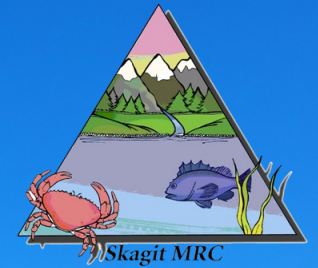


# Skagit County

## MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE



### 2024 Annual Report



Photo: Bowman Bay Discovery Day – Beach Seining Demo  
Photo By: Tracy Alker



This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under Assistance Agreement CE01J65401 to Puget Sound Partnership. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.



# MISSION STATEMENT

*“Skagit Marine Resources Committee acts as a catalyst for the protection and restoration of the marine waters, habitats and species of Skagit County to achieve ecosystem health and sustainable resource use”*

## Inside This Report

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# YEAR IN REVIEW: 2024

This report highlights the Skagit Marine Resources Committee's (MRC) accomplishments and demonstrates the multiple collaborations and partnerships, shared resources, in-kind support, and leveraged funding, and the collective impact of trained community volunteers in protecting and improving the health of the Salish Sea.

<b>11</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>2,293+</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>\$733,295</b>
MRC Members	Community Volunteers	Volunteer Hours	MRC Projects	Community Outreach Events	Partners	Leveraged Funding & In-Kind Support
		Value= <b>\$95,618</b>				

## SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEMBERS

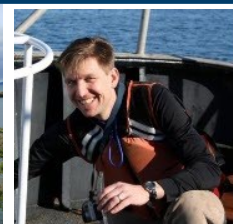
MRC members are volunteers appointed by the Board of Skagit County Commissioners as stakeholders of the marine environment representing a broad spectrum of community interests including tribal, government, economic, recreational, conservation, and scientific. The MRC identifies local priorities and carries out projects that help restore and protect the marine environment. Skagit MRC is administered under the Natural Resources Division of Skagit County Public Works.



Kevin Anderson  
Port of Anacortes



Lynne Wenberg-  
Davidson  
NWSC Rep & MRC  
Vice-Chair  
Skagit Land Trust



Jude Apple  
Padilla Bay NERR



Darla Gay Smith  
Sport Fishing



Paul Dinnel  
Marine Scientist  
(Retired)



Cynthia Nielsen  
Citizen-at-Large



Elizabeth Drozda  
Environmental  
Education  
(The Salish Sea School)



Pete Haase  
Citizen-at-Large



Betsy Stevenson  
MRC Chair  
Skagit County  
Planning Dept.



Catey Ritchie  
Swinomish Tribal  
Community



Matt Castle  
Samish Indian  
Nation, DNR



Tracy Alker  
Skagit MRC Staff  
Skagit County  
Public Works



MRC members  
contributed over

**836**

Volunteer Hours

### Want to Learn More?

MRC meetings occur the second Thursday each month from 9am-11am and are open to the public. For more information, contact Tracy Alker at [tracya@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:tracya@co.skagit.wa.us) [www.skagitmrc.org](http://www.skagitmrc.org)



# Northwest Straits INITIATIVE

Congressionally authorized in 1998, the Northwest Straits Initiative is a grassroots collaboration bringing together scientists and volunteers to protect and restore the marine environment. It is comprised of the Northwest Straits Commission and 7 county-based Marine resources Committees: Skagit, Whatcom, Snohomish, Island, Jefferson, Clallam, and San Juan counties.



- Provides MRC base-funding, training and technical support.
- Facilitates regional projects and collaboration for MRCs.

## Marine Resources Committees

- Collaboration of community volunteers representing diverse interest groups that serve as advisors to local government.
- Implement on-the-ground projects that protect and restore marine resources using sound science and education and outreach through a bottom-up approach.



