



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **December 8, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Kevin Anderson, Pete Haase, Paul Dinnel, Matt Castle
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Jude Apple, Darla Gay Smith, Kari Odden, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Jennifer Johnson, SCPW NRD Division Manager; Holli Watne, Skagit Watershed Council Community Engagement Coordinator

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: November 10, 2022, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

Public Comments: No comments

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: Diane Hennebert

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held October 28, 2022, via Zoom conference call. There was no meeting in November. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC and shared at the November 10th MRC meeting.

- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meetings via Zoom- December 9 (10:00am-12:00pm): The presenter will be Dr. Tessa Francis, Lead Ecosystem Ecologist at the Puget Sound Institute. All MRC members are welcome to attend. For anyone interested in joining the Zoom link is available [here](#). Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

Project Status & Discussion

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been tentatively set for **Saturday, August 26, 2023**, from 11am to 3pm. The Shannon Point Marine Center confirmed their participation with the portable Touch Tank. Darla said she can no longer be the Project Lead for Fidalgo Bay Day and is looking for someone else to fill that role. The list of tasks and timeline has been updated. The Fidalgo Bay Day Planning team is already in place and ready to go as soon as we get someone to lead it.
- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: 2023 SSS training will start February 7th through April 25th. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. The earlier start date is to accommodate spring volunteer opportunities. Promotional materials and the registration form has been updated and posted on the Skagit MRC website: www.skagitmrc.org. The deadline to register is January 31, 2023. The speaker schedule has been drafted and will be posted on the MRC website after it's been finalized. Several people have already registered. The SSS Advisory Committee started reaching out to high schools and the Skagit Valley College to try to get younger volunteers involved in the program. Betsy suggested contacting the alternative schools because they tend to have more flexible schedules and independent studies.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue. The forage fish surveys at our nearshore restoration site at March's Point will likely end in 2023 because we have reached beyond the 5-year post-construction monitoring requirement. Forage Fish surveys will likely end in July at the Kukatali nearshore restoration site after collecting 5 years' worth of data. However, forage fish surveys will likely continue at the Bowman Bay nearshore restoration site. The forage fish Index Site surveys at Ship Harbor, Samish Island, and Similk Bay will continue to occur monthly. The forage fish survey team is considering petitioning the NWSC and WDFW to add one or two new Index Sites and possibly decommission one or two of the sites that haven't

been very good sampling sites. They are also considering reducing the surveys at Fidalgo Bay on behalf of the WDNR Aquatic Reserve in 2023. They currently survey Fidalgo Bay twice a month.

- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: Interns finished collecting data in November and are now working on data analyses and a final report. Virtual presentations will be held January 7th and Skagit MRC members are invited. More information to come. It will also be a good opportunity to learn what other participants in the program have been working on.
- Kids on the Beach – Pete Haase: The field program with Conway Middle School was originally scheduled for October 19th at the Fidalgo RV Park but ended up getting canceled at the last minute due to poor air quality from the forest fires. The field day was rescheduled for November 18th. 50 8th grade students from Conway Middle School participated in beach seining and forage fish survey activities. Despite the cold weather, a broken hose, getting locked out of the building twice, and finding very few fish or forage fish eggs, the kids had a great time on the beach (see photos below). The kids will analyze the data in the classroom and prepare reports and presentations that will likely be recorded via Prezi instead of an in-person Science Symposium. More schools will likely be participating in the spring program.





Photo Credit: Mira Lutz



Photo Credit: Mira Lutz



Photo Credit: Jillian Brinko

- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Not much happening right now except for hatchery maintenance. Puget Sound Restoration Fund will start field work in February or March 2023.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Not much happening right now. We will be conducting a large bay-wide native oyster population survey in partnership with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund starting in April or May 2023, with NOAA Congressional funding. Bay-wide surveys will only occur at 5-year intervals as funding allows. The last bay-wide survey was completed in 2018. Paul attended a workshop on climate change and shellfish in Port Townsend on December 2nd. There were presentations on impacts to shellfish during the recent heat dome events in the Puget Sound region. The biggest impacts to shellfish occurred in the south Puget Sound region where the temps got hotter. There was about a 15% mortality of native oysters in Fidalgo Bay during the heat dome. They will be developing standard procedures and protocols for monitoring impacts of heat dome events in the future.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: September was the last month for kelp surveys this season. The NWSC is currently reviewing and analyzing 2022 data. They requested clarification regarding the survey

tracks for 2 of the 3 Skagit sites that didn't quite line up with previous tracks. This was most likely due to multiple people were helping with the surveys last year.

- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Skagit MRC's NOAA Congressional funds will be used to continue plant maintenance activities at Bowman Bay in 2023 in partnership with NWSF. The NWSF is currently managing three beach restoration projects at Deception Pass State Park including Cornet Bay, Hoypus Point, and Bowman Bay and will continue to manage the plant maintenance activities and monitoring at all three sites. There is some erosion happening at the site that we will continue to monitor to determine if we need to move the fence back.
- Sharpes Corner Round-About Stormwater Sampling – Diane Hennebert: The Department of Ecology requires a full QAPP. Diane does not currently have time to complete the QAPP prior to spring sampling, so someone else will need to take the lead. Jude provided some links to QAPPs that have been approved by Ecology and posted online for similar projects that we could use as a guideline. Pete and Lynne offered to look at the other QAPPs to see if they could help draft something in time for spring sampling. Tracy reminded the Committee that the QAPP would need to be completed at least one or two months prior to any sampling. The MRC could consider including this project on the next round of MRC grant funding that would start October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2025.

Derelict Vessel Workshop Update *Lynne and Matt*

Several MRCs including Island, Jefferson, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties, included derelict vessel removal in their proposals for NOAA congressional funding. The NWSC applied for and is expected to receive an estimated \$1,300,000 of NOAA Congressional funds for regional derelict vessel removal in 2023. The Commission encouraged all 7 MRCs and tribal partners to provide a list of priority derelict vessels for removal even if it wasn't included in our project proposals for congressional funding. Representatives from each MRC and tribal partners were invited to participate in the workgroup to rank derelict vessels for funding using a list of criteria established by the Commission. Lynne is participating in the workgroup as Skagit MRC's representative, Catey is participating as the Swinomish representative, and Matt is the Samish representative. Due to the limited overall budget, it may not be possible to remove all derelict vessels on the list in 2023. Funding priority will be given to those vessels that the workgroup ranks highest. The Swinomish Tribal Community identified two derelict vessels that were included on the list for consideration for removal in Skagit County. The vessels are located just south of Kukutali and near the Swinomish Clam Gardens. Skagit MRC missed the opportunity to submit vessels to include on the list for removal in 2023 but should consider preparing a list of vessels for removal in 2024 if we get additional NOAA funds. Kevin and Matt suggested including the vessel that sank in Fidalgo Bay just outside of Cap Sante Marina several years ago as a high priority for future removal for Skagit MRC. DNR has placed low priority on that vessel, with the owner not claiming responsibility. It has broken up since then, but the hull still poses a navigation hazard.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- Jay Lind announced this will be his last MRC meeting because he is resigning his position on the MRC. He said he is living full time in Poulsbo and can no longer continue to be actively involved on the MRC in Skagit County. He is considering joining the Hood Canal Salmon Advisory Board. Jay has been an invaluable member of the Skagit MRC since 2012. He served as MRC Chair and Vice Chair for multiple years. He was also the Skagit MRC rep for the Northwest Straits Commission and served on the board of the Northwest Straits Foundation. In addition, Jay was the Project Lead for the Bowman Bay Restoration project and Fidalgo Bay Day and participated on multiple MRC planning subcommittees and was a popular speaker for the Salish Sea Stewards Training program. Jay's knowledge, dedication, reliability, sense of humor and kind heart was greatly appreciated and will be sorely missed. Jay recommended Darla Gay Smith take his place in representing the recreational fishing interest group on the Skagit MRC.
- Jay shared the news that the fish net pens are no longer allowed in state waters and the one near Hope Island in Skagit Bay is now gone.
- Pete brought forward a question for the MRC to consider regarding the Committee's interest in getting involved in reviewing and commenting on the MJB waterfront development in Anacortes as a group, or if committee members would prefer to do that as individuals or the other organizations they represent. Kevin recommended waiting to see what they are proposing. The permits and project details probably won't be available for at least

another year or so. Coastal Geologic Services was involved in the studies for the new development. If the MRC is interested in commenting on the project, the committee could contact the City planners to find out what the timeline will be so that we can be prepared to comment.

- Holli Watne, Community Engagement Coordinator with the Skagit Watershed Council, shared that she leads a Drain Rangers program in the springtime where she teaches kids about the impacts of stormwater. She taught the Drain Ranger program at Mt Erie School last spring and said it was really great having the rain garden there to demonstrate the impacts of stormwater and all of the benefits of the rain garden. Holli Watne is thinking about conducting a teacher training on storm drains and the raingarden concept next spring. Using rain gardens as education and outreach tools in schools provides opportunities to teach students about stormwater issues and provide information to the community about the rain gardens and their uses. We received a lot of positive feedback from the teachers and students and hope to expend the Adopt a Rain Garden project to other schools in Anacortes and La Conner.

The business meeting adjourned at 10:44am followed by a field trip to the Mt. Erie Rain Garden. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually January 12, via Microsoft Teams.



Mt Erie School Rain Garden - Before



Mt Erie School Rain Garden – Planting with Students



Mt Erie School Rain Garden – MRC Field Trip 12-08-22





SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson, Kari Odden, Pete Haase, Catey Ritchie, Jodi Bluhm, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Eduardo Gallo Cajjoo, UW; Molly K Daly, UW

Call to Order and Introductions: Betsy called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: October 13, 2022, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

Public Comments: No comments

UW Migratory Shorebird Research Project Discussion: Molly Daly and Eduardo Gallo Cajjoo

Molly Daly and Elley Donnelly are graduate students in the School of Marine and Environmental Affairs at the University of Washington working on a research project in partnership with Audubon Washington. Their team is interested in researching current management strategies for estuaries in the Puget Sound, specifically in relation to migratory shorebird habitat in Skagit Bay. Their goal is to contribute to the management of migratory shorebird habitat by assessing on-the-ground practices that have been put into effect and identifying any opportunities or barriers to estuary habitat conservation. The primary methods of data collection for this qualitative study include holding stakeholder interviews and analyzing documents. They are interested in interviewing MRC members and other stakeholders including tribes, government agencies, environmental organizations, and individuals from diverse backgrounds, knowledge, and interests to get a better understanding of the different perspectives, partnerships, gaps, and opportunities. Interviews take about one hour and are confidential and anonymous and will be conducted through mid-December. The final results will be documented in a report that will be presented to the UW and shared with the MRC and other stakeholders. More information can be found on their project website: <https://faculty.washington.edu/nives/shorebird%20capstone%20project.html>.

Darla shared information about the annual Puget Sound Shorebird Count coordinated by the Ecostudies Institute that will be taking place Saturday, December 3rd to capture a snapshot of wintering shorebird abundance each year. The survey will be taking place across all sites along the Pacific Flyway including Samish Bay, Padilla Bay, Fidalgo Bay, Port Susan, Skagit Bays, and Whidbey Island. Information about the Puget Sound Shorebird Count can be found here: <https://ecoinst.org/conservation-programs/avian-conservation/puget-sound-shorebird-count/>.

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: Diane Hennebert

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held October 28, 2022, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.

- **Representative Debra Lekanoff:** Provided inspirational opening remarks for the NWSC meeting and shared information about some of the great work she is doing.
- **Backyard Buoys Project Presentation:** Jan Newton with the Applied Physics Laboratory of the University of Washington gave an excellent presentation on the Backyard Buoys project: www.backyardbuoys.org and an overview of the Northwest Association of Networked Ocean Observing Systems: www.nanoos.org. They have mostly been working closely with the tribal communities on the backyard Buoys project. The tribes maintain the buoys and the UW collects the data. The data gives the tribes real time data for making fishing decisions. They can login and see what exactly is happening in their area and can track trends over time.
- **March 30-31 NWSC retreat:** An in-person retreat is being planned. Diane will be unable to attend and is looking for another Skagit MRC member to go in her place.

- 2023 Northwest Straits Conference: to be held Nov 3-4 at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. All MRC members are encouraged to attend.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meetings via Zoom- December 9 (10:00am-12:00pm): The presenter will be Dr. Tessa Francis, Lead Ecosystem Ecologist at the Puget Sound Institute. All MRC members are welcome to attend. For anyone interested in joining the Zoom link is available [here](#). Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

Project Status & Discussion

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been tentatively set for Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 11am to 3pm. The Planning Committee plans to reserve the Fidalgo Bay Resort facility as well as the Shannon Point Touch Tank. Darla announced she can no longer be the lead for Fidalgo Bay Day and is looking for someone else to fill that role. Jude offered to reach out to some of his contacts at the Shannon Point Marine Center to see if there is anyone with an Education and outreach background who might be interested in becoming a member of the Skagit MRC and the new lead for Fidalgo Bay Day.
- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: 2023 SSS training will start February 7th through April 25th. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. The earlier start date is to accommodate spring volunteer opportunities. Promotional materials and the registration form will be updated and posted on the Skagit MRC website: www.skagitmrc.org. The deadline to register is January 31, 2023. The speaker schedule has been drafted and will be posted on the MRC website after it's been finalized. Darla and the rest of the Advisory Committee thanked Sara Brostrom for her efforts in accelerating the 2023 Salish Sea Stewards Training speaker schedule. Sara was recently presented with the prestigious Cathy Angel award at the National Estuarine Conference. Pete and Lynne are planning to meet with Skagit Valley College to begin to explore ways to get younger folks engaged in the Salish Sea Stewards program.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue. Scheduling surveys during the winter months can be a little tricky.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: Interns will continue to collect data through November. The interns will then put together data analysis, a final report, and presentation. Virtual presentations will be held January 7th and Skagit MRC members are invited. It will also be a good opportunity to learn what other participants in the program have been working on.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Jillian, an AmeriCorps with Padilla Bay, is leading the Kids on the Beach program in Annie's absence, while Annie works on her Master's in education. The field program with Conway Middle School was originally scheduled for October 19th at the Fidalgo RV Park but was canceled due to poor air quality from the forest fires. The field program has been rescheduled for November 18th at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Students will be collecting beach seining data and forage fish surveys with the help of volunteers from 8:30am to 1pm. Beach seining will be led by Mira Lutz. Pete said they are looking for more volunteers to help assist the kids with the forage fish surveys and are willing to train volunteers on the job.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel: The [2022 Pinto Abalone Final Report](#) is now complete and available on the Skagit MRC website. Puget Sound Restoration Fund will start field work in February or March 2023.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Field work is complete for the 2022 season. Overall, this year has been a very good year for oyster larval recruitment. We will be conducting a Bay-wide survey in partnership with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund starting in April or May 2023, with NOAA Congressional funding. Bay-wide surveys will only occur at 5-year intervals as funding allows. The last bay-wide survey was completed in 2018.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling – Diane Hennebert: We were unable to complete the QAPP prior to the first flush this fall. Diane will need assistance in completing the QAPP if the MRC wants to get sampling done at Sharpes Corner this spring. Jude recommended looking at other QAPPs that have been approved by Ecology and posted online for similar projects that we could use as a guideline. If we are unable to complete the QAPP in time for spring sampling, we will need to amend the MRC grant and move the funds to another project. Lynne pointed out that Friends of Skagit Beaches volunteers collected samples from the first flush to test for contaminants off HWY 20 near Sharpes Corner and sent it to Edge Analytics for analysis. The Salish Sea School grant funds were used to pay for the samples.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: September was the last month for kelp surveys this season. The Northwest Straits Initiative will kick off the 2023 survey season with a regional meeting in early spring for MRC's to share survey data and get geared up for the upcoming survey season. Eleanor Hines with RE-Sources recently presented the kelp survey program to the Hole in the Wall kayak group in Anacortes in October which sparked some interest from experienced kayakers to help with the kelp surveys.

