



Skagit County Marine Resources Committee

MINUTES

*The following is a summary of the **April 9, 2026**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually, via Microsoft Teams.*

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Pete Haase, Tracy Alker, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Dale Fournier, Paul Dinnel, Jude Apple, Darla Gay Smith, Matt Castle, Aaron Esterholt
(MRC Members Absent: Catey Ritchie)
- **Others in Attendance:** Dana Oster (NWSC); Jenn Johnson (SCPW)

Call to Order and Introductions: Lynne called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions and Tribal Land Acknowledgment.

Tribal Land Acknowledgment: *We acknowledge the lands we're on today are the ancestral and current homelands of Indigenous Nations who have stewarded them since time immemorial. We respect their sovereignty, support their Treaty rights, their right to self-determination, and we honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. The Samish Indian Nation, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, and other Coast Salish Tribes are invaluable partners in the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems. We follow through on this support by ensuring there is staff representing the interests of the Samish Indian Nation and Swinomish Indian Tribal Community as members on the Skagit Marine Resources Committee.*

Approval of Minutes: February 12, 2026, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written. No regular monthly MRC meeting in March due to the MRC's Five Year Strategic Plan update retreat.

Public Comments: NA

Action Items:

- The MRC approved Lynne's request to submit the Derelict Crab Pots (year 2)- Modeling and Participative Mapping project for the first round of Science Advisory Committee Collaborative consultations.
- Pete and Jude will meet with Annie England to discuss the possibility of requesting a Science Advisory Committee Collaborative consultation for the Kids on the Beach project prior to the September 10 MRC meeting. The request for SAC consultations is due to the Northwest Straits Commission by September 18th.

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*

The last NWSC meeting was held virtually, April 2, 2026, from 10:30am-11:00am.

- NWSC Retreat held April 2-3 on Camano Island. Discussed reaching the MRC's full potential based on feedback from the MRC annual conference in La Conner. Discussed the NWSC's Communication Strategy and feedback from the survey that went out to MRCs and feedback from NWSC 101 presentations. Also took a look at how the NWSC is structured and the roles of the NWSC staff members and operating budget.
- MRC projects, including Skagit MRC's Bowman Bay Boat Launch Removal and Shoreline Restoration, were approved for 2026 NOAA funding!
- The next **NWSC meeting** is scheduled **Friday, April 24, 2026**, virtually **10am-noon**. It will include a Speed Date with a Scientist from Dr. David Trimbach, Conservation Social Scientist with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. For more information about upcoming meetings and events: [2026 NWSC Meeting and Events Calendar](#).

Science Advisory Committee Collab Sessions: *Tracy Alker*

- Two SAC consultations offered to each MRC in 2026. Must submit a request for a session and provide specific project information including the overall project goal and what we need guidance on and if there is a specific area of technical expertise needed.
 - Request deadlines:
 - First round of requests Due: **April 24, 2026**
 - Second round of requests Due: **September 18, 2026**
- Project ideas for SAC consultations that were discussed at the MRC meeting:
 1. **Derelict Crab Pots (year 2)- Modeling and Participative Mapping** (Lynne Wenberg-Davidson): Request was approved by the MRC. Lynne will submit her request to the NWSC for the first round by April 24.
 2. **Kids on the Beach** (Pete Haase): Pete decided to put this request on hold until he has had a chance to meet with Jude and Annie England. They plan to meet to discuss prior to the September 10th MRC meeting to get approval before the second round of requests are due on September 18th.