## Skagit Marine Resources Committee 2024 Funding



PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP

= \$61,500



DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY  
State of Washington

= \$65,000



= \$68,000



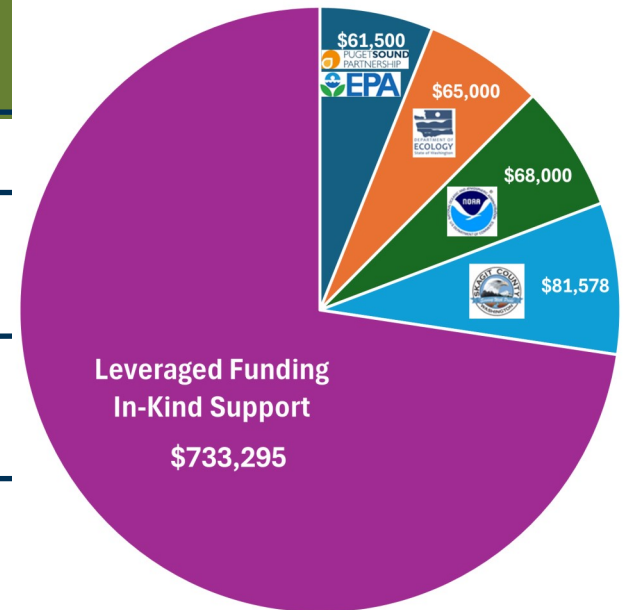
Clean Water Funds  
(MRC Administration)

= \$81,578

**TOTAL MRC FUNDING**

**= \$276,078**

**Leveraged Funding/In-Kind = \$733,295**





**300+**  
Attendees

**30**  
Volunteers

**450**  
Volunteer Hours

**40**  
Organizations & Businesses

**155**  
Discovery  
Passports

"I am very happy to do whatever little thing I can to help that small but mighty event."  
- Saul Vest, FBD Volunteer



Skagit MRC's interactive Kelp Forest Craft Activity  
Photo: Tracy Alker

## Fidalgo Bay Day 20th Anniversary Celebration!

**MRC Budget:** \$3,500

**Project Lead:** Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Committee (Darla Gay Smith (MRC), Tracy Alker (MRC), Kat Hayes, Anna Thomas, Thea Roe, and Erin Merklein)

**Partners:** Samish Indian Nation, Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Friends of Skagit Beaches, & 40 participating organizations and businesses

**Highlights:** Skagit MRC's signature annual educational event held at the Samish Indian Nation's Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes since 2004. Features interactive environmental educational booths, Discovery Passport stations and prizes, coloring contest, games, beach seining demonstration, touch tank with living marine creatures, kid friendly craft tables, face painting, complimentary samples of fresh local seafood from Taylor Shellfish, Bob's Chowder Bar, and Adrift, a no host traditional Coast Salish salmon BBQ lunch, and a restaurant gift card prize drawing for volunteers. This was a Zero Waste Event in partnership with Skagit Soils. Opening Ceremony presented by MRC member and Director of Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Jude Apple and Coast Salish Elder Rosie Cayou James. This event wouldn't happen without our volunteers!

### Why We Do It:

To raise awareness about the marine environment and the work the MRC and our partners are doing to protect it, and to foster stewardship and build connections with the community, volunteers, and like-minded organizations and businesses.



Opening Ceremony with Rosie Cayou James  
Photo: Tracy Alker





"The speakers were very knowledgeable. It opened up volunteer opportunities I otherwise would not have known. It gave me a sense of place in my area." - *Salish Sea Steward Trainee*

# Salish Sea Stewards



**MRC Budget:** \$41,000

**Project Lead:** Darla Gay Smith

**Key Partners:** Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (PBNERR)

**Highlights:** Skagit MRC's FREE signature annual community science training each year since 2014. The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee helps guide and support the program. Members include Salish Sea Stewards alumni, MRC members, and MRC staff. In 2024, 11 classes totaling 44 hours taught by 34 local experts on a variety of topics impacting the Salish Sea. Classes occurred Tuesdays at Padilla Bay from February 6 – April 30, 2024, including 3 field trips. 26 new volunteers completed the training program in 2024 and contributed over 392 volunteer hours through October. Over 300 volunteers trained since 2014 and have contributed over 47,000 volunteer hours. Salish Sea Steward alumni are kept informed and engaged through social educational events and volunteer opportunities in the electronic news bulletin, "TheWAVE" and Facebook.