- **Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:** Skagit MRC partnered with the Northwest Straits Foundation to host a planting party at Bowman Bay on November 3, 2022. 17 volunteers, MRC members, MRC staff, and NWSF staff applied compost and planted over 175 native plants that were purchased with MRC grant funds. Several volunteers also participated in the forage fish survey following the planting party. NOAA Congressional funds will be used to continue plant maintenance activities at Bowman Bay in 2023 in partnership with NWSF. The NWSF has completed three beach restoration projects at Deception Pass State Park including Cornet Bay, Hoypus Point, and Bowman Bay and will continue to manage the plant maintenance activities and monitoring at each site.

Miscellaneous Announcements: All

- Jude Apple announced the recruitment for a Facilities Maintenance Coordinator at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to replace Mark Olson who recently retired. For more information and to apply, follow this link: <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/washington/jobs/3770459/facility-maintenance-coordinator-maintenance-mechanic-2>

The meeting adjourned at 10:46am. The next MRC meeting will be held December 8, at the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort in Anacortes, followed by a field trip to the Mt. Erie Rain Garden.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **October 13, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson, Kari Odden, Pete Haase, Catey Ritchie, Matt Castle, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson
- **Others in Attendance:** Leah Robison, NWSC; Jeff Whitty, NWSC; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Mira Lutz

Call to Order and Introduction: Betsy called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** September 8, 2022, MRC meeting were approved by consensus as written.
- **Public Comments:** Mira Lutz shared information about the National Science Foundation proposal for a 3-year research project to study the effect of teachers utilizing the Explore the Salish Sea curriculum which takes kids out to the beach and provides culturally responsive instruction. They will know if it gets funded in January. Mira thanked the MRC for providing a Letter of Collaboration. Some MRC members have committed to supporting the students in doing field science which would most likely take place in the spring of 2024. The project will involve working with La Conner and Sedro Woolley schools.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held September 30, 2022, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.

- **Seabird and Marine Mammal Monitoring:** Scott Pearson from WDFW gave an excellent presentation on how they monitor seabirds and marine mammals. The presentation and interactive map was shared with the MRC. To explore data collected, go to <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/wp/MarineSeabird/index.html>
- **Northwest Straits initiative Reauthorization:** The NWSI reauthorization bill was introduced to the Senate.
- **Derelict Vessels:** A workgroup is being formed with MRC and tribal representatives to help guide derelict vessel removal prioritization and a pilot Vessel Turn In Event in 2023. MRCs have until the end of October to identify and prioritize derelict vessels to be removed. So far Skagit MRC has not identified any.
- **Eurasian Green Crab Update:** There was a late season spike in the number of green crabs trapped. They were also finding green crabs in the lower reaches of tidally influenced creeks.
- **March in-person NWSC retreat:** An in-person retreat is being planned for March. Diane will be unable to attend and is looking for another Skagit MRC member to go in her place.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meetings via Zoom- **October 28** (10:00am-12:00pm):** All MRC members are welcome to attend. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

Northwest Straits Initiative (NWSI) Collaborative Workshop:

- Skagit MRC members Pete Haase, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Paul Dinnel, Diane Hennebert, and Matt Castle attended the NWSI Collaborative Workshop on September 16th at Padilla Bay. They all enjoyed seeing everyone in person and felt inspired after listening to elected officials Liz Lovelett and Ann Larson (Patty Murray's representative) speak very passionately about the work that we do. Rosie Cayo James also provided an inspirational welcome and delicious salmon BBQ. MRC's exchanged project ideas and discussed collaborative opportunities. It was exciting to see what the other MRCs are doing and how it could translate here. It was surprising to learn how few MRCs have a volunteer program like the Salish Sea Stewards. Over 50 people attended the event.

Project Status & Discussion

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith: Fidalgo Bay Day was held Saturday, August 20th at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Thanks to Darla’s leadership and the 36 organizations and 155 volunteers who helped make this year’s in-person event a huge success! An estimated 300 people attended. The opening ceremony was led by MRC member Jay Lind and Samish tribal member Rosie Cayou James. The event offered a wide variety of indoor and outdoor educational booths and activities including a beach seining demonstration, a touch tank, a whale skull, microscopes, games, kids crafts, and face painting. 175 attendees participated in the Discovery Passport activity and 35 kids competed in the coloring contest to win a spot on the cover of next year’s Discovery Passport. Food included popcorn, a chowder competition from 3 local restaurants, complimentary samples of grilled shellfish, and a no-host traditional Samish salmon BBQ lunch. Bob’s Chowder Bar won the chowder competition this year. There were two newspaper articles about the event. Planning for the 2023 FBD event will likely start in November. Darla announced she can no longer be the lead for Fidalgo Bay Day and is looking for someone else to fill that role.
- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: The Advisory Committee is currently focused on the implementation of a part-time paid stewardship coordinator position with congressional funding. This role will help provide support and coordinate volunteer opportunities with stewards and maintain a strong volunteer base. Currently, the consensus of the AC is that a professional in the communication/ecology field (working less hours) would be more beneficial than a new college intern each year. The AC held a meeting on October 20th to start planning the 2023 SSS training which will start in February to get volunteers trained and ready to help with projects by early spring. Classes will likely be held Tuesdays again at Padilla Bay.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue. We have reached the 5-year post-construction monitoring requirement at our restoration sites so we will either stop sampling or reduce sampling at these sites in 2023. Sampling at the DNR Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve sites will likely be reduced as well. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife maintains the database for the forage fish survey data collected, including 6 sites in Skagit County, and shares results with forage fish volunteers and partners on a regular basis. They also host quarterly meetings to touch base with the volunteers and partners. Jason Morgan with NWSF oversees and analyzes the data collected at our restoration sites and will compile it into a final report. DNR maintains and analyzes the data collected at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve site. The data is shared in reports to the Citizen Stewardship Committee and posted on the DNR’s Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve website. Fidalgo Bay has the most forage fish spawning activity compared to any of the other sites in Skagit County.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: The monitoring will continue through November. The interns will then put together data analysis, a final report, and presentation. Virtual presentations will be held January 7th and Skagit MRC members are invited. It will also be a good opportunity to learn what other participants in the program have been working on.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Typically, the Kids on the Beach program involves grade school and middle school students. But starting this fall we will have a modified version involving high school students. The first program this fall occurred October 5th with Concrete High School Students who collected mudflat exploration data at Bay View State Park. The next field program is with Conway Middle School on October 19th at the Fidalgo RV Park where they will be collecting beach seining data and forage fish surveys with the help of volunteers from 8:30am to 1pm.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneel: The [2022 Pinto Abalone Final Report](#) is now complete and available on the Skagit MRC website. The final report is now complete and available on the MRC website. Puget Sound Restoration Fund and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife were able to spawn and raise about 1.3 million abalone larvae to settlement stage. They surveyed four of the eight Skagit abalone restoration sites and found 275 abalone. About 20% of those had emigrated offsite. There were densities of 0.23 to a little over 1 abalone per square meter. Densities of only 0.15 per square meter is required for successful spawning to occur. The abalone have grown a little over 2 inches. No outplanting occurred at the Skagit restoration sites this year. Over 7,283 juvenile abalone were outplanted in San Juan County.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel: Overall, this year has been a very good year for oyster larval recruitment. It was the highest larval recruitment that we’ve ever seen. Several bags of oyster seed were transported to Padilla Bay as well as Kukatali and Skagit Bay. One set of the shell string at Weaverling spit didn’t survive the winter. Most likely because they were in an area that was really exposed to boat traffic and storm action. The three shell strings at the trestle were collected and are currently being analyzed by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling – Diane Hennebert: No Update.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: September was the last month for kelp surveys this season. Several new Salish Sea Stewards helped with the kelp surveys this year. The kelp appears to be healthy at all sites and expanded in growth compared to the last survey. Three purple sea stars were observed at the Biz Point kelp bed

site. The survey track at Coffin Rocks looks different than previous years due to smokey haze, currents, and the growth extension of the kelp bed. The winds and waves really picked up during the Shannon Point kelp survey. The survey team had to retreat and head back to shore. Unfortunately, they were unable to reschedule the September survey for Shannon Point.

- **Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:** Skagit MRC had a sub-Award Agreement with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to manage the plant maintenance work at Bowman Bay that recently ended on September 30th. On September 9th Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Ameri-corps and staff removed the water bags that were placed next to the conifers and spread mulch. They rented a water truck and watered the plants at the site on September 22. The final walk through with the MRC Project Lead and SFEG staff occurred September 30th. Some of the new plantings did not do very well this year because they were planted a little later in the season due to the birth of the elephant seal followed by a dry hot summer. The Final Report is now complete. Costs were lower than expected, so there was some money left on the contract with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group which was used to purchase additional plants for the site. The contract with SFEG expired September 20th. To get the 150 new plants in the ground this fall, Skagit MRC is partnering with the Northwest Straits Foundation to co-host a volunteer planting party at Bowman Bay on November 3rd from 9am to 12pm. Volunteers will be asked to provide their own garden tools and gloves.

NOAA Grant Application Update: *Tracy*

- The NOAA Grant application for our MRC project proposals was due September 30, 2022. Approximately \$200k will be available in January for MRC projects. The projects must be completed within the 12-month timeframe, by December 31, 2023. Tracy thanked Cindy and the MRC Project Leads for their hard work preparing the proposals and addressing the comments from the NWSC staff.
 1. **Trestle Replacement- Fidalgo Bay (\$58,000)**- There are still questions whether NOAA funds can be used for a match. Sasha is waiting for some clarification from NOAA. The funds will likely need to be directed to the City through an interlocal agreement for the conceptual design, project management, and for developing and implementing an education/outreach plan.
 2. **Olympia Oyster Fidalgo Bay-Wide Monitoring (\$7,500)**- Funds would be used to contract with Puget Sound Restoration Fund to conduct a bay-wide survey of Olympia oysters in Fidalgo Bay. There were only a few minor comments that Paul was able to address and its now moving forward to EAGL.
 3. **Salish Sea Stewards Part-Time Volunteer Coordinator (\$10,000)**- Funds would go directly to Ecology for Padilla Bay NERR or the Padilla Bay Foundation to hire an Intern or a PT professional. There were questions whether this would be enough funding for the long list of tasks. The Salish Sea Advisory Committee recommends increasing the budget to \$15k - \$20k. Tracy will need to confirm with Sasha if we can request funding beyond the allotted \$200k.
 4. **School Rain Gardens (\$10,000)**- There were questions about whether the funding would be enough to cover the interpretive sign, rain garden design, and installation. Diane said she would check to see what their final cost was for Mt. Erie, but there are so many factors that can play a part in the cost of a rain garden. The City of Anacortes provided excavation for the Mt. Erie rain garden because its within City limits. However, if its outside of City limits (Fidalgo Elementary or any La Conner schools) then we will have to either hire a contractor or hope we can find someone who will donate their time, excavator, and dump truck. Plants and design are another big piece. The rain garden curriculum was created by one of Diane's interns. It is designed to be three lessons over the school year: one in fall, one in winter, one in spring. Each lesson has a hands-on activity and a trip through the garden. The Green Club at the high school is interested in coming to the elementary school to teach the curriculum to the kids. There were also questions regarding maintenance. The bulk of the site maintenance has to be done when school is not in session, otherwise the students could get involved. We could try to recruit one or two Salish Sea Stewards to maintain the site on a consistent basis.
 5. **Voluntary No Anchor Zone/Eelgrass Protection (\$5,000)**- Funding was originally to be used for outreach, mailing, and supplies. However, after meeting with the NWSC staff, we've decided to postpone the No-Anchor Zone outreach work until the next MRC grant funding cycle due to the permitting timeline concerns which means we will no longer need the \$5,000 from the NOAA grant. Kevin plans to continue monitoring anchored vessels at Seafarers Memorial Park.
 6. **European Green Crab Community Outreach/Education (\$5,000)** - Lynne and Tracy will be meeting with NWSC staff this Friday to address some of the comments and to get some clarification regarding what

the project needs are and what Skagit MRC's role should be. The budget for this project could probably be reduced.

7. **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance (\$5,760)**- The MRC is considering partnering with the Northwest Straits Foundation to take the lead on plant maintenance instead of the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group. It seems like a perfect fit since the Foundation is not only part of the NWSI, but they were also the Project Manager of the larger Bowman Bay restoration project. It would also be easier to partner with the Northwest Straits Foundation from an administrative standpoint since the funds would go directly to the Foundation rather than through the County. The MRC has been partnering with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to take the lead on plant maintenance for the last several years, but nearshore restoration work isn't really in their wheelhouse. Their primary focus is riparian restoration along freshwater creeks and streams.

The following proposals were submitted by the NWSF and are moving forward. Funding will go directly through the NWSC to the Foundation instead of through the County. MRC members expressed concern about making sure we are on the same page as the Foundation regarding the project goals, objectives, and implementation and what the MRC's role will be. Tracy suggested we develop a Partnership Project Plan with the Northwest Straits Foundation for each of the projects we will be partnering on that clearly outlines the project, and the roles and responsibilities of the Foundation and MRC.