MRC Grants and Operations Update: *Tracy Alker*

- **County volunteer Registration and Reporting Requirements for L&I coverage:**
 - To be covered by county liability insurance, volunteers (including MRC members who are volunteers) must be registered volunteers with the county by filling out the appropriate forms and listing all the volunteer activities they would be performing. Activities performed outside of the scope will not be covered. We are required to report volunteer hours covered under L&I to the county auditor's office on a quarterly basis.
 - County volunteer forms include:
 - County Volunteer Application
 - County Volunteer Agreement Form. Any activities not documented will not be covered)
 - Volunteer Receipt of Personnel Policies Signature Page
 - Human Resources Policies and Procedures Manual-
 - Background Check Authorization form
 - Volunteers would need to fill out the county paperwork if participating in MRC projects that are not contracted with another entity such as:

- Tabling for the MRC at outreach events
 - Kayak kelp monitoring
 - Olympia oyster monitoring
 - School Rain Garden Planting/Maintenance
 - Fidalgo Bay Day (unless we contract with another entity)
 - There is much concern from volunteers about the personal information that is required in the county forms.
 - Lynne asked if there is a volunteer liability waiver form that volunteers could sign to opt out of county liability coverage and volunteer registration requirements. Tracy and Jenn will reach out to county Risk and HR to see if that might be an option. Jude has a volunteer liability waiver form for minors under 18 that PBNERR uses that could be used as a template and modified.
 - Dale asked if a volunteer signs a waiver, would their volunteer hours still need to be reported to the county's auditor's office? Tracy- volunteer hours that are not covered under the county liability insurance would not need to be reported.
 - Volunteers for MRC projects that are under a contract agreement with another entity would be covered under the contractor's insurance policy:
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund - Pinto Abalone Restoration
 - Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve - Kids on the Beach and Salish Sea Stewards
 - The Salish Sea School - Forage Fish Surveys and Intertidal Monitoring)
- **Fidalgo Bay Day**
 - Sent out an email to past participating organizations to let them know the MRC is unable to sponsor Fidalgo Bay Day this year.
 - The Salish Sea School responded and said they might be interested in taking over the event this year! We have a meeting scheduled May 5th to discuss!
 - Aaron reached out to the City of Anacortes Mayor to see if the City would be willing to support the event by dedicating staff time- He said yes!
 - Birdie Davenport, the new president of the Friends of the Salish Sea, plans to apply for a grant to support the Fidalgo Bay Citizen Science Committee with a staff person and coordinating Fidalgo Bay Day could be one of their projects in 2027!
 - Rosie's daughter, April, just reached out yesterday and said she is interested in continuing with Rosie's legacy by doing Indian tacos and Salmon Plates for Fidalgo Bay Day!
 - **MRC Website Updates to Meet Federal Accessibility Requirements**
 - Skagit MRC website must be in compliance with the federal accessibility requirements by April 24th! This includes adding Alt Text on all images (including logos), formatting text with appropriate H1-title, H2-subhead, paragraph -body text to all website content, links, and pdf attachments such as: Project Reports, Promotional Materials, the Salish Sea Stewards registration, MRC membership application, our 2025 Annual Report, etc. if we want to post these documents on the MRC website! Very time consuming!
 - **MRC Logo Update:**

- Discussed the possibility of updating our MRC logo. We have some funding available in our MRC Operations budget that could be used to do that, depending on how much it costs. It would be good to spell out Skagit County Marine Resources Committee to make it more legible for promo materials, reports etc. to help increase our visibility.
- Please provide feedback on what you like or don't like about the logo.
- **MRC Grant Deliverables and other Upcoming Deadlines**
 - (Tracy) Quarterly Volunteer Hours for County L&I– **Due April 8**
 - (Tracy) 2025 Skagit MRC Annual Report (must meet federal accessibility criteria before posting on MRC website)- **Due April 10**
 - (Tracy) Quarterly Progress Reports for all MRC projects- **Due April 15**
 - (Tracy) Quarterly Volunteer Hours for MRC members and other volunteers (for all MRC related projects, meetings, events) - **Due April 15**
 - (Jason Morgan / Lynne) Derelict Gear Removal- Target Areas in Skagit Bay Map- **Due April 15**
 - (Lynne) SAC Collaborative Session Request- **Due April 24**
 - (Tracy) Skagit MRC Website Accessibility Compliance- **Due April 14**
 - (Tracy) OTGP-2026 Grant Amendment (for additional funding approved by NWSC)- **Due April/May**
 - (Tracy) The Salish Sea School Subaward Agreement (Forage Fish and Intertidal Monitoring)- **Due April/May** (after OTGP-2026 Grant Amendment)
 - (Tracy) Interlocal Agreement with State Parks (Bowman Bay Boat Launch Removal and Shoreline Restoration)- **Due April/May** (after OTGP-2026 Grant Amendment)

