6-8 zones and will start managing / collecting data by zone. They hope to recruit and train volunteers to become dedicated stewards for each zone.
- Green Crab Outreach – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Trapping/monitoring began in April, and there has been an increased detection in Samish Bay this year. The purpose of the letter is to educate shoreline landowners about green crab, how to identify them, know what equipment looks like, and give a heads-up that we may be asking for access to their property. The final product will be a letter, rack card, and wallet card. They met with NWSC yesterday to complete editing and are working on a final version to be reviewed by signatories (NWSC, WDFW, UW Sea Grant, Padilla Bay, and potentially Taylor Shellfish, Samish, and Swinomish Tribes). They have about 500 names and addresses and hope to get mailings out by end of June. As a side note, Erin Mercline (through Padilla Bay) is hosting a green crab molt training for the public at Padilla Bay today.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: The project is underway. Dana Flerchinger is working with Salish Sea School as the “intern”. She is overseeing a group of 5 kids from the Anacortes area, who are doing monthly forage fish surveys in Fidalgo Bay. They did their first test run last Sunday afternoon. They will be surveying 3 fixed sites near Fidalgo Bay Resort RV Park: some in the shade, some in the sun. They found a lot of forage fish eggs, many hatching or just hatched. They will end their monthly surveys in September and compile reports in October or November.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Periodic surveys are ongoing and spawning is starting up again. Several folks from the 2023 Salish Sea Stewards class are volunteering. July will be the last survey at the Kukutali / Kicket Island site, as it has been surveyed for 7 years. The Bowman Bay survey is scheduled for June 15th at the same time as the Bowman Bay maintenance work party, a large woody debris monitoring survey, and profile monitoring. On May 23rd, they hosted the Anacortes Island View Elementary students at Fidalgo Bay Resort and did a modified forage fish survey. On July 19th, they will also host a group of Salish Sea School summer camp students to complete a modified forage fish survey.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert: Diane partnered with the Skagit Watershed Council’s Drain Ranger Program to present to two different classes at the Mount Erie Rain Garden in Anacortes today, including hands-on stormwater science activities for students and a demonstration of how rain gardens work. Diane has been talking to the Between Two Worlds program and the principal of La Conner Elementary School to install a rain garden with the upcoming funding.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Cindy Elston, Darla Gay Smith: The 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event is Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility and Shannon Point Marine Center’s touch tank has been reserved. There will be beach seining, seafood samples, and this year will also include an educational mermaid, Samish indigenous-themed art, and potentially Salish storytelling. We will be sending out an official sign-up email to organizations interested in hosting booths and have begun reaching out to restaurants for chowder.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement – Tracy Alker: The Interlocal Agreement between the County and City of Anacortes is on hold while they figure out how to extend the NOAA grant by 6 months to fit the timeline of the project.

- Clayton Beach Restoration – Paul Dinnel: There is nothing new to report. Foot access to the site is currently shut down to build the foot bridge. The site is currently only accessible by kayak. The Northwest Straits Foundation staff have completed two snorkel surveys with kayaks and saw some juvenile salmon and a few other fish.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Spread the word that the MRC is actively recruiting new MRC members.
- Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Discussion:
 - The Department of Ecology (DOE) held a local public hearing and heard from a lot of people who said there wasn't enough information about climate change or sea level rise in Skagit County's Shoreline Master Program. In response, Skagit County intends to apply for DOE grant funding for the shoreline planning process to address comments and incorporate climate change & sea level rise resiliency in the Shoreline Master Program which will also require the completion of a QAPP.
 - New Inflation Reduction Act non-competitive funding is coming to all Estuarine Research Reserves, about \$400,000 per reserve for coastal resilience. Padilla Bay NERR intends to work in collaboration with the county and other partners to address coastal resilience issues.
 - NOAA's Sea Level Rise prediction viewer: <https://coast.noaa.gov/slr/>. Shows Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding Impacts. View projected sea level rise at any coastal location up to 6 feet of inundation from flooding, hurricane storm surge, and high tides.
 - UW projection map: <https://cig.uw.edu/projects/interactive-sea-level-rise-data-visualizations/>. This is a series of Interactive Sea Level Rise Data Visualizations from the UW Climate Impacts Group. There are two interactive Tableau data visualizations where you can query, visualize, and compare the latest projections for sea level rise out to the year 2150.
 - The Skagit MRC's Shoreline Needs Assessment will incorporate climate change, sea level rise, and previous studies to address these climate resiliency questions. It is intended to be an assessment and prioritization of all shorelines in Skagit. This will be a coordinated effort to make sure we don't duplicate work. Phase 1 will catalog information through the Northwest Straits Foundation, and phase 2 will hire a consultant through the competitive bid process.
 - The Northwest Straits Foundation's Shore Friendly program offers technical site visits to shoreline landowners to look at options for addressing sea level rise and coastal resiliency on private property.

The meeting adjourned at 10:12am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually on July 13th, via Microsoft Teams.