8. **Derelict Crab Pot Removal in Samish Bay (\$41,100)**
9. **Shore Friendly Shoreline Landowner Workshops (\$5,000)**
10. **Clayton Beach Restoration (\$50,000)**

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- MRC Grant: Our MRC grant (Year 1) expired September 30th. All year-1 grant invoices, deliverables, volunteer hours, in-kind services, and invoices are due. Tracy will post the final reports on the MRC website and send links. Year-2 of the MRC grant started Oct 1, 2022 and will end September 30, 2023.
- Next MRC Grant Funding Cycle: The MRC will need to come up with a list of projects for the next two-year MRC grant by March 2023. Grant applications will be due in May. The new two-year grant will start October 1, 2023.
- In-person annual meeting: The monthly meetings will continue to be held virtually. The consensus of the Committee was to hold the December 8th MRC meeting in-person since it's the last meeting of the year. The meeting will include a field trip to the Mount Erie Rain Garden.

The meeting adjourned at 11:25am. The next MRC meeting will be held November 10 via Microsoft Teams.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **September 8, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson, Kari Odden, Pete Haase, Catey Ritchie, Matt Castle
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel
- **Others in Attendance:** Cindy Elston, SCPW; Kristen Murray, SFEQ; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Hannah Williams, Skagit Land Trust

Call to Order and Introduction: Betsy called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** August 11, 2022, MRC meeting were approved by consensus as written.
- **Public Comments:** Skagit MRC will be proposing a letter of recommendation in support of the Skagit Land Trust for the Rose Foundation's Puget Sound Stewardship and Mitigation Fund grant. The grant would be used to help recruit, retain, and onboard stewards through reimbursement of volunteer travel and tool costs, along with potential internship stipends. Edits were suggested, which included switching the order of two paragraphs and adding a sentence clarifying that the grant will be applied to travel reimbursement for land stewards to Skagit MRC's Salish Sea Stewards program, in addition to tool costs and a potential stipend for interns. Once edits are completed, the letter of recommendation was approved by consensus.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held August 26, 2022, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.

- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meetings via Zoom- September 30 (10:00am-12:00pm) and October 28 (10:00am-12:00pm):** All MRC members are welcome to attend. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- **Congressionally Directed Spending** the Northwest Straits Commission was awarded congressional funding through NOAA for 2023. Funding will be available to the MRCs January 1 – December 31.
- **Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization:** Senator Murray continues to lead the effort. Preliminary plans indicate the bill may be introduced in the US Senate after the August recess.
- **Northwest Straits Initiative Collaborative Conservation Workshop:** The workshop will be held at Padilla Bay on September 16th. Senator Lovelett agreed to speak.
- **Derelict Vessel Removal:** The project is moving forward and they are compiling prioritization lists to decide where to spend the funds.
- **Speed Dating with a Scientist:** At each meeting, a guest speaker who works in the field of marine science gives a short presentation. Chris Mantegna from the University of Washington presented about her Yellow Island Intertidal Monitoring Project for underserved groups. They take the students out to Yellow Island and do monitoring.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards – *Darla Gay Smith*:** This fall, the Advisory Committee will be focusing on the implementation of a part-time paid stewardship coordinator position. This role will help provide support and coordinate volunteer opportunities with stewards. The Advisory Committee took its traditional month off in August. In September, they will begin reviewing feedback from last year's trainees and presenters and will start the process of planning and refining the 2023 training program. There are 342 stewards, and since 2014 they have contributed over 40,000 hours of service.

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith: It was resounding success, with over 36 participating organizations, over 300 attendees, the weather cooperated, and it was stellar. A full update was postponed until October due to technical difficulties.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Volunteers will continue surveying at all the sites in September, October, November, and December. This seems to be a rather odd spawning year for surf smelt and they haven't seen the mass spawning events that they usually have seen in previous years. They do not know the cause, but surf smelt are somewhat sensitive to water salinity, so they may have been impacted by the freshwater input from earlier this year. In addition to MRC surveys, the volunteers also extensively survey Fidalgo Bay for DNR, and are thinking about reducing the number of samples they will be taking in the future. The volunteers have also been asked to help do forage fish surveys at the beach property adjacent to the Samish Island flower farm that was recently acquired by the Skagit Land Trust. It will also be a good opportunity for Padilla Bay staff to get involved in forage fish monitoring along those beaches.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: The monitoring continues. The interns will be monitoring for two or three more months, and then putting together data analysis and presentations. Presentations will be held January 7th and Skagit MRC members are invited. It will also be a good opportunity to learn what other participants in the program have been working on. Pete will talk with the Salish Sea School about doing another year of the program with Skagit MRC support.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: The first Kids on the Beach effort is kicking off with Conway, and classroom and field activity dates have been set for the middle of October. So far, Conway is the only school participating in the fall program. 2-4 more schools will likely be participating in the spring program.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinne: No updates. The field work is complete, and now they are working on data analysis and report writing. A final report will be provided at the end of this month.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinne: No updates.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling – Diane Hennebert: The Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) required by Ecology for stormwater sampling won't likely be completed and approved prior to the first flush this fall or before the MRC grant funding expires. Skagit MRC plans to collaborate with Amy Eberling's Salish Sea School to do the sampling and lab tests this fall because they have funding which does not require the full QAPP. The MRC will re-evaluate whether the full QAPP requirement is worth the \$2,000 MRC grant funds or if it makes more sense to collaborate with the Salish Sea School do the sampling again next year.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The kelp is healthy at all sites. They likely will not be able to survey in October due to weather conditions, so September is their last month of sampling.
 - Shannon Point: Had 6 Kayakers on August 12, and the beds are expanding and getting denser. The last survey at Shannon Point will be tomorrow, September 9th. The depth sounder tool they currently have is very awkward to use. It gets tangled, wrapped around paddles, and is generally difficult to handle. Hall Lee came up with a new tool that he found on Amazon and they will have a new depth sounder tool to share with other teams tomorrow.
 - Shannon Point East: Had dense invasive sargassum kelp along the shoreline, which they have seen in the past but this appeared denser than previously observed. They also saw for the first time *Saccharina latissima*, which had epiphytes all along it. The bull kelp offshore is healthy with long blades but was still fairly dispersed. They saw one osprey.
 - Shannon Point West: Did not see invasive kelps. The kelp was extremely widely spaced but was healthy and had very long blades.
 - Coffin Rocks: The last survey was August 25th. The kelp was healthy. The perimeter track was taken by a new kayaker, so the perimeter looked a little different than previous surveys but they were able to get it uploaded. There will be one more survey in September.
 - Biz Point: The last survey was August 8th. They had 3 kayakers. The kelp was healthy and wider than it was in July. There were lots of bait fish jumping, 11 purple sea stars, and one osprey. There will be one more survey in September.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The last volunteer party of the year was on August 8th. Tracy worked with Skagit County Public Works and arranged a water truck to water the restoration area on August 12th. Nate White with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group will do a final round of watering next week, and a final walk-through on September 30th with Lynne. A final report will be provided. SFEG costs were lower than expected because Adam rigged up a water tank rather than the rental, so there is some money left on the contract. Tracy and Lynne will talk to SFEG and NWSC to see how they can use the funds elsewhere, such as re-planting the conifers we lost.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- Tracy sent a friendly reminder that the funding for our MRC grant (Year 1) expires September 30th. All year 1 grant deliverables, volunteer hours, in-kind services, and invoices are due by Oct 10, 2022. MRC members must submit quarterly hours (July-Sept) by October 3, 2022. Year 2 of the MRC grant starts Oct 1, 2022.
- NOAA Grant Application deadline is- **September 30, 2022!** Cindy Elston will insert the original project proposals into the new NOAA grant application forms and share those with each of the project leads for the following projects before submitting them to the NWSC:
 1. Voluntary No Anchor Zone/Eelgrass Protection
 2. Olympia Oyster Fidalgo Bay-Wide Monitoring
 3. Salish Sea Stewards Part-Time Volunteer Coordinator
 4. School Rain Gardens
 5. European Green Crab Community Outreach/Education
 6. Derelict Crab Pot Removal in Samish Bay (NWSF will provide this proposal)
 7. Clayton Beach Restoration (NWSF will provide this proposal)
 8. Fidalgo Bay Trestle Concept Design/Community Outreach
- Mount Erie Rain Garden: They had a volunteer event to spruce it up before the first day of school. There were a few erosion issues. Interns have been taking care of weeding and watering. A couple of families showed up and fixed it. The signs will be installed when the grounds crew installs the base. It could be a good model for the school raingardens program. The curriculum will involve one lesson in the fall, winter, and spring, so students can see the rain garden in different seasons. There are also some hands-on science activities to see some of the processes involved.
- In-person annual meeting: The monthly meetings will continue virtually, but there is a possibility of making the December 8th meeting in-person. It could involve a tour of the Mount Erie Rain Garden. A poll will be released asking what people want to do.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25am. The next MRC meeting will be held October 13 via Microsoft Teams.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **August 11, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Jay Lind, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Kevin Anderson, Kari Odden, Jodi Bluhm (Matt Castle's Alternate)
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Jude Apple, Betsy Stevenson, Diane Hennebert, Catey Ritchie, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Cindy Elston, SCPW; Sasha Horst, NWSC; Jessica Page, NWSF

Call to Order and Introduction: Lynne called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** July 14, 2022, MRC meeting were approved by consensus as written.
- **Public Comments:** none

NWS Foundation Passport to Marine Adventure – Jessica Page

The passport to marine adventure app is up and running in the app store. Link to NWS Foundation webpage about the app: [Passport To Marine Adventure – Online Portal | NWStraitsFoundation.org](https://www.nwstraitsfoundation.org/passport-to-marine-adventure-online-portal). The goal is to get people visiting coastal sites and beaches in the 7 counties, to spread awareness about what the Initiative and partners have been doing in terms of restoration and monitoring. There are educational aspects on the app about each site, for 3 sites in each county. Users can collect points by visiting sites and redeem them with local businesses for discounts. Educational information on the app is related to the site (for example, a beach might have information about eelgrass or forage fish surveys). They currently have a limit of 40 sites, including rewards sites, on the app but are hoping to raise the site limit, and are looking for more sites to swap out other sites in the future.

In Skagit County, 3 sites are currently active: Kiket Island, Port of Anacortes' rain garden, and Bayview State Park. They hope to add a few more sites to the app in the next couple months and are thinking about Bowman Bay and Sunset Beach as possible future sites. Paul suggested the South Padilla Bay Shore Trail as a future site. Pete mentioned that Kiket is a heavily visited site with a small parking lot that fills up quickly. Jessica said that they launched the app last month and not many people are using it yet, but if accessibility becomes a problem, they may switch sites.

MRC members were asked to provide input on the selected sites, environmental education ideas, pictures of the sites, and local tips and things to do. They are also looking for suggestions for potential reward sites in Skagit County. You can contact Jessica Page via email: page@nwstraitsfoundation.org.

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report – Sasha Horst

- **Collaborative Conservation Workshop- Sept 16:** This will be the first in-person event in a long time and will be keeping it simple. The event will be held at Padilla Bay on Friday, September 16th, 11am-4pm . They would like each MRC to bring to the group some information about a project and do a round-robin "speed dating" about lessons learned, project sharing, and networking.
- **Derelict vessel removal:** NWSC will be putting together a work group and need roughly 1 person from each MRC to help prioritize the vessels for removal and then will do an interagency agreement with DNR. Some MRCs prioritized a chunk of their money for derelict vessel removal, so they will be getting some of their vessels high on the list for

removal, but all MRCs can be part of the workgroup. Lynne will be the point-person for Skagit MRC for the derelict vessel removal project.

- In Memoriam, Terry Williams: Terry Williams, member of the Tulalip Tribes and one of the founding members of Northwest Straits Initiative, recently passed away. Terry was an influential leader in salmon recovery, climate action, and protecting the Salish Sea. He will be greatly missed.
- Congressional Funding Update: The NWS Commission finally received the notification from NOAA that they have officially received the award for congressional funding, so they can start getting agreements launched. The grant starts January 1, 2023 and expires December 31, 2023.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: The 6-person Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee met on July 20th, 2022. We are actively recruiting 3 new members from the 2022 graduates to the Advisory Committee, and are reviewing feedback from this year's training program to help refine next year's Salish Sea Stewards training program. The traditional July picnic for all Salish Sea Stewards was hosted on Saturday, July 16, 2022, by PBNERR and Friends of Skagit Beaches. Over 40 stewards attended. Padilla Bay conducted a lab facility tour and assisted WWU Shannon Point students in their outdoor table presentations of summer research projects. A GERE-a-DELI lunch was provided by Friends of Skagit Beaches and the reserve. The Advisory Committee works continually to keep volunteers informed of current volunteer opportunities available through the SSS electronic news bulletin, "The Wave" and Facebook.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith: The 2022 Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Committee's last virtual meeting was held on July 29, 2022. Fidalgo Bay Day will be held August 20th from 11:00am to 3:00pm at Fidalgo Bay Resort. Opening ceremonies will be presented by Jay Lind and Samish elder Rosie Cayou James. 14 organizations have confirmed participation with educational booths. Activities will include the WWU Shannon Point Marine Center touch tank, a no-host salmon barbeque, beach seining demonstration, 12 kid-friendly aquatic-themed crafts, and educational booths. Friends of Skagit Beaches will be running a kids art contest and the passport program. Paul is working with Taylor Shellfish to get a donation of oysters & clams/blue mussels to grill. Four Anacortes restaurants will be participating in the chowder contest: Adrift, Secret Cove, Bob's Chowder Bar, and 13moons.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue. There were about 48,000 eggs in one sample at Fidalgo Bay East, and all were dead. The spawning volume this summer is low compared to years past, and survival rate is so low because of the heat and sun and low tide. They will be cutting back some survey activity starting this year and next year, because some of the surveys are done on restoration sites and the monitoring duration required will have ended, and Department of Fish and Wildlife do not have the resources and time to handle all the samples. Marches point will probably be reduced to one sample once a month, will continue at Bowman Bay monthly, Kiket Island will either end or be reduced to one trip of the month, and Fidalgo Bay will be reduced. They may take on additional survey work on the land trust and reserve on Samish Island.
- Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: Nothing new to report. Julia and Trevor will have more information later this year when they start analyzing their data.
- Kids on the Beach – Pete Haase: Nothing new to report, but they we will probably have more to report next month.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneel: Nothing new to report. The field work is complete, and now they are working on data analysis and report writing.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel: No activity this last month. They will be collecting bags next spring and counting new recruits. Next month they will be collecting the shell strings (shells on a stick for monitoring oyster recruitment) working in conjunction with Puget Sound Restoration Fund at 2 sites in Fidalgo Bay: one at the trussell and one at the Samish RV Park.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling – Diane Hennebert: No updates.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: We started monthly kelp surveys in June. We currently survey three sites: Shannon Point, Bowman Bay Coffin Rocks, and Biz Point. Julie Ledbetter from the Department of Natural Resources will be visiting each kelp survey site across the state and has submitted potential dates for her to visit. Brad Smith and Dale Fournier will be moving back to the east coast. Brad leads the kelp surveys at Shannon Point, and Lynne will be taking over the Shannon Point surveys for the rest of the season. There are 5 new kayaker volunteers who have joined the teams. Kelp is growing slowly this year.
 - Shannon Point: Next survey is tomorrow, August 12th, and will have 6 kayakers (3 new). Will report findings next month. The last survey will be September 9th.