MRC Five-Year Strategic Plan Update: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- Thank you all for a very productive strategic planning brainstorming retreat last month and a huge shout out to Dana Oster for facilitating!
- The MRC Retreat Outputs were summarized (shared in meeting packet), including the desired outcomes, the sticky notes from MRC members, and the focus areas that the sticky notes were stacked under.
- As a follow-up to the retreat, a smaller Strategic Planning Team (Lynne, Pete, and Tracy) took another look at the sticky notes and themes and moved a few things around to come up with **Five Key Focus Areas**:
 1. Engagement (looking outward)
 2. MRC Participation (looking inward)
 3. Science
 4. Projects
 5. Operations
- The **DRAFT Five Year Strategic Plan 2026-2031** includes Strategies, Goals, and Actions for each of the five key focus areas (shared in meeting packet). Please let us know if the Five Key Focus Areas are what we want at the top level for grouping the elements that are most important to the Skagit MRC. Please keep in mind this is just the first DRAFT. We are looking for feedback and help with wordsmithing and streamlining. Jude would like to help the team with the next steps in refining the Five-Year Strategic Plan 2026-2031.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards** – *Dale Fournier*:
 - The Advisory Committee met on April 2nd. We discussed the program for the final day of this year's SSS training, graduation packets for the participants and social events for Alum. The committee also reviewed the Program Evaluation that the SSS participants will complete on the last day of class.
 - The Salish Sea Stewards training program for 2026 ends on April 14th! The SSS Advisory Committee will give a presentation and congratulate the new graduates. They will also try to recruit new SSS AC members as well as MRC members. MRC members are welcome to attend the last class and graduation.
 - The SSS training field trip class was cancelled due to high winds. Erin is working on an optional field trip experience for the class.
 - This year's class was small - 15 students - but they seem very engaged and eager to volunteer on projects to help the Salish Sea. The Salish Sea Stewards working group has been brainstorming strategies to improve/expand our recruitment outreach.
 - The Communications Team met on March 30th. This group's tasks include monthly letters to the SSS Alum, planning social events for Alum and planning for volunteer recognition.
 - The next meeting of the Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee Working Group is May 7, 2026, at 2:30. This will be another virtual meeting.
- **Forage Fish Surveys** – *Pete Haase*:
 - Skagit MRC contracted with the Salish Sea School's Catherine Houck to coordinate the monthly forage fish monitoring at 7 Skagit MRC restoration and index sites. WDFW Index Sites: Guemes Channel Index, Lovrics Assessment, Samish Index, Similk Bay Index. Restoration Sites: Clayton Beach, and Similk Restore.
 - The Bowman Bay forage fish survey for March was cancelled due to the windstorm and demolition of the Bowman Bay boat launch, but were able to reschedule.
 - The April 2026 Forage Fish Survey Schedule is as follows:
 - April 14 Clayton Beach, 9am-ish
 - April 15- Similk Restore (TBD)
 - April 15- Guemes Channel -10am
 - April 15- Similk Bay- 10am
 - April 15- Lovrics- 9:30am
 - April 15- Fidalgo Bay Resort- process samples – 10:30am
 - April 20- Fidalgo Bay Resort- preview new survey methods and sites- 2pm
 - April 22- Bowman Bay -11am
 - Island MRC Forage Fish Community Science Workshop will be held April 27 at Deception Pass State Park. Several Skagit forage fish volunteers plan to attend. The purpose of the workshop is to explore how public participation can advance forage fish science while informing shoreline management, conservation priorities, and science education.
 - A few forage fish survey volunteers plan to attend the Mount Vernon High School Science Night with microscopes and surf smelt eggs on April 30th.