**Why We Do It:** Trained volunteers participate in efforts that support the MRC and its mission, become better stewards of the marine environment, and help educate others.

**44**

Training Hours

**11**

Classes

**34**

Presenters

**26**

New volunteers

**392**

Volunteer hours

**300+**

Total Trained  
Volunteers

**47,000+**

Volunteer Hours since 2014

**300+**

TheWave  
Subscribers



Salish Sea Stewards Class of 2024  
Photo: Erin Merklien



"I LOVE the kids on the Beach program, it was so thorough and really made the experience meaningful. Thanks so much!"  
- Teacher



Conway Middle School– Kids on the Beach at Fidalgo Bay



Sedro-Woolley 6th grade– Kids on the Beach at Padilla Bay

# Kids on the Beach

**MRC Budget:** \$19,500

**Project Leads:** Jude Apple & Pete Haase

**Key Partners:** Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (PBNERR) and Samish Indian Nation, Sedro-Woolley School District, Conway Middle School

**Highlights:** This project is designed to engage middle-school students in a variety of hands-on authentic marine research in the classroom and on the beach that generates useful scientific data. Volunteer support is a critical aspect of the Kids on the Beach program. Volunteers are trained on data collection methods and working with students.

**2024 Spring Program:** 75 6th grade students from Sedro-Woolley participated in mudflat investigations at Bay View State Park.

**2024 Fall Program:** 40 8th grade students from Conway Middle School participated in forage fish egg sampling and beach seining for fish abundance and diversity at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.

**Why We Do It:** To help students build impactful connections to the marine environment and inspire the next generation of scientists and environmental stewards by showcasing nature in the classroom and outdoors.

**127** 6th & 8th Grade Students   **2** Schools   **12** Volunteers   **53** Volunteer Hours



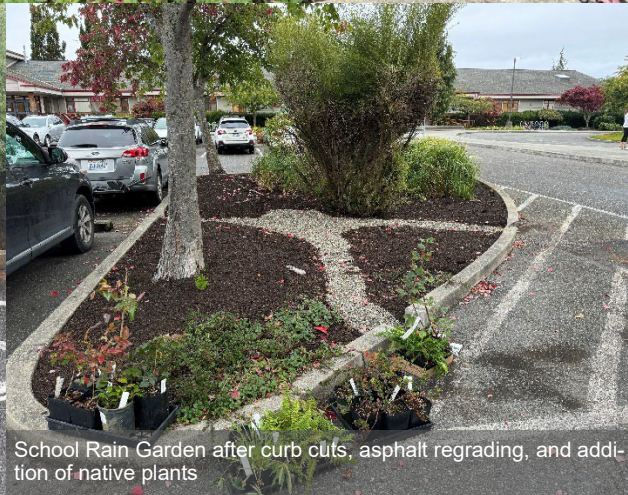




La Conner 4th & 5th Grade science Class Planting Native Plants  
Photo: Elizabeth Drozda



School Rain Garden Before Improvements



School Rain Garden after curb cuts, asphalt regrading, and addition of native plants

# La Conner School Rain Garden

**MRC Budget:** \$10,000

**Project Lead:** Elizabeth Drozda

**Key Partners:** La Conner Elementary School, Skagit County Public Works, Skagit Conservation District, Swinomish Tribal Community, Westar Solutions

**Highlights:** Improved the school rain garden functionality through additional curb cuts and asphalt regrading. Enhanced wildlife habitat with the addition of native plants planted by the 4th & 5th grade science class, the new rain garden ambassadors. The MRC Project lead taught the students about rain gardens and they researched the native plants they planted and will share what they've learned with other classes. Interpretive signage donated by Westar Solutions will be installed in 2025.