- Coffin Rocks: Last survey was July 25th, had 4 kayakers (2 were new this season). Kelp looked healthy with a finger of new growth from the north end, and the normal hole has been filling in with new kelp growth despite being 4 feet deep. Next survey is September 10th and will be the last of the season.
- Biz Point: Last survey was July 17th. Kelp bed has expanded a little in width but is still far narrower than previous years, no sea stars and no animals observed. The last survey will be September 8th.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The last volunteer party of the year was on August 8th. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group had over 18 volunteers, many of which were from Crane Aerospace as a sponsored volunteer event and several Salish Sea Stewards. Nate White, the new Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group lead joined as well. They spread 7 cubic yards of bark, did some nominal weeding, and watered a portion of it. SFEG has 2 more waterings in September, and a staff walk-through on September 30th.

Collaborative Conservation Workshop – MRC Project Discussion:

Lynne Wenberg, Jay Lind, Paul Dinnel, and Pete Haase are planning to attend the Collaborative Conservation Workshop. Each MRC will select one project to share with the other MRCs. Skagit MRC will be focusing on the theme of cross-collaboration among our projects (forage fish surveys, restoration projects, coordinating Salish Sea Stewards volunteers, etc). Lynne will work on filling out the form, which is due by August 25th.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- Lynne will follow up with Catie and CC Pete and Tracy about reaching out to the Sauk-Suiattle and the Upper Skagit to see if they approve the NWS Commission’s land acknowledgement and if they would like to be included.
- Jeff Whitty of NWSC has been leading an invasive European green crab removal activity. They are targeting areas in Skagit where green crab has been found and need help with two sites: Colony Creek and Pidgeon Point. They need volunteers in September and October for trapping, carrying packets or buckets, walking around in muddy sites, checking the traps for rebaiting, handling green crabs and assessing color/condition/sex, recording data, cleaning and organizing, taking pictures, and community outreach. They would love to have shoreline landowners involved and help from the MRC. They could use whatever help people are willing to volunteer, whether it’s a few hours every couple of weeks or a few days a week. You can use the link to the questionnaire or the QR code to sign up.

The meeting adjourned at 10:18am. The next MRC meeting will be held September 8th via Microsoft Teams.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **July 14, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Jay Lind, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Kevin Anderson
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Jude Apple, Betsy Stevenson, Diane Hennebert, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Cindy Elston, SCPW; Julia Schielke, MRC Intern; Lisa Kaufman, NWSF; Allie Simpson, NWSC; Kristen Murray, SFEG; Dana Oster, NWSC; Trevor Derie, MRC Intern; Nathan Woods, NWSC

Call to Order and Introduction: Lynne called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** June 9, 2022, MRC meeting were approved by consensus as written.
- **Public Comments:** none

MRC/Salish Sea School Intern Intros and Updates - Pete Haase, Trevor Derie, Julia Schielke

Pete introduced Trevor Derie and Julia Schielke. Trevor is a MRC-Salish Sea School intern working on a project called STaRS (Students Training as Research Scientists) and is mentoring Julia, an 8th grade student in the STaRS program. They are doing a year-long forage fish survey at Marches Point, which has been ongoing since January. They have 3 stations set up with various variables such as gravel size, freshwater vs saltwater, and shading, and will monitor changes over time. After sampling ends in November, they will start putting together a report and a presentation. They have not seen any big spawnings yet, but have seen some hatchlings and scatterings of live eggs.

Northwest Straits Foundation Update – Lisa Kaufman

Lisa provided an update on the projects the Northwest Straits Foundation has been working on in Skagit County including:

- **Crab Pot Removal:** The survey was completed in the spring in Anacortes, and over 300 crab pots were identified for removal. Lisa is not sure when the removal will occur or if it already has.
- **Catch More Crab Program:** The catch more crab program is currently underway. All materials have been distributed and posted on Facebook and other social media. We hosted a crabber workshop online, which allowed for more participation across a broader audience, and it was well attended as always.
- **Clayton beach:** Not a lot has been going on, but Hailey and Jason are working on developing a monitoring plan. We also had a meeting with eelgrass folks at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and DNR thinks that once the armor is removed, eelgrass will move landward into the intertidal zone. We also discussed potential expansion of the project to include a large drench hole used to fill the area behind the rocks and pilings, which DNR sees as a big restoration opportunity for eelgrass. In regards to phasing the project by removing the upper 800 ft of the armor first, DNR expressed concerns that it may scour out the eelgrass. NW Straits Foundation has been reaching out to tribes for permission to start investigations and get core samples. This project will be funded by congressional funds, thanks to the Skagit and Whatcom MRCs, and \$75,000 from USDF&W Coastal Program, which will move them along towards feasibility and preliminary designs. The project will spend 2 more years gathering information, getting consultants out on the ground, and developing preliminary designs.
- **Shoreline Landowner Workshops:** NW Straits Foundation hosted a vegetation management workshop in partnership with the Swinomish Tribe and the Washington State University in May. We also brought in a video crew to create 3 or 4 segments on vegetation management for shore friendly living, which should be completed by the end of September. ESRP funding can now be used for their workshops and other direct outreach to landowners, but not for

videos or contractors. We will be doing a video on smart development and are hoping to do a workshop on coastal & climate resiliency. We are hoping to expand outreach audience and workshop topics in the future.

- Rain Garden: The rain garden has been completed. Dianne is watering and maintaining it. Erosion is occurring on one side of the rain garden, but Lisa is not sure if anything will be done to resolve this.
- Nearshore Monitoring: Jason, Haley, and Jessy are doing summer monitoring with volunteers. They have already monitored the Similk Bay site, and they added the sites in the south and central Puget Sound for DFW as well.
- Marine Passport: The Marine Passport is live and you can download the app off of the NW Straits Foundation website. Jessy and Brook are working on refining all the information on each site and working with a select number of local businesses to create a local partnership with rewards for app users.
- Salish Sea Conservation Crew: Brook and Dawn are working on transitioning the AmeriCorps investigation into a pilot effort to create the Salish Sea Conservation Crew. This will be a long-term effort to help get resources available to local MRCs and NW Straits.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: The 5-person Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee met on June 15, 2022. We are actively recruiting 3 new members to the AC from the 2022 graduates over this summer, and are reviewing feedback from this year’s training program while refining next year’s Salish Sea Stewards training program. The traditional July picnic for all Salish Sea Stewards is planned for this Saturday, July 16, 2022, noon-3pm at Padilla Bay. The event is for all stewards and members of SMRC, and will be hosted by PBNERR who is also providing food, the venue, and a program. The Advisory Committee works continually to keep volunteers informed of current volunteer opportunities available through the SSS electronic news bulletin, “The Wave” and Facebook.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith: The 2022 Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Committee last met online on for their 5th meeting on June 29, 2022. 18 organizations have confirmed participation with educational booths. Activities will include the Shannon Point Marine Center touch tank, a no-host salmon barbeque, beach seining demonstration, many kid-friendly aquatic-themed crafts, and educational booths. We are also working with Taylor Shellfish for oysters & clams/blue mussels to grill and are working to get chowder donations from local Anacortes Restaurants for a chowder contest. Friends of Skagit Beaches will be running the passport program and childrens’ art contest.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue. We are recruiting a few new volunteers, and are starting to have discussions about rethinking our current sites and other potential sites that could benefit from sampling. In Fidalgo Bay, historically summer is extremely prolific for surf smelt spawn. This summer we have not seen any indication of new spawning in the last few weeks which is extremely unusual. Also, this week high school students interested in marine science are learning to do forage fish surveys through a program jointly run by Skagit Valley College and Mount Vernon High School and Burlington-Edison High School. Some of the students will be writing reports and giving presentations at the end of the program.
- Kids on the Beach – Pete Haase: The early planning has begun for next year, albeit slowly because teachers are on summer break right now. We are expecting to have some programs set up for the fall and a couple for the spring, but we will have more to report in September.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinne!: Nothing new to report. The field work is complete, including site survey monitoring for survival and growth at various outplant sites. PSRF did scouting for new outplant sites including several in Skagit County waters. They had 2 induced abalone spawns in June that resulted in 5 new families of juvenile abalone. They also outplanted about 8,000 juvenile abalone this spring, but none of them were in Skagit County and Skagit MRC funds were not used. This was based on scheduling restrictions, but Skagit County will likely be involved next year. They are working on preparing an annual report in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinne!: There hasn’t been any new work. The work from April and May was summarized in the previous minutes.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling – Diane Hennebert: No updates.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: We started in June and have completed 2 kelp surveys. We currently survey three sites: Shannon Point, Bowman Bay Coffin Rocks, and Biz Point. Julie Ledbetter from the Department of Natural Resources will be visiting each kelp survey site across the state and has submitted potential dates for her to visit. Brad Smith and Dale Fournier will be moving back to the east coast. Brad leads the kelp surveys at Shannon Point, and Lynne will be taking over the Shannon Point surveys for the rest of the season. There are 5 new kayaker volunteers who have joined the teams. Kelp is growing slowly this year.

- Shannon Point: 2-3 new kayakers, last survey was July 1st, next surveys are August 12th and September 9th.
 - Shannon Point West: A low density but continuous kelp bed which was widely spaced with no clusters, small and narrow blades, no crabs or epiphytes.
 - Shannon Point East: The kelp bed was much larger than last month, more dense and clustered, but still no crabs.
- Coffin Rocks: 2 new kayakers. Last survey was June 25th. Kelp was healthy and there was new growth with scattered bulbs, saw lots of silvery baitfish jumping on the surface and a seal. Next surveys are July 25th, August 25th, and September 10th.
- Biz Point: Kelp bed was more narrow than ever previously observed, only a few small heads present below the water outside of the perimeter. Saw 15 sea stars that appeared bleached.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group has a sub-award agreement with the MRC to continue the plant maintenance work on the Bowman Bay Restoration project. On June 27th they had 7 volunteers and 3 staff who weeded, watered plants, and installed water bags around trees that were previously planted. They also worked with the forage fish team and Michelle was there with her educational outreach kiosk to help show the connectivity between the beach restoration project and forage fish eggs. On July 13th they had 21 volunteers and 4 staff who weeded, spread 150 pounds of fertilizer, and watered. Many of these volunteers were from Glacier Peak Institute. The next volunteer maintenance party is August 8th, where they will also be spreading mulch and they may be working with the forage fish team again. They will be watering on September 1st and September 17th as needed. The final walkthrough is planned for September 30th with SFEG and SMRC staff. The SFEG riparian restoration manager who has been overseeing the implementation of this project, Adam Airoldi, is moving on to State Parks and his replacement is Nathan White, a previous SFEG senior restoration technician.

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: *Jay Lind/Diane Hennebert*

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held June 24, 2022, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.

- The NW Straits will be hosting an outdoor Collaborative Conservation Workshop on September 16 at Padilla Bay Reserve that replaces the annual conference in the fall. Each of the MRCs need to select a project to highlight at the conference. Members should think about a good project to highlight. Skagit MRC will need to fill out the form once the project is decided, which is due August 25th.
- Congressional Funds will not be awarded to the MRCs until January 2023.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- July 29 (10:00am-12:00pm): All MRC members are welcome to attend. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- MRC Grant Progress Reports and Volunteer Hours Due-July 15: MRC members were asked to send Tracy hours for MRC related projects, meetings, workshops, etc.(unless the hours are recorded in Volgistics) and project progress reports as soon as possible.

The meeting adjourned at 10:51am. The next MRC meeting will be held August 11 via Microsoft Teams.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the June 9, 2022, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Paul Dinnel, Kevin Anderson, Kari Odden, Pete Haase, Catey Ritchie, Matt Castle
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Jude Apple
- **Others in Attendance:** Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Dana Oster, NWSC; Kristin Murray, SFEG; Jodi Bluhm, Samish Indian Nation; Catherine Houck, FBAR Committee; Allie Simpson, NWSC; Todd Woodard, Samish Indian Nation; Birdie Davenport, WDNR; Jonn Lunsford, City of Anacortes

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** May 12, 2022, MRC meeting were approved by consensus as written.
- **Public Comments:** Congratulations to Pete Haase for being named Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFS) 2022 Volunteer of the Year for his involvement in forage fish surveys. Pete is being recognized for his work in recruiting, training, coordinating, and leading an army of volunteers in forage fish surveys, and organizing and hosting public outreach and education events for schools and other special events. There will be an Awards Ceremony in August.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith:** This year's Salish Sea Stewards Training ran from March 1 – March 24. 24 of the original 26 2022 new trainees graduated this year. Sara Brostrom of the Coastal Training Program at Padilla Bay is the Stewards Training Coordinator. Planning is underway for the annual SSS picnic on Saturday, July 16th at PBNERR for all Stewards. This year it will be a "bring your own lunch" event (to cover Covid unpredictability) and there will be an educational component. MRC members and the Friends of Skagit Beaches are invited. The Advisory Committee works continually to keep volunteers informed of current volunteer opportunities available through the SSS electronic news bulletin, "The Wave" and Facebook.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day- Darla Gay Smith:** The event date has been set for **Saturday, August 20, 2022**, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. So far 10 organizations confirmed participation this year. Activities will include the Friends of Skagit Beaches Passport Activity & Children's Art Contest, the Shannon Point Marine Center touch tank, beach seining demonstration, educational booths, a no host-salmon BBQ, and hopefully Taylors Shellfish oysters & clams/blue mussels to grill. So far, the volunteers haven't had much luck in getting chowder donations. All the local restaurants were hit hard by the pandemic. The FBD Planning Committee met virtually on June 6th. The next planning meeting will be held June 29. The Committee consists of 4 MRC members, 3 veteran volunteers, and 4 Salish Sea Stewards recent graduates.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:** The kelp survey season is now underway! We currently survey three sites: Shannon Point, Bowman Bay Coffin Rocks, and Biz Point. Two of our experienced kayak volunteers, Brad Smith and Dale Fournier, will be moving back to the east coast soon. Brad leads the kelp surveys at Shannon Point. Brad held a shakedown cruise in May to make sure the equipment is working properly and as a bit of a refresher training on the protocols. 7-8 kayakers attended the shake-down cruise including 5 new kayaker volunteers who will be helping with the surveys this year. The first official surveys this season were held June 3 at Shannon Point, June 12 at Biz Point, and June 25 at Bowman Bay. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hosted the 2nd of 3 Floating Kelp Indicator Workshops on June 7 via Zoom. The purpose was to get feedback in the development of the new Vital Sign indicator for floating kelp canopy area.
- **Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:** The Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance project is focused on enhancing existing vegetation, interplanting with trees and shrubs, expanding ground cover and increasing structural diversity and reducing erosion in shoreline restoration area. The plant maintenance work was put on for

a while until the new elephant seal pup was fully weaned and removed from the area. Four monthly work parties are scheduled this season: May 18, June 20, July 13, and August 8, 2022. This effort will coincide with the Forage Fish Surveys as a public outreach opportunity. The work party on May 18 consisted of 2 WCC Americorps, 1 volunteer intern, SFEG crew lead, 2 new Salish Sea Stewards trainees, and MRC Project Lead, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson. They planted plant 10 Sitka spruce, 10 Douglas Fir and 20 Scouler's willow, a bunch of salal, and did some heavy mulching. On May 19th two volunteers conducted a survival assessment the following day to help determine the maintenance needs going forward. The plants at the site look pretty good, but there has been some erosion. The site still needs more shrubs and trees to protect the understory. Soil tests indicate the soil is low in nitrogen. Todd suggested adding early successional trees like alder to fix nitrogen. Kristin said SFEG is considering doing that. Some alder trees have planted themselves at the site.