- Forage fish survey volunteers will assist the Island View Elementary School's 1st and 2nd grade students with forage fish surveys and microscope activities at the Fidalgo Bay Resort beach in May.
- Volunteers are learning and practicing DNR's new procedures for collecting forage fish data in Fidalgo Bay.
- **Kids on the Beach** – *Pete Haase*:
 - Spring 2026 KOTB program is as follows with field days at Bayview State Park:
 - (April 13-17) **Evergreen Elementary**: Sedro-Wolley: 92 6th grade students
 - (April 27-May 1) **Edison Elementary**: 3 classes 5th graders 65 students
 - (May 18 -22) **Concrete High School**: 90 students
 - A call for volunteers was posted in the Salish Sea Stewards electronic news bulletin The WAVE for the April 13-17 KOTB event with Evergreen Elementary School.
- **Intertidal Monitoring** - *Pete Haase*:
 - Partnering with The Salish Sea School to do this project. A contract has been drafted. Just waiting on the grant amendment for additional funding to be added to this project before the contract can get signed.
 - Finalized the QAAP that has been reviewed and approved by Ecology.
 - Pete meets once a month with The Salish Sea School to plan for the intertidal monitoring event.
 - The intertidal monitoring event will take place June 2, 2026, at Fidalgo Bay RV Park. Monitoring will be led by Elizabeth Drozda and involve Anacortes High School's Environmental Science program. There will be a call for volunteers to help.
 - A Zoom session being led by Whatcom MRC is planned for April 20th with Dept of Ecology oil spill staff to discuss what baseline data would be important to have in the event of an oil spill.
- **Pinto Abalone Restoration** - *Paul Dinnel*:
 - Finished up field work in January, February, and March.
 - Working on raising juvenile pinto abalone in the hatchery.
 - 1,000 juvenile pinto abalone will be transferred to a new rearing facility at the Shannon Point Marine Center where students can conduct experiments with them and also assist in outplanting the abalone.
 - Eileen will give a presentation on the pinto abalone project at the May 14th MRC monthly meeting.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration**– *Paul Dinnel*:
 - Field work to monitor annual recruitment levels using oyster shell bags will start up again in May.
 - Paul has been working with Sylvia at PBNERR to obtain some oyster shell from the former Blau Oyster Company for oyster restoration work in Padilla Bay and possibly Fidalgo Bay. They are aiming to get a yard of oyster shell for immediate use this year and looking for funding to purchase additional shell next year.
- **Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys** – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:

- 2026 season will start in June – September at the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and new Lone Tree Point (Steven Olsen – Lead)
 - NWSC All MRC Kick Off meeting is scheduled at PBNERR on April 29. Optional Safety Training at Bowman Bay is scheduled for May 30, 31.
 - Pre-season planning activities are underway for Skagit volunteers, including organizing an all-team BBQ, info sharing/recommended improvements, protocol updates and shake-down cruise – ECD mid-May.
 - All MRC kelp kayak volunteers will now require signed Skagit Co volunteer liability forms which have been sent out to kayakers. Goal is to have all volunteer forms signed and turned into Tracy before end of April. There is much concern regarding level of personal information requested so working through that with County.
- **Bowman Bay Boat Ramp Removal (new 2026)** – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:
 - This MRC project was reviewed and approved on April 2, 2026 by the NWSC. The grant will be amended for all new MRC projects and an Interlocal Agreement will be established between Skagit MRC and State Parks for this project.
 - State Parks received an emergency permit to remove the broken portions of ramp on the beach only to coincide with a “fish window” and exceptionally low tides. Removal and disposal of the lower portion of ramp occurred on March 23 and 24. State Parks asked for volunteer help to remove the small pieces of remaining concrete the excavators could not get to. Seven volunteers (including the BB Forage Fish team) worked 3 hours on March 27 and removed as many pieces as we could find.
 - Remaining work is scheduled for September – December to include: final shoreline armoring and debris removal during in water work window (September); apply beach nourishment (September-November); install native plants and mulch (November-December); and Final report (December).
 - <https://photos.app.goo.gl/DAYBv6TLjModzfKq9>
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining (2024-2025)**- *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:
 - This project concluded April 2026.
 - The Final Report deliverable prepared by Northwest Straits Foundation staff was finalized April 7, 2026, and will be shared with volunteers and partner organizations.
 - A presentation of the final report will be scheduled for a future MRC meeting soon.
 - **Derelict Crab Pot Removal** – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:
 - The DOE OTGP Agreement for all 2026-2027 projects was recently signed and a Sub-Award Agreement with Northwest Straits Foundation has been fully executed.
 - A kick-off meeting was held March 9th with NWSF, Island MRC and Skagit MRC.
 - NWSF has purchased an ROV and has training scheduled from the manufacturer soon.
 - NWSF is working with Swinomish with watercraft and diver support for derelict gear removal.
 - WDFS permits are in place for gear removals, however, additional funding anticipated to support removals has been delayed due to staff shortages. NWSF committed to using other funds if needed to remove derelict gear while awaiting WDFW funding.