**Why We Do It:** Treat stormwater runoff from the school parking lot, enhance habitat for local wildlife, and provide an educational tool for the school and local community.

**25**  
4th & 5th Grade  
Students

**25**  
Native  
Plants

**25**  
Volunteer  
Hours



## Miscellaneous Education and Outreach Activities



MRC European Green Crab Plinko Game



European Green Crab Molt Training  
Photo: Tracy Alker



Congressman Rick Larsen—Kids on the Beach Seining  
Photo: Jessica Owens



Family Festival of Farms—Shellfish Artist  
Photo: Betsy Stevenson

### Mt Vernon High School Science Night (April)

MRC co-hosted a European Green Crab outreach booth with the Northwest Straits Commission at Mt Vernon High School Science Night. Activities included the MRC's European Green Crab Plinko Game and a molt identification activity.

### European Green Crab Molt Training (June)

MRC co-hosted a free European Green Crab Molt Training at Padilla Bay in partnership with PBNERR and NWSC for community members to learn how to conduct a timed survey for crab molts and to report their findings using a mobile app. The Molt Search program enables the public to help protect local marine waters by monitoring shorelines throughout the Salish Sea.

### Recreational Crabber Outreach (July)

Approximately 12,000 crab pots are lost annually. Most common cause is user error. Over 142,000 harvestable crabs lost per year! To help educate recreational crabbers and prevent crab pot loss, Skagit MRC partnered with the Northwest Straits Foundation to distribute **200** "Catch More Crab" outreach rack cards and **10** posters to **9** local businesses in Skagit County that sell recreational crabbing licenses and crabbing gear prior to crabbing season in July.

### Congressman Rick Larsen Visit (Aug 27)

MRC, NWSC, Samish Indian Nation, Port of Anacortes, City of Anacortes, and PBNERR co-hosted a visit with Congressman Rick Larsen at the Fidalgo Bay Resort to highlight NWS Initiative Reauthorization bill and Skagit MRC projects and partnerships the bill supports. Collaborative projects presented: Trestle Project, Seafarers Park No Anchor Zone, and Kids on the Beach along with a beach seine demonstration.

### Family Festival of Farms (Oct 5 & 6)

MRC hosted an outreach booth at the Family Festival of Farms event held October 5 & 6 at the Taylor Shellfish Farm in Bow to share the work of the MRC and the impacts water quality can have on shellfish and other marine life. Activities included a shell identification & tracing game.



# WHY REPLACE IT?

## Thompson Trail Trestle

ANACORTES, WASHINGTON

The eelgrass beds in Fidalgo Bay offer a safe refuge for sea life and nurture vital underwater communities. Many invertebrates make their home in eelgrass, creating a rich feeding area for fish and marine birds. The beds south of the trestle will flourish with the removal of the causeway and trestle.

The trestle is currently made of toxic creosote pilings and the causeway acts like a partial dam. Replacement would restore more natural tidal flow and sediment transport while removing chemicals harmful to humans and the abundant life in Fidalgo Bay. The new design will be resilient by considering sea level rise and increased storm events.

THIS PROJECT IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN The Samish Indian Nation, Skagit Marine Resources Committee, Washington State Department of Natural Resources AND the City of Anacortes TO REPLACE THE TRESTLE. THIS PROJECT FUNDED IN PART BY THE Recreation Conservation Office's Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program.

\*The signage was prepared as no federal funds under award NSAC2009-090335 from NOAA, U.S. Department of Commerce and does not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA or the U.S. Department of Commerce.

# WHY REPLACE IT?

## Thompson Trail Trestle

ANACORTES, WASHINGTON

The Thompson Trail Trestle is a long, narrow structure that spans the Fidalgo Bay. It is made of creosote pilings and is a partial dam. The trestle is a major source of pollution and sedimentation in the bay. The trestle is a major source of pollution and sedimentation in the bay. The trestle is a major source of pollution and sedimentation in the bay.