- **Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:** Monthly forage fish surveys continue. Survey sites include: Fidalgo Bay, March Point, Bowman Bay, Kukatali Preserve, and our 3 index sites. Surf smelt spawning activity is starting to pick up now after a pretty quiet winter. There were some huge spawns right on the boat ramp at the Fidalgo Bay RV Park. Todd Woodard said they were seining at the custom plywood site recently and caught a bunch of adult surf smelt that were very ready to spawn. The NWSC is hosting a forage fish training with WDFW on July 13 in Port Townsend. Contact Leah Robison for more information: robison@nwsraits.org.
- **MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase:** We contracted with the Salish Sea School to hire an intern, Trevor Derier to carry out a forage fish study at Marchs Point for the MRC that started in February. Trevor is also very active with the Pacific Mammal Institute. Trevor is mentoring a young 7th grader participating in the "Students Training as Research Scientists" (STaRS) program with the Salish Sea School. They will be invited to the next MRC meeting in July to introduce themselves and present an update on their project. The 7th grader will be giving her final presentation in January along with the other STaRS participants.
- **Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:** The KOTB program is now done for the year. Four schools participated in the spring KOTB program this year with 360 students: Sedro-Wooley, Conway, Concrete, and Anacortes middle schools. A report will be finalized in September. Planning is now underway for the fall KOTB program.
- **Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinneel:** Field work is now complete. The data analysis and annual report will be finalized in September.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel:** Field work just got started a few weeks ago. Volunteers collected bags of oyster cultch to monitor for new oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay and deploying new bags that will be collected next spring. Data indicates 2021 had the second highest rate of oyster settlement recorded in Fidalgo Bay. Volunteers also put out shell strings prepared by Puget Sound Restoration Fund at the trestle and Weaverling Spit. Bags of oyster seed were collected in Fidalgo Bay by the Swinomish and Padilla Bay NERR crews and relocated to Kukatali and Padilla Bay. They also deployed new cultch bags in Fidalgo Bay to collect more seed next year or the following year, depending on the amount of oyster settlement.
- **Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- Diane Hennebert:** The QAPP will be completed and submitted for review and approval within the next two weeks. Sampling will take place after the first flush in the fall of 2022 (late September-October).

Trestle Feasibility Study Discussion: Todd Woodard, Jonn Lunsford, and Birdie Davenport

Todd, Jonn, and Birdie presented an update on the Trestle Project and how it might relate to support from the MRC. The Committee discussed some of the questions that have been brought up regarding funding needs, match requirements, project timeline, and the education and outreach component, etc. The total match requirement for the \$355k grant received by the City of Anacortes for the Trestle Feasibility Study is \$110k, of which they currently have \$52k of match. The funding they currently have available will be used for cultural resources and physical surveys as well as geotechnical work and initial engineering. They are still short approximately \$58k of match. Birdie suggested that if the Skagit MRC could allocate \$58k to meet the remaining match requirement, it could specifically be used to pay for the concept design, public meeting, and possibly project management or permits. However, it is still unclear whether MRC congressional funding can be used towards match. The project timeline is 2 years beginning 2021 – December 2023: studies and surveys (April – Aug 2022); concept design and public meeting - late 2022 (if the MRC can provide the \$58k); geotechnical work (Jan – March 2023); plans, designs, and estimates (April – August 2023); and permits (August – December 2023).

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: Diane Hennebert

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held May 27, 2022, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.

- **New NWSC Staff:** Nathan Woods was recently hired as the new Program Coordinator for the Commission. He will be leading meeting planning and logistics and providing support to our network of regional partners.
- **NOAA Funds:** We have been assigned a NOAA liaison for the congressional funds. The Commission is hoping to have some answers to many of our questions soon (timing, allowable projects etc).
- **MRC Conference Feedback:** The Commission is asking for feedback from MRCs regarding an in-person indoor MRC Conference in November and/or an outdoor gathering in late summer or early fall. Per consensus, the Skagit MRC is in support of attending an in-person indoor Conference in November if masks are required and an outdoor gathering if masks are optional.
- **Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda:** The PSP Leadership Council will vote on approval of the new Action Agenda in June.
- **Jefferson MRC ROV Derelict Crab Pot Survey:** Jeff Taylor of the Jefferson MRC gave a presentation on their pilot project to survey for derelict crab pots with an ROV. Here are to links to short videos: [Side scan sonar survey of Adelma Beach](#) and [Tank testing ROV](#).
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- June 24 (10:00am-12:00pm):** All MRC members are welcome to attend. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

Derelict Vessels Discussion: All

The Northwest Straits Commission may have the opportunity to do an interagency agreement with DNR for derelict vessel removals and/or [vessel turn-in](#) events using congressional funds. The vessels that DNR listed as primary targets are represented by blue dots in the map that was shared with the Committee. Several Skagit MRC members expressed interest in this work but need more time to determine if there any derelict vessels in Skagit county that might stand out as primary MRC interests. If derelict vessel removal is identified as a top priority by the MRC for congressional funding, the MRC would need to determine how much of the \$200,000 to allocate towards vessel removal. MRC members were encouraged to attend the Derelict Vessels Discussion meeting with the NWSC and other MRCs via Zoom on Friday, June 10th at 2pm.

Clayton Beach Feasibility/Design Letter of Support: All

The Northwest Straits Foundation is applying for ESRP grant funds for the Clayton Beach Restoration Feasibility and Design and is seeking letters of support for the grant from Skagit and Whatcom MRC. Lisa Kaufman will be drafting the letter that will be shared with the MRC for approval.

Miscellaneous Announcements: All

- **Shoreline Landowner Workshop:** vegetation workshop, beach walk. Thousand Trails. 25 people in attendance plus a waiting list. Lots of people signed up for technical site visits.

The meeting adjourned at 10:51am. The next MRC meeting will be held July 14 via Microsoft Teams.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **May 12, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Matt Castle, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Jude Apple, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Paul Dinnel, Kevin Anderson
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Kari Odden, Pete Haase, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Amy Wilcox, NWSF; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Sasha Horst, NWSC

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** March 10, 2022, MRC meeting minutes and April 13, 2022, MRC Project Planning Retreat Summary were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** Aundrea McBride announced there are two new nearshore projects coming through the Skagit Watershed Council's grant cycle: Similk Bay Nearshore Restoration near the Swinomish Golf Course, and the Bowman Bay Feasibility Study for the Pocket Estuary Restoration project.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held April 22 via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were emailed to the MRC.

- **MRC Grant Amendments:** Half of the state funds under the current MRC grant must now be spent by June 30, 2022, which will require an amendment to shift funds around.
- **NWSC Program Coordinator Position:** currently open for applicants.
- **Eelgrass Protection- Social Marketing:** The NWSC will be developing a social marketing toolbox and site monitoring plans for MRC's eelgrass protection/voluntary no anchor zones.
- **Green Crab Detection Presentation:** P. Sean McDonald gave a presentation on the new E-DNA methods for sampling water to detect the presence of green crabs. It will be a great opportunity to do more widespread monitoring that is less labor-intensive.
- **Puget Sound Day on the Hill:** The event was canceled and will need to be rescheduled.
- **Passport to Marine Adventure Project:** The NW Straits Foundation is creating an app that will include georeferenced project sites to visit in partnership with local businesses.
- **Salish Sea Conservation Corps:** The NW Straits Foundation is developing a Salish Sea Conservation Corps program to help support the NWSF and MRCs needs.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- **May 27** (10:00am-12:00pm):** All MRC members are welcome to attend. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith:** The 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program runs March 1 through May 24, 2022; twelve Tuesdays, from 1:00-5:00 pm, in-person at Padilla Bay's Stevens Center room. The sessions have been a mixture of online and in person presentations. There are 24 trainees slated to graduate this year. Geographically the registrants hail from Anacortes, Sedro Woolley, La Conner, Mount Vernon, Burlington, Bellingham & 2 from Snohomish & Seattle. The Advisory Committee is coordinating SSS Graduation Materials (i.e. certificates, letters of congrats, SSS t-shirts, and name pins) for the May 24th last session and graduation at Padilla Bay. Planning is underway for the annual SSS picnic on Saturday, July 16th at PBNERR for all Stewards. This year it will be a "bring your own lunch" event (to cover Covid unpredictability) and there will be an educational component. The Advisory Committee works continually to keep volunteers informed of current volunteer opportunities available through the

SSS electronic news bulletin, “The Wave” and Facebook. Since 2014 the 235+ Salish Sea Stewards have contributed over 40,000 hours of service to Salish Sea projects.

- Fidalgo Bay Day- Darla Gay Smith: Fidalgo Bay Day is Skagit MRC's signature educational event that has taken place each year since 2004. The purpose of this free event is to increase public awareness of the marine environment and foster environmental stewardship. Hundreds of visitors, mostly local, attend this event each year. Planning meetings were held April 6 and April 29. The next meeting will be held this Friday, May 13. The Committee consists of 4 Skagit MRC Members, 3 Veteran Volunteers and 4 current Salish Sea Trainees (total of 11). The Resort did not accept reservations until April, so we have been playing catchup on 5 months of planning. We invite any and all of the Skagit MRC members to join us in planning and volunteering. The event date has been set for **Saturday, August 20, 2022**, 11am-3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility has been reserved. The Shannon Point Marine Center confirmed the availability of their touch tank and volunteers for Fidalgo Bay Day. Rosie James and her Samish family will offer a no-host salmon BBQ. A Save the Date notice went out to past participating organizations to gauge interest in hosting a booth at this year's event. So far there seems to be a lot of interest in participating in FBD this year. Friends of Skagit Beaches will be running the Passport Program & Childrens' Art Contest. We will be working with Taylors Shellfish for oysters & clams/blue mussels to grill with our oyster guru Paul Dinnel and his special sauce and enticing several Anacortes Restaurants for chowder donations.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The NW Straits Commission held the Kelp Kickoff on April 14 for all MRC teams performing kelp surveys. At the session, Julie Ledbetter from DNR expressed her desire to go out with a team from each county, and as such, she requested all teams to submit their proposed survey dates for the season. A Kickoff Summary of this meeting was emailed to participants on April 21 providing requisite safety videos, liability waiver forms and KoboTool Box protocols for data collection as needed to begin the annual kelp survey season. The three Skagit MRC Kelp Teams, ie, Bowman Bay (Bob Weathers – Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto – Lead) and Shannon Point (Brad Smith – Lead) are gearing up to start surveys in June. Six potential new volunteers / experienced kayakers have offered to join the Skagit teams this year and will be vetted by team leaders prior to determining their assignments. Brad Smith is planning to hold a “shake down” cruise on May 27 in advance of the regular season for the Shannon Point team and will extend the offer to new volunteers for familiarization and to better understand capabilities. Unfortunately, we will be saying goodbye to Brad Smith and Dale Fournier soon as they are moving to Massachusetts later this summer. Brad will be training Lynne Wenberg-Davidson to become the Shannon Point team lead for the remainder of the season until a permanent team lead is determined.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance project is focused on enhancing existing vegetation, interplanting with trees and shrubs, expanding ground cover and increasing structural diversity and reducing erosion in the area of the previous beach restoration. Volunteers and trainees may include community volunteers, school groups and SFEG and MRC staff. SFEG is working with Skagit MRC to coordinate volunteer events with other MRC activities. For 2022, the project has been on hold this spring as Bowman Bay State Park has been closed to the public during the birth and development of Emerson, the Elephant Seal, born to Elsie Mae in February. Emerson has been seen laying in the grass and wandering the park, but experts observed he was not spending enough time in the water or feeding. Last week, it was determined that Emerson was becoming too socialized with humans, so he was relocated by boat to an undisclosed location. The next day he was observed swimming around exploring his sea environment and doing very well. Now that Bowman Bay beach is accessible again, Adam Airoidi from SFEG has scheduled four monthly work parties beginning on May 18. This effort will coincide with the Forage Fish Survey volunteer team who will be collecting and processing samples nearby. The SFEG Crew will include two WSC Americorps members, one volunteer intern to plant 10 Sitka spruce, 10 Douglas Fir and 20 Scouler's willow, plus dune grass if possible. They also plan to install 12 watering bags to help the trees stay moist during the dry season. Two additional volunteers will conduct a survival assessment the following day. The next work parties are scheduled for June 20, July 13 and August 8, 2022. The NW Straits Foundation's “Restoration Effectiveness in Puget Sound: Shoreline Monitoring Case Study Report”, which includes the Bowman Bay Restoration site monitoring results, is now available [here](#).
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Monthly forage fish surveys continue. It is a very low time for spawning but will begin picking up soon. Pete Haase gave a presentation to the Salish Sea Stewards class on May 17 and encouraged interested folks to come along on upcoming surveys and see if they want to get more involved. The forage fish survey crew provided demos at the RV Park on May 21 as part of Skagit Water Weeks. The NWSC is hosting a forage fish training with WDFW on July 13 in Port Townsend. Contact Leah Robison for more information: robison@nwsraits.org.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase: The intern project continues with monthly forage fish survey field work and periodic zoom data analysis practice. The young 7th grader doing her Forage Fish Student Training as Research

Scientist (STaRS) program with the Salish Sea School and her mentor our MRC Intern Trevor Derie are now “on their own” with a full set of gear and their monthly survey out around March Point. We are hoping to have them give an “in person/zoom” brief visit to the MRC meeting once school is over for the year. It has been a worthy and interesting and enthusiastic effort so far!

- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Four schools participated in the spring KOTB program this year with 360 students: Sedro-Wooley, Conway, Concrete, and Anacortes middle schools. The Anacortes middle school program was completely virtual. The other schools KOTB programs included two in-person classroom visits, or remote classroom visits, and two or three field days with hands on experience collecting and analyzing scientific data at the beach with the help of volunteers. Sedro Woolley field trips took place at Padilla Bay where they collected data on invasive snails and beach seining. Conway and Concrete Middle School field trips recently took place at Fidalgo Bay where they collected forage fish eggs and examined them under a microscope and collected beach seining data. At the end of the program the students will give presentations, but they will not be participating in a science symposium this year.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinne!: Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) with the help of WDFW and Shannon Point Marine Center divers finished doing juvenile abalone outplants (~7,500) at 8 sites last month and surveyed a variety of potential new seeding sites, several of those being in Skagit County waters. They also conducted new brood stock collections from sites throughout North Puget Sound. They like to rotate brood stock animals to keep them fresh. Time lapse cameras were also installed at about a half dozen sites to monitor predation patterns. The new Abalone Recovery Plan has now been reviewed and passed by the Fish & Wildlife Commission. And PSRF/WDFW are considering establishment of several new "Index Sites" to better monitor restoration progress. The data analysis and annual report will be finalized in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinne!: Field work starts next week. Volunteers will be collecting and deploying bags of oyster shell to monitor for new oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay. They will also be putting out shell strings prepared by Puget Sound Restoration Fund at the trestle and Weaverling Spit. The Padilla Bay Reserve crew will collect the 50 or so settlement bags set out in Fidalgo Bay last summer and relocate those seed bags into south Padilla Bay.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- Diane Hennebert: Diane Hennebert started working on the QAPP. She was able to get ‘as built’ drawings from WSDOT for the Sharpes Corner drainage system to try to figure out the best locations to collect storm samples. A site visit will be conducted to make sure the sampling locations can be easily and safely accessed by the volunteers before finalizing the QAPP. The QAPP will likely be complete next month. Sampling will take place after the first flush in the fall of 2022 (late September-October).

MRC Project Prioritization Retreat Follow-up Discussion: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

The MRC Project Planning Retreat was held virtually on Wednesday, April 13, 9:00am-11:00am. The retreat was facilitated by NWSC staff (Lucas and Allie). The retreat provided an opportunity for the Committee to get some clarification regarding some of the comments and questions raised from the project evaluations. However, there were a few things that required some additional clarification following the retreat including:

- NOAA Funding Guidelines: Unfortunately, we still have not received any funding guidelines from NOAA. It is still anticipated that we will receive congressional funds by August 2022 and we will have 12 months to complete the projects once the grant starts.
- Needs Assessment: In anticipation of continuing to receive this same level of funding on an ongoing basis, Lynne suggested sponsoring a comprehensive needs assessment to identify and prioritize MRC projects in the future. Lynne started researching the different approaches that other MRCs have taken for identifying needs/gaps, and future projects. She also reached out to other organizations for some insights and recommendations that could help us in improving our approach of project identification and prioritization including the Skagit Land Trust and the Skagit Watershed Council. The MRC discussed the possibility of forming an MRC technical executive committee to identify future projects, review project proposals, and make recommendations to the rest of the Committee.
- Trestle Replacement Project: Jude contacted Jonn Lunsford with the City of Anacortes, Birdie Davenport with the Department of Natural Resources, and Todd Woodward with the Samish Indian Nation to invite them to the next monthly MRC meeting to provide an update on the project status, funding needs, match requirements, the education and outreach component and timeline, and how the MRC can support the project moving forward.
- Samish Interpretive Signage: Lucas followed up with the NWSC Executive Committee with questions about whether the project fits the NWSC funding policies. The Executive Committee determined that the project did not meet the NWSC funding guidelines for the MRC’s congressional funding.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- [Skagit Water Weeks](#)- The Skagit MRC is co-hosting several events and learning opportunities for Skagit Water Weeks in partnership with the Northwest Straits Commission and the Northwest Straits Foundation including:
 - [Tips and Tricks to Keep you Pots and Catch More Crab](#)- featuring a series of educational videos and a virtual crabbing workshop, **June 30th**.
 - [Shore Friendly Living](#)- featuring a series of educational video series and resources for Shore Friendly Living as well as a FREE Vegetation Management Workshop and Beach Walk for Shoreline Landowners on **May 25th, 10am-2pm** at the SneeOosh Beach and Thousand trails Meeting Room.
 - [European Green Crab Invasion Investigations in Samish and Padilla Bays](#)- featuring educational resources and a series of twitter and Instagram posts by the NWSC's Washington Conservation Crew to share what they've learned about the green crab trapping effort and other interesting green crab facts. The NWSC will be hosting an educational booth and giving a presentation **May 25** (6:00-7:30pm) at the Terramar Brewery-Distillery.

The meeting adjourned at 10:12am. The next MRC meeting will be held June 9 via Microsoft Teams



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **March 10, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Jodi Bluhm (Alternate for Matt Castle), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Jude Apple, Kari Odden, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Paul Dinnel
- **Others in Attendance:** Kristin Murray, SFEG; Leah Robison, NWSC; Jason Morgan, NWSF; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Jeff Whitty, NWSC

Call to Order and Introduction: Betsy called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** February 10, 2022, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held February 25 via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights and NWSF Monthly Updates were shared with the MRC.

- **NWSI/MRC Conference- Nov 18-19, 2022:** A tentative in-person conference is scheduled for Nov 18-19, 2022, at Maple Hall in La Conner. A decision is pending public health recommendations.
- **REEF Volunteer Fish Survey Project:** Presented by Christy Pattengil-Semmens. The REEF Volunteer Fish Survey Project is a citizen science opportunity for those who dive or snorkel. For more information: <https://www.reef.org/what-reef>.
- **Puget Sound Day on the Hill:** Still in planning. No dates have been set.
- **Maritime WA National Heritage Area:** A draft management plan for this area has been released and is open for public comment. <https://preservewa.org/programs/maritime-national-heritage-area/mw-nha-get-involved/>.
- **Mt. Erie Rain Garden:** Excavation has begun to install the new rain garden at Mt. Erie Elementary School in Anacortes. This is a NWSF grant funding project.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- March 25 (10:00am-12:00pm):** This meeting will include a presentation from Dr. Drew Harvell. All MRC members are welcome to attend. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith:** The 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program started March 1 – May 24, 2022. Classes are being held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. 26 people are registered to take the in-person training. SSS training participants are no longer required to wear masks and we are no longer restricted by the occupancy limit moving forward. 4 people who were on the waiting list will now be able to attend if interested. The [2022 Training Schedule](#) is available on the Skagit MRC website. Padilla Bay staff are working to resolve the audio accessibility technology issues for our class participants who are hard of hearing. The next SSS Advisory Committee meeting will be held March 28th. The Advisory Committee drafted a proposed statement of work for the SSS Part-Time Volunteer Coordinator proposal for the MRC's consideration for the upcoming congressional funding. The Part Time Coordinator would be focused solely on supporting our 300+ alumni Salish Sea Stewards volunteers, keeping the entire volunteer group informed and active. The Advisory Committee finalized the SSS Program Facebook page "About Section".

- Fidalgo Bay Day- Darla Gay Smith: A planning meeting will be held in April. Darla will contact the Fidalgo Bay Resort after the MRC meeting to see what dates are available to reserve the facility in August or early September. We will also be looking into alternative locations to host the event just in case we are unable to have it at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Pete will look at the tides to try to find a few dates that will work for the beach seining demonstration. Darla will also reach out to the Shannon Point Marine Center to see what dates the touch tank might be available. It is still uncertain whether the Skagit River Salmon Festival is happening this year. In the past we've always tried to pick a date that doesn't compete with that event. As soon as we pick a date and location, we will be reaching out to past participating organizations to gauge their interest and comfort level in participating in-person.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: At last month's Kelp workshop, the Department of Natural Resources indicated they were interested in expanding the parameters of kelp surveys to include more kelp beds. The kelp data will be used as a vital sign at the Puget Sound Partnership. There has been a lot of interest from volunteers to help with the surveys. Some of the experienced lead kayakers are discussing the possibility of providing training for volunteers who want to become leads to survey new kelp beds. The MRC Kayak Kelp Survey season kick off meeting will take place this spring where they will talk more about the survey parameters and adding more kelp beds. Surveys won't start again until June 2022.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Parts of the beach area are still closed to protect a new northern elephant seal pup. The mother has already left the area. The pup is hunting on its own now and getting fatter but isn't quite ready to head out to the ocean on yet. All planting and plant maintenance activities at Bowman Bay is temporarily put on hold until the elephant seal pup is gone.
 - Bowman Bay Pocket Beach Restoration Letter of Endorsement: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) is seeking funding for a feasibility study/design to restore the pocket estuary and replace the Pass Lake culvert to improve flushing and has requested a Letter of Endorsement for their grant proposal from the Skagit MRC. A Letter of Endorsement is required as part of the grant application. The SFEG drafted the letter that was shared with the MRC. The Committee was asked to vote via email on whether they were in support of submitting the Letter of Acknowledgement. However, we did not receive enough votes for a consensus in time for the March 1, 2022, deadline for the first grant application. Several MRC members expressed concerns about the project proposal and letter, particularly with regards to the preliminary design portion of the project. It was pointed out that applying for both feasibility and design could be taking money away from other projects if the project isn't feasible. With so many unknowns about the feasibility, it might be better to just apply for the feasibility study first and not include design. On the other hand, SFEG's proposal is for a small amount of around \$70k, and the grant application period was extended due to a lack of applications. Kristin said she would check to see if she can scale the project back by dropping the design portion of the project from her grant application to avoid potentially tying up funds. There were also questions about benefits to salmon and potential water quality impacts with opening Pass Lake to Bowman Bay. Kristin said for now, SFEG's proposal is just focusing on the marsh restoration at Bowman Bay and not replacing the culvert at Pass Lake. The consensus of the Committee was to revise the Letter of Endorsement to only include the Feasibility Study, not the preliminary design. Catey volunteered to draft a new letter with input from Kari and Jude and will send it to the rest of the Committee for review and approval. The final ESRP grant is due May 11, 2022.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Monthly forage fish surveys continue. In Fidalgo Bay and around March's Point it seems like there has been more surf smelt spawning and egg viability than we've seen in the past this time of year.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase: The intern Trevor is a college graduate who is mentoring a 7th grader from Shoreline, Julia, to collect and analyze forage fish data at several locations along March's Point. Field work occurs monthly between Feb-October. Last month they observed lots of newly hatched surf smelt swimming around under the microscope. Julia was able to get some great video of the newly hatched surf smelt swimming around with her smart phone. Trevor and Julia will present results to the MRC in January 2023.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Four schools are participating in the spring KOTB program this year with 360 students: Sedro-Wooley, Conway, Concrete, and Anacortes middle schools. The level of involvement ranges from fully virtual to in-person.
 - Anacortes is completely virtual.
 - Sedro Woolley will be in-person and will be going on a field trip to Padilla Bay on March 29th, 30th & 31st 11am-2:00 pm.

- Conway is set to have two classes go on a field trip to Fidalgo Bay on April 13th, 10am-1:30 pm.
- Concrete will be a mix of virtual and in-person. The in-person portion will include an in-class visit with forage fish eggs. The other will be a field trip to Fidalgo Bay on April 27th, 10:30-1:30pm.
- La Conner Middle School and the Swinomish's Between Two Worlds aren't interested in participating this year.

The program will not host a research symposium on site, but Annie is encouraging students to create virtual presentations. We plan to have the symposium next year. Media coverage - Kimberly Cauvel is planning on coming to one of the Sedro-Woolley days and one of the Concrete days. We have a total 13 volunteers signed up to assist with our In-Person field days. No plans for the Fall KOTB program yet. Annie will reach out to teachers in the next few months.

- **Pinto Abalone Restoration- *Paul Dinne!*** Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF), WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Shannon Point divers have been conducting routine annual surveys of the various seeding plots during the last 3 weeks, including 4 Skagit County sites. Those sites continue to be in good shape population wise. This month the dive team will be assessing the possibility of adding a few new sites for seeding, including one or two in Skagit waters. Or they could decide not to add new sites and continue to oversee some of the already established sites (4 Skagit sites were overseeded in 2021). PSRF has about 9,000 juvenile abalone ready to be deployed in the next few months.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration – *Paul Dinne!*** Field work will start up again in April or May 2022 with abbreviated monitoring again this year. More intensive monitoring is planned in 2023 if federal appropriations funding is approved. Paul will present on the native oyster restoration project as part of the 2022 Salish Sea Stewards training program on March 29.
- **Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- *Diane Hennebert!*** It is anticipated that the QAPP will be completed in late March. Sampling will take place after the first flush in the fall of 2022 (late September-October).

MRC Project Proposal Update and Retreat Discussion: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

It is anticipated that each MRC will receive an additional \$200k in federal appropriations funding by March or April 2022, depending on Congress. The funding is just a one-time deal for MRC projects that are shovel ready and can be completed by the end of 2023. Lynne developed a new, easy to follow, three-pronged approach for MRC members to evaluate and prioritize MRC projects.

STEP 1: STEP 1 is now complete! Project Leads were contacted by the Planning Team to provide initial project info for the 20 projects on the MRC's wish list. After completing the initial screening process following a set of criteria, it was determined that 6 of those projects are a "No Go" at this time, 2 projects were dropped because they did not have an MRC Project Lead (*Pre-Season Crabber Outreach and Educational Videos*), and 11 projects are a "Go" and have moved on to STEP 2.

