



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **October 12, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Meeting at Bowman Bay Deception Pass State Park.

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Betsy Stevenson, Cynthia Nielsen, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate)
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Darla Gay Smith, Diane Hennebert, Jude Apple, Catey Ritchie, Kevin Anderson
- **Others in Attendance:** None

Call to Order and Introductions: Betsy called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: September 14, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

Public Comments: None

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: Diane Hennebert

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held September 29, 2023. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC

- Island County presented their White Paper outlining climate needs specific to shoreline and water quality.
- Ginny Broadhurst presented on the Roberts Bank Terminal II expansion that will increase shipping traffic.
- NWSC has been working on reauthorization featured in a [new brochure](#) and a recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- No NWSC Monthly Meeting in October. The 2024 NWSC meeting calendar is now [available online](#).
- Northwest Straits Conference – November 3-4th – at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Northwest Straits Conference registration is now closed. Lots of opportunities for interactive discussions and networking. Some MRCs will be presenting, and some will have displays.

Bowman Bay Beach Seining Proposal Revisions: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- Bowman Bay Beach Seining: Lynne worked with Jason to revise the proposal to address comments received from the NWSC Staff and Technical Committee to better clarify Skagit MRC's role in the Bowman Bay Beach Seining project so that it fits the NWSC funding criteria:
 - SMRC Project Lead will work with NWSF Lead Scientist to plan, schedule, coordinate, promote, and recruit volunteers to conduct beach seining surveys.
 - SMRC Project Lead will work with SFEG and NWSF to plan and coordinate education and outreach materials and activities during beach seining events with the help of volunteers.
 - SMRC Project Lead will get monthly updates from the NWSF Lead Scientist that will be shared with the SMRC and Northwest Straits Commission at monthly meetings.
 - SMRC volunteers will take the lead on maintaining beach seining equipment.
- Skagit MRC Members voted by consensus to approve the revised Bowman Bay Beach Seining proposal.

Clayton Beach Restoration Proposal Discussion: Cynthia Nielsen

- Clayton Beach Restoration: Skagit MRC's current proposal would allocate \$50k directly to the Northwest Straits Foundation to continue the feasibility study, permitting, and design phase for the removal of riprap structures and pilings from the old rail line, expanding eelgrass beds, improving forage fish spawning habitat, and related activities. Herrera is currently under contract with the NWSF to do the work. However, this proposal does not meet the NWSC's funding criteria because Skagit MRC would not have a clear role in this project. Skagit MRC could potentially take on an education and outreach role in the project, but it would not be part of the feasibility

study which is what we would be seeking funding for. The Committee also discussed the possibility of taking the lead on a separate piece of the feasibility study that is not currently under the NWSF's feasibility scope that would focus on the depression area out past the old rail trestle that was dredged out when the structure was originally built. If feasible, this large area could be filled in, possibly with riprap to be removed from the shoreline, along with some clean dredged material, and then replanted with eelgrass. However, it was determined that the NWSF already has plans to add the depression area to their current feasibility scope as funding permits and is not something the SMRC should take on separately.

- Skagit MRC Members voted by consensus to wait until the NWSF's feasibility study is completed and redirect the \$50k Elsewhere. Once the feasibility study is completed, we would work with NWSF to try to identify a piece of the work that Skagit MRC could take the lead on, possibly in partnership with Whatcom MRC.

SMRC Diversity Equity Inclusion Subcommittee Update: *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*

- The Skagit MRC DEI Subcommittee held a brainstorming session on October 5th to identify goals and strategy for filling diversity and representation gaps in Skagit MRC's work and in expanding our MRC membership.
- Lynne drafted a proposed plan that was shared with the Committee for feedback. The Proposed Plan includes goals, tasks, timeline, and deliverables. It also lists Skagit MRC's current membership structure/ representation to see where the gaps are.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – *Darla Gay Smith*:
 - Lynne and several Salish Sea Stewards volunteers hosted the Skagit MRC display at the Festival Family of Farms at Taylor Shellfish on October 7th and 8th to share information about the upcoming 2024 Salish Sea Stewards training program. They handed out flyers and save the date cards. There seemed to be a lot of interest.
 - The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee will hold the Annual 2023-2024 Training Plan Kickoff meeting in-person at Padilla Bay on October 25th from 10am to noon.
 - 2024 Salish Sea Stewards training will likely be held Tuesdays, 1-5pm at Padilla Bay February – April.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – *Darla Gay Smith*:
 - The 19th Fidalgo Bay Day was held on Saturday, August 26, 2023, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. A large crowd of over 300 attended. The event was a huge success! The 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day Final Report is now complete.
 - The Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Committee held a 2023 event debrief meeting on October 10th and started making plans for the 2024 event.
 - The date for the 2024 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort has been reserved. Matt Castle and Jason Morgan are on board for leading the beach seining demonstration in the afternoon.
- Kids on the Beach – *Pete Haase*:
 - 40 8th grade students from Conway Middle School participated in the Fall 2023 Kids on the Beach program October 2nd-October 6th.
 - 15 Volunteers and 5 Padilla Bay staff helped with the field day on October 4th at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Students collected and analyzed data from forage fish egg samples to investigate forage fish egg abundance as an indicator of habitat health and nearshore fish seining data to investigate fish abundance and diversity as an indicator of habitat health.
 - Classroom presentations were held October 6th.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:
 - 2023 season includes: Coffin Rocks (Steve Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead) and Shannon Point east/west (Lynne W. - Lead). September was the final month for 2023 monitoring. Surveys ended for the season in September. Updates for the last month are as follows:
 - **Shannon Point** survey completed – September 1st – Team led by Hal. They have found that late in the season, the currents are nothing close to what the current station says. With higher currents, they can't hold position long enough to take readings, and can't see the kelp well. They made a slight change in