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# Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement Phase 1

**MRC Budget:** \$58,000

**Project Lead:** Cynthia Nielsen

**Key Partners:** City of Anacortes, WA  
Department of Natural Resources, Samish Indian Nation

**Highlights:** This is the first phase of a large multi-year project with many partners and funding sources. MRC's involvement and funding supported the completion of the feasibility study and preliminary concept design, and initiating community outreach efforts including: a series of partner meetings, community meetings and outreach events, 3 interpretive signs, project website and story map, 2 short videos, press releases, and social media posts. Outreach efforts will continue throughout the subsequent phases of this project until the project is complete.

**Why We Do It:** Removing the existing trestle and causeway and replacing it with a more sustainable, environmentally friendly structure will help restore natural tidal action, remove sources of pollution and fire hazard, reduce sedimentation and localized storm surge damage, and improve habitat for key species in Fidalgo Bay. Community outreach to help the local residents understand the environmental, ecological, and recreational benefits of the project is vital to this project's success.

- 1 Project Story Map
- 2 Video Clips
- 3 Interpretive Signs
- 3 Community Outreach Events





PSRF dive team preparing for abalone broodstock collection dive  
Photo: Josh Bouma, PSRF



PSRF hatchery team preparing abalone outplants  
Photo: Josh Bouma, PSRF



1 & 2 yr-old abalone prepped for outplanting  
Photo: Josh Bouma, PSRF

# Pinto Abalone Restoration

**MRC Budget:** \$21,000

**Project Lead:** Paul Dinnel

**Key Partners:** Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF), WA Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), Shannon Point Marine Center, Seattle Aquarium, and Samish Indian Nation

**Highlights:** Pinto abalone recovery is a long-term collaborative effort between multiple partners to rebuild a sustainable spawning population in northern Puget Sound. Since 2009, more than 26,000 hatchery-reared, genetically diverse, juvenile abalone have been introduced to 11 rocky reef sites in Skagit County waters to help increase abalone population densities to enable natural reproduction. Diver surveys are conducted each year (Feb-April) to monitor survival, growth, and movement of the pinto abalone released into the wild. Successful outplants are overseeded every 3 years to maintain aggregations and boost genetic diversity.

Skagit MRC has been involved in this effort since 2014. In 2024, 2 new sites were established and 6,344 abalone outplanted to 9 of the 11 restoration sites in Skagit County. 22 new broodstock were collected for hatchery production. The hatchery season was successful.

**Why We Do It:** Pinto abalone (*Haliotis kamtschatkana*) is the only known species of abalone found in Washington State waters and has cultural and ecological significance. With a 98% decline in the Pinto abalone population from 1992-2017, they've been formally listed as a state endangered species and cannot recover without help.

**2**

New out-plant sites established

**6,344**

Juvenile abalone outplanted to 9 sites

**26,000**

Juvenile abalone outplanted to 11 Skagit sites since 2009

**22**

New broodstock collected





Bowman Bay Orca Recovery Planting Day  
Photo: NWSF



Bowman Bay Discovery Day Outreach Booths  
Photo: NWSF

# Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance

**MRC Budget:** \$5,760

**Project Lead:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

**Key Partners:** Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF), Deception Pass State Park

**Highlights:** Plant maintenance at Bowman Bay is part of a larger collaborative restoration project of the Skagit MRC, NWSF, Deception Pass State Park, and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group that began in 2015. The project restored 0.6 acres by removing over 540 linear feet of rock armoring, adding 1080 tons of beach sediment to support forage fish spawning, and enhancing the riparian area with approximately 0.26 acres of native vegetation.