<u>Project</u>	<u>MRC Lead/s</u>
1. Salish Sea Stewards Part-Time Coordinator	<i>Jude and Darla</i>
2. Shoreline Landowner Workshops	<i>Betsy</i>
3. Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance	<i>Lynne</i>
4. Olympia Oyster Monitoring	<i>Paul</i>
5. Derelict Crab Pot Removal in Samish Bay	<i>Jay and Matt</i>
6. No Anchor Zone/Eelgrass Protection	<i>Kevin</i>
7. School Rain Gardens	<i>Diane</i>
8. Clayton Beach Restoration	<i>Paul</i>
9. Samish Island Conserve Interp Sign	<i>Kari</i>
10. FB Trestle Replacement Outreach	<i>Pete</i>
11. Green Crab Removal/Outreach	<i>Lynne</i>

STEP 2: MRC Project Leads were asked to complete the Project Info forms from the NWSC's Request for Proposals for each of their projects prior to the March 10 MRC meeting. The Project Info Packet and Evaluation Forms will be emailed to the MRC members after the meeting and will also be available to download from the Google Drive folder.

- **MRC Action Item:** All MRC members are asked to complete the Project Evaluation Forms and email them to Lynne (lwenberg9@gmail.com) or Tracy (tracya@co.skagit.wa.us) or upload them to the Google Drive folder by **Monday**,

April 11, 2022. The project ranking and scoring will be kept confidential. Project leads should abstain from rating their own projects.

STEP 3: A Project Planning Retreat will be held in-person at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center on **Wednesday, April 13, 9:00am-11:00am**. The retreat will be facilitated by NWSC staff (Lucas and Allie). The purpose of the retreat is to review the project evaluation/ranking results and different funding scenarios, discuss the risks and benefits of each scenario, provide clarifying information as required, vote on preferred scenario, and authorize the final list of MRC projects/budget to proceed.

Skagit Water Weeks: *Tracy Alker*

Skagit MRC has been invited to participate in the 6th Annual Skagit Water Weeks, a month -long celebration of events that highlight the value of our local water resources during the month of May. The events can be live or virtual. The application deadline is March 18th. This would be a great opportunity to do some outreach for European Green Crabs, Recreational Crabber Outreach, and Shoreline Landowner Outreach, in partnership with the NWSC and NWSF. Below are some ideas that are being discussed.

European Green Crab Outreach: This outreach event would be in partnership with the Northwest Straits Commission staff, Leah and Jeff. Lynne volunteered to help plan the events as the Skagit MRC Project Lead:

- Social Media Participation- using #SkagitWaterWeeks on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook: The NWSC's WCC Crew members helping with the green crab trapping and removal effort in Samish Bay would each create a social media post related to something they learned while working on the green crab project. They would post with images and facts about green crabs and local water bodies.
- Virtual Education for Adults (video or live):
 - Partner with NWSC to create a short video about European green crab ID and reporting, molt hunts as you walk the shoreline, etc. that could be posted to Facebook and shared on the water weeks page.
 - Padilla Bay Aquarium/Touch Tank Tour. We could piggyback on Padilla Bay's touch tank tour event and set up a green crab outreach booth with a live green crab specimen (if possible), or several molts.
- European Green Crab Webpage: We could create a European Green Crab webpage on the Skagit MRC website with links to tools and resources.

Shore Friendly Outreach: This outreach event would be in partnership with Lisa Kaufman - Northwest Straits Foundation, and Catey Ritchie with the Swinomish Shore Friendly programs. Betsy volunteered to help plan the events as the Skagit MRC Project Lead:

- Shoreline Landowner Workshop (virtual, video, or in-person): either a general coastal processes version with a beach walk or a vegetation workshop.
- Shore Friendly Webpage: We could create a Shore Friendly webpage on the Skagit MRC website with links to tools and resources and videos for Shoreline Landowners.
- Shore Friendly Living Video Series: Share the links on the Skagit MRC webpage and place emphasis on site visits and community beach walks and designate dates ahead of time for specific areas around the shoreline.

Crabber Outreach: This outreach event would be in partnership with Jason Morgan- Northwest Straits Foundation. Darla volunteered to help plan the outreach events as the Skagit MRC Project Lead:

- Crabber Outreach Webpage: We could create a Crabber Outreach webpage on the Skagit MRC website with links to tools and resources and videos for recreational crabbers. We would share links to educational videos and/or past workshops. We can highlight one specific video each week during the entire month of May for Skagit Water Weeks.
- Crabber Outreach Rack Cards: We could distribute outreach rack cards to local businesses that sell crabbing licenses and equipment and list the locations where folks can get the outreach materials on the MRC website.
- Crabber Outreach Workshop: Jason plans on doing another virtual crabber outreach workshop in late June/early July but could do an in-person one with more of a Skagit County focus.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

- **Clayton Beach Site Visit- March 10:** The NWSF scheduled a site visit with the ESRP grant team on Thursday, March 10th from 2:30 to 3:30pm. The tide should be around a +2 so it will be a great opportunity to see the armor, pilings,

and edge of the eelgrass bed. The purpose of this site visit is for the ESRP group to determine if the NWSF can move to the full proposal and provide assistance and input to make the application stronger. The full proposal isn't due until early June and there will be another virtual site visit with the technical review team after it is submitted. MRC members are welcome to attend.

- **DNR Derelict Vessel Removal Program Presentation- March 10:** On March 10th at 1:00 the DNR Derelict Vessel Removal Program Manager, Troy Wood, will be giving a virtual Teams presentation about their removal program. This presentation is the result of Clallam MRC's recent update to their County Commissioners who expressed interest in providing resources toward vessel removal in their county. DNR can reimburse counties, cities and ports up to 90% of vessel removal costs. However, House Bill 1700 and Senate Bill 5598 aim to increase their budget. the additional 10% of vessel removal costs can be met through in-kind support.
- **Northwest Straits Initiative 101 Virtual Presentation- March 17, 2022, 3:30-5:00pm.** Northwest Straits Commission Director Lucas Hart and Northwest Straits Foundation Director Don Hunger will give an introduction to the Northwest Straits Initiative. Learn what the Initiative is, the roles and responsibilities of the Commission, Foundation and MRCs, and ask questions to Initiative leadership and seasoned MRC members. This informal event is a great refresher for veteran members, and an opportunity to ask burning questions!
- **Reef Check Kelp Forest Monitoring Training Course-** The Reef Check Kelp Forest Monitoring Training course is designed to provide participants with the skills and experience to complete the Reef Check Kelp Forest Monitoring survey protocol accurately. In addition to direct survey methods, the training will address safe diving practices, techniques of research diving, sampling design and theory, general marine ecology including species identification and interactions, and the importance of monitoring to meet marine management needs. Trainings include a combination of online in-person training, recorded lectures and at-home work, and in-person ocean field sessions. Following completion of the training, all participants will have the skills necessary to complete the training examination allowing them to collect data that will be eligible to obtain a Reef Check Kelp Forest Monitoring Specialty Certification (NAUI). Folks can learn more (and register) [here](#). And the Reef Check team has scholarships available that they are keen to use, so folks should ask for support. I've also attached a flyer that Reef Check created for the program.

The meeting adjourned at 10:51am. The MRC Project Planning retreat will be held April 13, 2022, at Padilla Bay, instead of the regular monthly MRC meeting that was originally scheduled for April 14, 2022. The April 14th MRC meeting has been canceled.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **February 10, 2022**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Paul Dinnel, Jodi Bluhm (Matt Castle's Alternate), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Jude Apple, Kari Odden, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Allie Simpson, NWSC; Jeff Whitty, NWSC; Kristin Murray, SFEG; Lisa Kaufman, NWSF; Leah Robison, NWSC

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** January 13, 2022, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held January 28 via Zoom conference call.

- **NWSI/MRC Conference- Nov 18-19, 2022:** A tentative in-person conference is scheduled for Nov 18-19, 2022, at Maple Hall in La Conner.
- **Clallam MRC Marine Critter Outreach Cards:** Clallam MRC's critter outreach cards have been distributed to several community locations in Clallam County. The cards have a QR code link back to the MRC website. The cards are available for other MRCs if interested.
- **NWSF's Caroline Gibson Scholarship in Marine Studies:** The Foundation issued its first call for applications for the scholarship. Applications are due February 19.
- **NWSF Passport to Marine Adventure:** The Foundation is reviewing their Passport to Marine Adventure program and plans to expand its reach and scope. They are looking at multiple ways to do this. One way is to add new sites to each county. They've requested feedback from the MRCs on additional sites and any other aspect of the program.
- **NWSC Symposium via Zoom- February 17, 2022 (3:30pm):** In lieu of the annual MRC conference, the NWSC is hosting a series of virtual symposiums. The Symposium theme is Climate Change Action at the Local Level.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- February 25 (10:00am-12:00pm):** This meeting will include a presentation from Christy Pattengill-Semmens of REEF. All MRC members are welcome to attend. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

European Green Crab Update: *Allie Simpson*

European green crabs are considered one of the world's worst invasive species that can decimate eelgrass beds and outcompete native shellfish populations. European green crabs first arrived on the east coast of the United States in the mid-1800s but weren't found in the Northwest Straits region of the Salish Sea until 2016. To date, green crabs have been detected in Padilla Bay, Drayton Harbor, Lummi Bay, Sequim Bay, Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge, Westcott Bay, and Samish Bay. Just this past season over 86,000 green crabs were caught in Lummi Sea Pond! Drayton Harbor had 146, the second largest number of green crabs caught, and Samish Bay had 118, the third largest number of green crabs.

The NWSC is working in collaboration with the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and WA Sea Grant "The Green Crab Team" and other partners in a coordinated effort to monitor, trap, and remove green crabs using three types of methods including: early detection monitoring and trapping to collect baseline data, opportunistic trapping to look for hot spots, and dedicated trapping and removal in known hot spot areas where there are large numbers of green crabs. The NWSC is leading the

dedicated trapping and removal effort in Whatcom and Skagit Counties including Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay. The NWSC recently hired Jeff Whitty to lead the work in Samish Bay along with the Washington Conservation Crew. This year the NWSC will also be assisting with the opportunistic trapping effort in Padilla Bay since it is such a large area to cover. Although only 4 green crabs were caught in Padilla Bay last year, they continue to be consistently caught, but they are not in one localized spot. The NWSC plans to initiate a green crab volunteer pilot program with MRC members starting in May. MRC volunteers can help with monitoring, trapping and removal of green crab, as well as outreach and education. MRC members can also help by being the eyes and ears while on the beach. Green crabs can be identified by the 5 spines on each side of its eyes. If you think you've spotted a green crab, take a photo, and mark the location/date, and email it to Allie or The Green Crab Team. But be sure to leave the crab in place because it is illegal to possess a green crab without a proper permit.

Lisa asked if we should consider including green crab monitoring at Clayton Beach in our monitoring plans. There is some concern that Clayton Beach eelgrass beds could be ideal habitat for green crab, particularly if a clam garden is installed. Allie thought it would be a good idea to include green crab monitoring and opportunistic trapping at Clayton Beach to see if there are any green crab out there. Jay asked if there are any efforts in Canada to eradicate the green crab populations across the border. Allie said Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans sets lots of traps to remove as many green crabs as possible in the Sooke Basin. There are also some local volunteer groups that trap and remove green crabs in Boundary Bay. Lynne asked how Governor Jay Inslee's emergency proclamation on green crabs will impact the NWSC's work. Allie said most of the funding would likely be directed to WDFW to support the green crab trapping and removal effort in the Lummi Sea Pond. But it could also potentially mean additional funds for purchasing traps and bait for other areas such as NWSC's dedicated trapping and removal efforts in Skagit and Whatcom Counties.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards - *Darla Gay Smith*:** The 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program will start March 1 – May 24, 2022. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. Registration deadline is February 22, 2022. 13 people have registered so far to take the training. 26 is the maximum number of participants allowed for the in-person training. The training program continues to be widely promoted. Governor Inslee's mandate for vaccinations extends to volunteers. SSS training participants will be required to wear masks and show proof of vaccination. The [2022 Training Schedule](#) is now available on the Skagit MRC website. The SSS Advisory Committee meeting will be held February 15.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day- *Darla Gay Smith*:** The Fidalgo Bay Resort is not currently accepting facility reservations for 2022 events. Planning has been put on hold. Darla thanked Jay for sharing the planning documents from past events. We are thinking about sending out a survey to past participating organizations to gauge their interest and comfort level in participating in-person. We will also be looking at different dates and alternative locations to host the event just in case we are unable to have it at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:** The NWSC hosted the annual MRC Kelp Kayak Survey workshop on January 26th. The workshop was well attended including four presentations. Over 50 volunteers participated in 2021 kelp surveys across 7 counties including Skagit County. Volunteers monitored 21 different kelp beds, documented 404 acres of kelp forest, and collectively paddled 326 miles! MRC kelp monitoring data will be used for the Department of Natural Resources new floating kelp canopy vital sign indicator and to create an interactive StoryMap. In addition to kayak kelp surveys, the Department of Natural Resources collected kelp canopy data using drones, fix-winged aircraft, and high-resolution cameras and compared it to the data collected by the kelp kayakers. They found that the kelp kayak surveys are currently the best method for collecting the most reliable kelp forest data compared to other methods. Puget Sound Restoration Fund presented an overview of the kelp expedition that took place last July with 184 participants collecting kelp data over 8 days from Neah Bay to south Puget Sound. The purpose of the expedition was to catalyze a broader effort to protect and restore our kelp forests. Kayak Kelp Survey training will take place this spring. Surveys won't start again until June 2022.
- **Bowman Bay Restoration – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:** Parts of the beach area are currently closed to protect a new northern elephant seal pup and its mother, until the pup is fully weaned. Lynne and Tracy had a meeting with Lisa Kaufman (NWS Foundation), Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) staff, and State Parks staff at the Bowman Bay Restoration site on January 13 to look at the storm damage and talk about the next steps with additional planting and plant maintenance at the site and discuss two potential projects that are being proposed. This year the MRC in partnership with the SFEG will plant trees and shrubs along the fence line to help protect the rest of the vegetation and provide some shade. We will try to integrate additional dune grass up to the fence line and in between the logs that washed up along the shoreline. The new trees will likely have to be mounded. We are also considering the use of slow drip watering bags to increase the survivability of the newly planted trees during times