- The Skagit Bay 2026 Survey Area Map has been updated, reviewed, approved and submitted, but additional changes are needed. Updates include:
 - Cutting off the SW portion of the greater Similk Bay area due to concerns with current.
 - Keeping Dewey Beach.
 - Adding Miller Bay.
 - Extending the Camano Island area east to capture survey results from a 2006 project that found a lot of pots in that area.
 - Jason Morgan issued an RFP for the side-scan sonar surveys. We will help review the proposals as they come in. Side-scan sonar is expected to begin as soon as weather permits but before June when crabbing is scheduled to begin for tribes, commercial and then recreational in July.
 - The next review meeting is in process of being scheduled for updates and coordination.
- **Derelict Crab Pot Outreach** – *Darla Gay Smith*:
 - We are working on a basic approach to Crabber Outreach volunteering this season - organizing a few volunteers who have been trained on *Catch More Crab* to place Northwest Straits Foundation outreach materials in marinas and local businesses that sell crabbing gear and licenses. We target sporting goods stores in the area and place the information near crab equipment & license sales. In response to the past merchant requests, we have obtained 18 clear card holders to hold the rack cards securely.
 - We have ordered 250 rack cards from the NWSF to go in holders and 50 small posters with the 7 Basic Steps to educate crabbers how “Not to Lose” their pots and gear, now available in Spanish.
 - Tuesday of this week, I was able to hand out to each of the almost-graduated 2026 Salish Sea Stewards, a *Catch More Crab* rack card & challenged them to be familiar with the steps (even if not crab fishers). Jason Morgan of the NWSF delivered informative lectures on monitoring, restoration and the derelict gear retrieval program. The trainees intently listened, asked in depth questions which prompted Jason to produce extra data-filled crabber slides. Thank you Jason!
 - We are looking for 3 or 4 volunteers to deliver the materials mid-May to marinas and stores selling fishing/crabbing licenses and gear to prepare for the estimated July 15-17th projected crabbing season opening. If we can garner volunteers, we can extend our distribution to libraries, community centers, ferry docks & seafood restaurants. Lynne suggested posting something in The WAVE to recruit volunteers to help distribute outreach materials. Dale, Matt, and Lynne offered to help distribute some materials.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: *All*

- A gray whale was spotted swimming in the Swinomish Channel on Tuesday! It was observed in Padilla Bay in deeper water on Wednesday. Another gray whale was found dead near the refinery in Anacortes. The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community canoers held a ceremony for the dead whale at March Point. It was the seventh known gray whale to die in Washington this year.

The meeting adjourned at 11:08am. Next Scheduled Skagit MRC Meeting will be held virtually May 14, 2026.