In 2024, efforts continued to focus on increasing the survival rate and plant density of native plant populations with the removal of invasive weeds, weekly watering, planting additional native vegetation, and adding compost and mulch. NWSF staff performed weekly watering using the Parks water truck averaging 1,000 gallons each week for 10 weeks starting in June. Consistent watering had a positive impact on plant survivability and overall health at the restoration site. Stewardship events focused on weeding and spreading mulch were held each month starting in May with a total of 20 volunteers culminating over 103 volunteer hours. Bowman Bay Discovery Day was held June 28th in partnership with the Skagit MRC, SFEG, NWSF, The Salish Sea School, and the Washington Native Plant Society and involved multiple school groups and volunteers. Activities included spreading of mulch, beach seining, forage fish surveys, and outreach booths. The Orca Recovery Planting Day was held October 17th where 5 volunteers helped plant 98 native plants.

**Why We Do It:** Shoreline vegetation provides good habitat for insects, which are important prey for juvenile salmon, and protects the beach shoreline from erosion.

**10,000 gal**  
Water Used

**98**  
New Native  
Plantings

**20**  
Volunteers

**103+**  
Volunteer  
Hours



# Bowman Bay Beach Seining

**MRC Budget:** \$9,750

**Project Lead:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

**Partners:** Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF), Deception Pass State Park, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEg)

**Highlights:** The Bowman Bay post-restoration monitoring data was collected for the first five years after restoration occurred, 2016—2021. The Monitoring Plan calls for data to be collected again in 5 years of post construction and will take place in 2024-2025. In 2024, SFEg partnered on this project and provided matching funds as part of their study to potentially reopen the wetland located south of the pier. The NWSF with the help of MRC and SFEg volunteers conducted beach seine surveys throughout the year, surveying twice a month in February – June when juvenile salmon were most likely to be utilizing the nearshore habitat, and once a month July – January to monitor habitat use by other nearshore fish species. Some seining days had to be cancelled due to excessive amounts of ulva. In 2024 volunteers contributed over 231 volunteer hours assisting with beach seining, equipment maintenance, and public outreach. Planned events and opportunistic engagement with the public during seinings educated community members on the importance of the Puget Sound nearshore ecosystem.

**Why We Do It:** There is a gap in long-term data sets to evaluate nearshore fish use responses to shoreline restoration efforts. The robust data set produced from this project will be valuable in evaluating ecosystem responses to the Bowman Bay Restoration Project, and restoration efforts throughout the greater Puget Sound region. The results of this project will be shared with the public, researchers, planners, and policy makers to inform them of the effectiveness of the project and encourage future restoration efforts.



Bowman Bay beach seining with volunteers  
Photo– NWSF



Beach Seining Demo at Bowman Bay Discovery Day  
Photo– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

**2,100**

Fish Counted

**26**

Unique Species

**23**

Volunteers

**231+**

Volunteer Hours





## Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment (Phase 1 & 2)

**MRC Budget:** \$40,000

**Project Lead:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

**Key Partners:** Confluence Environmental, Skagit Watershed Council, Northwest Straits Foundation, Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Sound IQ, Skagit County GIS

**Highlights:** The goal of the Skagit Nearshore Assessment project is to develop a new web-based tool to help quickly identify and address current marine ecosystem needs using the most recent available data and research. Phases 1 & 2, completed in 2024, included: compiling and reviewing existing data from historical and authoritative references and records for potential projects and developing a prioritization framework to determine ecological value of location, restoration potential, and feasibility of restoration options, to produce high priority focus areas and in 2025, will be made available in SoundIQ and Skagit MRC website. The [Technical Report](#) is available on the Skagit MRC website.

Phase 3 will be completed in 2025 to finalize the web-based tool where projects will be geospatially displayed and made available to the public in the NWSC Sound IQ. Finished products will also consist of two Story Maps; Oyster Restoration Story Map, and the Nearshore Assessment and Priorities (NEAP) Tool Story Map.

**Why We Do It:** To identify and prioritize project opportunities for shoreline restoration and protection and help accelerate the rate of recovery efforts as funding becomes available to improve the ecological function of critical shoreline, estuarine, and nearshore habitats.