of drought and extreme heat. The planting and plant maintenance work will be done with the help of volunteers through a Sub-Award Agreement with SFEG. State Parks received funding to remove the dilapidated pier and creosote pilings and will replace it with more environmentally friendly materials. They hope to reduce the amount of hard shore armoring required to support the new pier. The shoreline next to the pier where one of the interpretive signs is located is highly eroding. As part of the pier removal/replacement, the Parks dept will be looking into different options for moving the interpretive sign to a better location. SFEG is seeking funding for a feasibility study/design to restore the pocket estuary and replace the Pass Lake culvert to improve flushing and have requested a Letter of Acknowledgment for their grant proposal from the Skagit MRC. The final Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) grant application is due May 11, 2022. They are also applying for another grant as match that is due March 1, 2022. Tracy will forward the Letter of Acknowledgment and project information in the grant application to the Committee for consideration. The MRC will need to decide by consensus whether to provide the letter of support for SFEG's grant proposal. As part of the feasibility study, SFEG will also be applying for a collection permit to collect baseline seining data at the site with the help of volunteers.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Monthly forage fish surveys continue. However, surveys at Bowman Bay have temporarily been put on hold until the northern elephant seal pup that was born at the park in January is fully weaned. Surf smelt spawning is pretty much over for the year in the northern part of Similk Bay out toward Turner Bay and Kukatali and won't likely start again until late May. However, they continue to spawn in Fidalgo Bay and Marchs Point.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase: The intern that has been selected is a college graduate that will be working on several projects including one for the MRC that involves mentoring a 7th grader from Shoreline to collect and analyze forage fish data at several locations along Marchs Point. Field work will occur Feb-October. Data analysis and report prep Nov-Dec. The intern will present results to the MRC in January 2022. This MRC Intern project is part of a pilot program and is just one of 5 other intern projects under the Salish Sea School STaRS program (Students Training as Research Scientists), including stormwater monitoring, beach debris, orcas, marine birds, and marine mammals.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Three schools will be participating in the spring KOTB program. Sedro-Wooley 6th grade students will be participating in a mudflat safari and beach seining activity over a three-day period in late March (March 29-31st) at Padilla Bay with the help of volunteers. Conway and Concrete middle schools will be collecting fish seine data and forage fish eggs at the Fidalgo Bay RV Park on April 13th and 27th with the help of volunteers. Annie is still working out the details for the Anacortes School District to participate in the spring program. Annie is also working in collaboration with the La Conner School to integrate the KOTB with the Swinomish Tribal Community's Between Two Worlds program.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinneel: Hatchery work continues with 15,000 abalone in cultivation. Field work including monitoring and outplanting started this month. The goal is to outplant 10,000 juvenile abalone to the abalone restoration sites in Skagit County by April this year.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel: Field work will start up again in April 2022 with abbreviated monitoring again this year. More intensive monitoring is planned in 2023 depending on funding. In March, Padilla Bay staff plan to collect a sub-sample of oyster seed from the bags of cultch that were placed in Fidalgo Bay last summer. The shells will be transported to south Padilla Bay channels later this summer. Paul will present on the native oyster restoration project as part of the 2022 Salish Sea Stewards training program in late March.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- Diane Hennebert: It is anticipated that the QAPP will be completed in late March. Sampling will take place after the first flush in the fall of 2022 (late September-October).

MRC Project Wish List Update and Retreat Discussion: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

It is anticipated that each MRC will receive an additional \$200k in federal appropriations funding by March or April 2022, depending on Congress. The funding is just a one-time deal for MRC projects that are shovel ready and can be completed by the end of 2023. Lynne developed a new, easy to follow, three-pronged approach for MRC members to evaluate and prioritize MRC projects.

STEP 1: STEP 1 is now complete! Project Leads were contacted by the Planning Team to provide initial project info for the 20 projects on the MRC's wish list. After completing the initial screening process following a set of criteria, it was determined that 6 of those projects are a "No Go" at this time and 10 projects are a "Go" and will move on to STEP 2. There are also 4 projects that need an MRC Project Lead/s before they can be considered a "Go". If nobody volunteers to be the Project Lead, the projects will automatically get moved to the "No Go" status at this time:

- Clayton Beach Restoration
- Pre-Season Crabber Outreach
- Derelict Crab Pot Removal in Fidalgo Bay – *Jay Lind and Matt Castle expressed interest in this project and are considering becoming the MRC Project Co-Leads*
- Educational Videos

STEP 2: MRC Project Leads will be asked to complete the Project Info forms from the NWSC’s Request for Proposals for each of their projects prior to the next MRC meeting on March 10. The Project Info Packet and Evaluation Forms will then be emailed to MRC members to rank projects prior to the April 13 MRC Retreat at Padilla Bay.

STEP 3: A Project Planning Retreat will be held in-person at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center on Wednesday, April 13, 9:00am-11:00am. The retreat will be facilitated by NWSC staff. The purpose of the retreat is to review the project evaluation/ranking results and different funding scenarios (totaling \$200k), discuss the risks and benefits of each scenario, provide clarifying information as required, vote on preferred scenario, and authorize the final list of MRC projects/budget to proceed.

MRC Chair/Vice-Chair Elections: *All*

MRC Chair and Vice-Chair elections were originally supposed to be held in January but were postponed until February due to the lack of any new nominees. The Committee voted unanimously by consensus to re-elect Betsy Stevenson to continue to serve as MRC Chair. Jay Lind nominated Lynne Wenberg-Davidson as Vice-Chair. Lynne graciously accepted the nomination. The Committee voted unanimously by consensus to appoint Lynne to serve as MRC Vice-chair. The term for Chair and Vice-Chair will be for a one (1) year term.

Miscellaneous Announcements: *All*

No announcements

The meeting adjourned at 11:30am. The next virtual MRC meeting to be held March 10, 2022.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the January 13, 2022, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Paul Dinnel, Matt Castle, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Jude Apple, Kari Odden, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Allie Simpson, NWSC; Jeff Whitty, NWSC; Kristin Murray, SFEG; Jessica ESPY, WSU Shore Stewards; Aundrea McBride

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** December 9, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: *Pete Haase*

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held December 10 via Zoom conference call.

- **New NWSC Representative:** Diane Hennebert will be taking Pete's place as the new NWSC Representative, starting in February 2022. The MRC will need to elect a new NWSC Rep Alternate. Pete volunteered to be the NWSC Alternate if nobody else is interested.
- **NWSC Staff:** Jeff Witty was recently hired by the NWSC to help with the Kelp Project Coordination and Green Crab Monitoring and Trapping. Other NWSC staff members: Lucas Hart, Director; Sasha Horst, Operations Manager; Dana Oster, Marine Program Manager; Allie Simpson, Ecosystem Project Coordinator; Leah Robison, Ecosystem Project Assistant; Suzanne Shull, GIS Specialist. Dana will be back from maternity leave in February.
- **Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) Presentation – Jackie Lindsey:** The focus of the presentation was on Marine Debris with the help of volunteers. The presentation might be of interest to the Skagit MRC.
- **Northwest Straits Foundation Report:** The Foundation recently appointed several new Board members, including Adam Lorio.
- **Storm Surge Monitoring:** Jefferson MRC and SeaGrant are collaborating on a more formal way to monitor storm surges as a region-wide effort. Stay tuned for more information.
- **Shoreline Management Plans- Adhoc Committee:** Barbara Bennett from Island County is leading an adhoc Committee for folks interested in learning the processes for reviewing and commenting on Shoreline Management Plans. The cities and counties across the region are all at different stages in the process of updating their Shoreline Master Plans. Pete suggested a presentation from Barbara might be of interest to MRC members.
- **NWSC Symposium via Zoom- January 20, 2022 (3:30pm):** In lieu of the annual MRC conference, the NWSC is hosting a series of virtual symposiums. The Symposium theme is Climate Change Action at the Local Level.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- January 28 (10:30am-1:30pm):** All MRC members are welcome to attend. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith:** The 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program will start March 1 – May 24, 2022. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. Registration deadline is February 22, 2022. The 2022 SSS training is currently slated to include in-person lectures and a field component. Governor Inslee's mandate for vaccination extends to volunteers, thus masks & proof of vaccination will be required for the SSS Training. The training curriculum has been drafted. Sara Brostrom has started contacting presenters. The presenters are being given the option of presenting virtually if they cannot attend in person. Promotional materials have been posted on the MRC website along with the Registration Form. The Advisory Committee is

working on a job description for a future part-time Volunteer Coordinator position to keep the 342 volunteers informed and active. The goal of the training program is to help foster stewardship by building & maintaining a strong base of community scientists which support the Skagit MRC & partner projects. Jude expressed his appreciation for Darla and the rest of the Salish Sea Advisory Committee for the support they've provided to Padilla Bay in planning and managing the Salish Sea Stewards program.

- Fidalgo Bay Day- Darla Gay Smith: The Fidalgo Bay Resort is not currently accepting facility reservations for 2022 events. Planning will likely start in February. Darla will be reaching out to former MRC Project Leads, such as Jay and Pete, for event organizational materials within the next couple of months, to start planning the task timeline and assignments.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Field work is done for the year. Surveys will start again in June 2022. The NWSC will be hosting the annual MRC Kelp Kayak Survey update January 26th, 3:30pm -5pm (via Zoom). The meeting link will be sent out soon. All MRC members are welcome to attend.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Lynne and Tracy will be meeting with Lisa Kaufman (NWS Foundation), Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group staff, and State Parks staff at the Bowman Bay Restoration site on January 13 to look at the storm damage and talk about the next steps with additional planting and plant maintenance at the site, and discuss two potential projects that are being proposed: SFEG's proposed Pocket Estuary Restoration Feasibility Study, and State Park's plans for the removal and replacement of the pier. The interpretive sign next to the pier might also need to be moved to a new location due to the eroding shoreline at that location. SFEG is continuing to work towards getting grant funding for the preliminary design and hydrologic modeling and have gotten some good cost estimates for the project. They plan to apply for Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) funding when it becomes available in January. Kristin will be requesting a Letter of Support from the MRC for the feasibility study and agreed to provide a project description in their grant application. Kristin said they have support from Skagit River Systems Cooperative on this project. Skagit MRC has a Sub-Award Agreement with SFEG to plant trees and shrubs along the fence line to help protect the rest of the vegetation and provide some shade this year.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: The weather and extreme high tides were not very conducive for conducting forage fish surveys in December. Surveys continued in January at all our sites. Most of our survey sites are dormant for surf smelt during this time of year, except for Fidalgo Bay. It is a good time of year for sand lance spawning, but we have yet to find any sand lance eggs at any of our sites. During one of the surveys at the Similk Bay Index Site, a huge chunk from a commercial dock had washed up onto the beach during one of the storm events. The forage fish survey crew notified various agencies about the dock.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase: An intern has been selected for this program to work on a forage fish monitoring project at March's Point. Pete Haase is working closely with the Salish Sea School Director Amy Eberling on a detailed Project Plan that will be finalized later this month. Field work will occur Feb-October. Data analysis and report prep will occur Nov-Dec. The intern will present results to the MRC in January 2022. This MRC Intern project is part of a pilot program and is just one of 5 other intern projects under the Salish Sea School STaRS program (Students Training as Research Scientists), including stormwater monitoring, beach debris, orcas, marine birds, and marine mammals. There is an amazing team of experts that are mentoring the interns and providing guidance for projects.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: The spring KOTB program will be a combination of field opportunities and in-class visits as well as virtual. So far, we have 200 students lined up to participate in the spring KOTB program. Conway and Concrete middle schools will be participating, but it will be mostly virtual. 90 Sedro-Wooley Middle School students will be participating in a beach seining activity over a three-day period in late March (March 29-31st) with the help of volunteers. The Anacortes School District has expressed interest in participating in the KOTB program to some degree if they can make it work with their schedules. Annie England is also working in collaboration with the Swinomish Tribal Community's Between Two Worlds program to implement the KOTB into their curriculum. It is unlikely that we will be able facilitate an in-person Science Symposium with all the students at the end of the KOTB due to COVID. The teachers also do not feel comfortable with a virtual symposium format. However, teachers are being encouraged to record and share student Prezi presentations if they are able.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinnel: Hatchery work continues with 15,000 abalone in cultivation. Field work won't begin until February 2022. The QAPP Addendum has been drafted and is currently under review. The goal is to outplant 10,000 small abalone to as many as 10 sites in Skagit County by April this year.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Field work will start up again in April 2022 with abbreviated monitoring again this year. More intensive monitoring is planned in 2023 depending on funding. Paul has been asked to present on native oyster restoration as part of the 2022 Salish Sea Stewards training program in late March.

- **Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- Diane Hennebert:** The QAPP won't likely be drafted until March 2022. Sampling will take place after the first flush in the fall of 2022 (late September-October).

MRC Project Retreat Discussion: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson / Tracy Alker

It is anticipated that each MRC will receive an additional \$200k in federal appropriations funding by March or April 2022, depending on Congress. The projects must be shovel ready and completed by the end of 2023. It is important to keep in mind that this is just a one-time deal, and we do not expect to continue receiving these funds each year. To help prioritize which MRC projects to fund, Lynne developed a new, easy to follow, three-pronged approach. **STEP 1:** Project Leads will be contacted by the Planning Team to provide initial project info. The Planning Team will follow a set of criteria to determine if the project is a "Go-No Go". If there is no Project Lead, Co-Leads, or Subcommittee, the project is automatically a "No Go". The projects that pass the initial screening process will go to Step2. **STEP 2:** MRC members will be emailed a Project Info Package and evaluation form to rank projects within 3 – 4 weeks. **STEP 3:** A Project Planning Retreat will be held in-person at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center sometime in April. The retreat will be facilitated by Lucas Hart, Director of the NWSC, and Allie Simpson, NWSC Ecosystem Project Coordinator. The purpose of the retreat is to review the project evaluation/ranking results and different funding scenarios (totaling \$200k), discuss the risks and benefits of each scenario, provide clarifying information as required, vote on preferred scenario, and authorize the final list of MRC projects/budget to proceed. A Doodle Poll will be sent to MRC members to pick a date and time that works best for them. The NWSC will be sending out a Request for Proposals, which the MRC project leads will be asked to help complete. The NWSC technical advisors will review and approve the grant applications.

MRC Chair/Vice-Chair Elections: All

There were no new nominees for MRC Chair or MRC Vice-Chair, so the Committee decided to table the MRC Officer Elections until the February MRC meeting. MRC members who have never served as an MRC officer or a Project Lead are strongly encouraged to consider taking on an active leadership role. Betsy said she could continue to serve as MRC Chair if there are no other MRC members who are interested. Jay said he could also continue to serve as MRC Vice-chair if there is no other interest, but once meetings are held in person again, he will likely need to step down.

Miscellaneous Announcements: All

No announcements

The meeting adjourned at 10:40am. The next virtual MRC meeting to be held February 10, 2022.