protocol and decided to use the Green Point current station in addition to their usual station, and it worked perfectly. They found two new kelp beds – one forming on the west bed, and another forming on the northwest corner of the east bed. Beds were healthy, and sargassum near the shoreline had thinned out.

- **Biz Point** survey was completed – September 27 – Team led by John Freeto along with Phil Latendress, and Denby Lloyd. Because kelp beds to the North and to the South have grown into the Biz Point kelp bed, we included them in our G.P.S. Track. The northern portion of the original Biz Point bed was less dense than the Central and Southern portion. Even though it was late in the season, most of the kelp was still vigorous and healthy showing no damage. Observed a variety of wildlife.
- **Coffin Rocks** survey was completed – August 15th – Team led by Steve. Kelp beds were very dense, with blades fully intact. There were many single bulbs around the larger bed. They saw various wildlife including harbor seals. Last survey scheduled for September 26th was cancelled due to poor weather.

- European Green Crab – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

- Letters were sent in July to 505 landowners, focusing on areas where green crab was present in the 2022 green crab detection map.
- Skagit MRC co-hosted a European Green Crab outreach booth at Fidalgo Bay Day with the NWSC and WDFW. NWSC also hosted a EGC outreach booth at the Festival Family of Farms at Taylor Shellfish on October 7th and 8th with Skagit MRC's EGC Plinko game.
- Paul conducted monthly monitoring with Salish Sea Steward volunteers of crabs and fish at the trestle in Fidalgo Bay in July, August and September. He forwarded data and catch photos to Washington Sea Grant folks. No live green crabs have been caught at our trestle monitoring site but one small molt was found during a molt survey in September 2022. This brings the total molts found in Fidalgo Bay to two, with one live green crab also being found near Little Crandall Spit by another agency monitoring crew.

- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

- As of September 8, NWSF staff and volunteers have worked over 132 hours this summer weeding and watering the beach restoration area. Increasing the frequency of watering appears to be working! The conifers are coming back and looking healthy.
- On September 22, NWSF lead a celebration and stewardship event at Bowman Bay recognizing the hard work of the volunteers and success of the maintenance program. Volunteers and staff spread mulch and compost and then enjoyed a nice lunch provided by NWSF.
- Next event at Bowman Bay, will be today, October 12, to weed, spread mulch and add more native plants. Forage Fish surveys will also simultaneously be conducted as well as a brief MRC meeting.

- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase:

- The project is now complete and the 2023 Project Report has been finalized.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:

- Monthly Forage fish surveys continue at the Index sites, Bowman Bay, and Fidalgo Bay.

- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert:

- No Update.

- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:

- The 2023 Final Report for the pinto abalone project was submitted to Skagit MRC at the end of September 2023. This report details all of the monitoring and out planting activities carried out in Skagit County waters during late 2022 and 2023. Laboratory culturing and spawning activities are continuing at the Manchester Chew Laboratory.

- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:

- Salish Sea Stewards, MRC, Shannon Point Marine Center and Community volunteers worked with Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) staff this last summer to sample Olympia oysters throughout Fidalgo Bay in order to generate an updated (from 2018) population estimate. The sampling will also inform us as to where oysters have naturally spread to new areas in the bay. PSRF is now analyzing the data and will forward a data report to the MRC by early November. Paul Dinnel will then incorporate their findings into an MRC project report covering the years 2019-2023.

- No Announcements.

The meeting adjourned at 10:02am followed by the Bowman Bay planting and forage fish surveys. The next MRC meeting will be held via Microsoft Teams on November 9th