**55**

Records  
Reviewed

**165**

Relevant  
Datasets

**12**

Existing MRC  
Projects

**5**

Potential MRC  
Projects



## Olympia Oyster Monitoring

**MRC Budget:** \$0

**Project Lead:** Paul Dinnel

**Key Partners:** Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF), Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), Samish Indian Nation

**Highlights:** Since 2002, Skagit MRC has been working collaboratively with many partners and community volunteers to establish a sustainable Olympia oyster population in Fidalgo Bay. Survival rate, growth, and natural recruitment have been deemed high and additional natural recruitment has been seen in Fidalgo Bay at areas outside the seed planting sites! Fidalgo Bay oysters are now used as broodstock to seed other restoration areas. MRC volunteers conduct small scale oyster recruitment surveys in Fidalgo Bay each year. Large-scale bay-wide native oyster population surveys take place every 5 years. The most recent one took place in 2023. The Olympia oyster population in Fidalgo Bay increased from around 50,000 in 2002 to an estimated 5.5 million oysters in 2023. The next bay-wide survey will take place in 2028, depending on available funding.

In 2024, two MRC volunteers counted 450 juvenile Olympia oysters per 100 shells in recruitment bags, which is the highest settlement in Fidalgo Bay in the last 20 years! MRC volunteers set out new recruitment bags for collection in 2025. MRC volunteers also set out shell strings (shells on a stick) for the PSRF to monitor oyster settlement throughout Puget Sound. Significant new oyster beds have been cropping up in the muddy area south of the trestle. The oyster shells continue provide substrate for future oyster settlement where there is very little substrate in the muddy bay. Extreme changes in temperature can cause mortality events in oysters which is what we suspect happened during the extremely cold winter of 2023-2024.

**Why We Do It:** The Olympia oyster, *Ostrea lurida*, is the only oyster native to the Pacific Coast of North America and were driven to near extinction in the late 1800s from over harvesting and severe water pollution. Olympia oysters provide important habitat for other species, stabilize sediment, contribute to nutrient cycling, are culturally significant for indigenous peoples, and can improve water quality as filter feeders. One oyster can filter up to 12 gallons of water in just one day, so **5.5+ million oysters in Fidalgo Bay can filter 66 million gallons of water!**



Fidalgo Bay Salt marsh Slough—  
Olympia Oyster Bed

<b>2002</b> <b>50,000</b> Olympia Oysters	<b>2023</b> <b>5.5+</b> <b>million!</b> Olympia Oysters	<b>2024</b> highest Olympia oyster settlement in <b>20</b> years!	<b>450</b> juvenile oysters per <b>100</b> shells
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Bowman Bay Forage Fish Survey Team : Pete Haase and Susie George processing the sample for forage fish eggs

## Forage Fish Surveys

**MRC Budget:** \$0

**Project Lead:** Pete Haase

**Key Partners:** Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC), Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF), Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

**Highlights:** Forage fish surveys are 100% coordinated, and carried out by volunteers. Survey data and samples are collected monthly at **three index sites and three restoration sites** in Skagit.

**Index Survey Sites:** Ship Harbor/Guemes Channel, NE Similk Bay, and SW Samish Island. WDFW processes and analyzes the eggs and maintains the data collected by volunteers to examine annual variations and potential trends in the forage fish spawning population. The data is shared with the MRC, NWSC, and state agencies.

**Restoration Survey Sites:** Bowman Bay, Clayton Beach, and Kukutali Preserve. WDFW maintains the data collected by volunteers and is shared with the MRC, NWSC, NWSF, and state agencies. The NWSF analyzes the data for the effectiveness of shoreline restoration projects on the forage fish spawning population.

**Why We Do It:** Forage fish are an important food source for marine birds, salmon, mammals, and people. Surf Smelt and Sand Lance beach spawning habitats are impacted by hard shore armoring and lack of shade. Volunteers provide outreach during surveys and get requests from school groups to assist with forage fish surveys.

**8**

**Volunteers**

**240+**

**Volunteer Hours**

**6**

**Survey Sites**

**2**

**School Groups**





Bull Kelp Kayak Survey Crew  
Photo: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>47+</b>
<b>Kelp Beds Monitored</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>Volunteer Hours</b>



Bull Kelp Kayak Survey. Photo: Lynne  
Wenberg-Davidson

## Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys

**MRC Budget:** \$0

**Project Lead:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

**Key Partners:** Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) & WA Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF)

**Highlights:** Skagit MRC volunteers have been involved in bull kelp kayak surveys since 2017 as part of a collaborative effort to monitor changes in kelp populations across the Puget Sound and Northwest Straits region. This project is 100% volunteer driven.

3 teams of experienced kayak volunteers conduct monthly survey at 4 kelp beds each year from June-September.

- **Coffin Rocks** (appears to be increasing)
- **Shannon Point East** (no apparent trend)
- **Shannon Point West** (no apparent trend)
- **Biz Point** (appears to be increasing)

The NWSC developed the survey protocol and provides training and technical support to the MRCs. They also maintain the kelp data which is shared with planners and researchers. The NWSF covers the liability insurance for the volunteer kayak kelp team.

The NWSC and MRCs were also involved in the development of the Kelp Recovery Plan: [www.nwstraits.org/our-work/kelp-recovery](http://www.nwstraits.org/our-work/kelp-recovery)

**Why We Do It:** An estimated 80% of the historic kelp beds in south Puget Sound have disappeared as far north as Snohomish County. Monitoring helps track changes, identify threats, and inform conservation and restoration efforts. Bull kelp is vital to the health of marine ecosystems because it provides a biodiverse habitat and a food source for a wide variety of marine life. It also protects shorelines by reducing wave action, produces oxygen, absorbs nutrients, and reduces ocean acidification.



Derelict Vessel Turn-In-Event  
Port of Skagit, La Conner Marina



**49**

**Vessels Recycled**

**109**

**Tons of Material Recycled**

**8**

**Project Partners**

Derelict Vessel Removed from  
Samish Bay– Blanchard



**5.6**

**Tons of Debris Removed**

## Derelict Vessel Removal & Turn-In Event

**MRC Budget:** \$0

**Derelict Vessel Removal Budget=** \$49,500 contributed by the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) with National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) funding.

**Turn-in Event Budget=**\$285,822 contributed by multiple partner organizations)

**Project Lead:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

**Key Partners:** NWSC, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Port of Skagit, La Conner Maritime Service, Skagit County, Ecology

**Highlights:** The Skagit County vessel turn-in event gave boat owners an opportunity to safely dispose of their unwanted vessels for free and was a cost-effective way to keep vessels from becoming derelict or abandoned and potentially harming the marine environment. The event which ran from July 22 through November 2024 was a collaborative effort co-hosted by 8 project partners. The Skagit MRC assisted with planning and widely promoting the event. 49 vessels were transported to La Conner Maritime Service at the Port of Skagit's La Conner Marina where they were deconstructed and 109 tons of materials recycled.

In addition to the Turn-In event, a derelict vessel identified and prioritized for removal by the Skagit MRC and the Swinomish Tribal Community was removed from Samish Bay in Blanchard by DNR in 2024.

**Why We Do It:** Derelict and abandoned vessels can pose a dangerous threat to the marine environment due to petroleum products, hazardous waste and other toxic materials stored on board and can create a navigational hazard impacting recreational and cultural access.



# THANK YOU!

The Skagit MRC relies heavily on the technical, financial, and administrative support of the Northwest Straits Commission, Northwest Straits Foundation, Puget Sound Partnership, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Skagit County Public Works Clean Water program and the Skagit County Board of Commissioners. The Skagit MRC's work is driven by our dedicated MRC members, the collaboration and shared resources of many partner organizations, and the hard work of our amazing volunteers. The MRC acknowledges that the land and waters where our work resides are the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish people and have been since time immemorial. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Samish Indian Nation and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community for their partnership and in-kind staff support for our MRC projects. Thanks to all of our partners for making a difference!!

