



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **June 12, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Tracy Alker, Jude Apple, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate), Dale Fournier, Holli Watne (Aundrea McBride's Alternate)
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Carolyn Moulton, Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie, Paul Dinnel, Darla Gay Smith, Elizabeth Drozda, Audrea McBride, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Jenn Johnson (SCPW); Sasha Horst (NWSC); Jessica Owens (NWSC)

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

Approval of Minutes: May 8, 2025, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments:

- No comments

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

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

May 30 NWSC meeting highlights shared with MRC in pre-meeting packet. Meeting held in person in Clallam County.

- Anchor Out of Eelgrass social media campaign - launched: [AnchorOut.org](https://www.AnchorOut.org), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/anchoroutorg), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/anchoroutorg), and [Threads](https://www.threads.net/@anchoroutorg).
- 2025 MRC Conference, November 7-8 - at Maple Hall in La Conner! Conference [website](#) for more info. Working with Skagit Valley College to set up audio. In exchange, NWSC purchased several short 30 second Public Service Announcements designed for general awareness about the NWSI and Skagit MRC.
- Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe – overview of natural resource projects and initiatives, visit their [website](#).
- NW Maritime Center's Blue Schools Initiative - presentation to educated students about and prepare for maritime careers. For more info, visit their [website](#).
- The Port of Skagit awarded the 2025 Environmental Stewardship Award - for their role in the vessel turn-in event in La Conner. Check out the [press release](#).
- **Next NWSC meeting (June 27):** 10am-12pm, held virtually. Speed Date with a Scientist speaker, Fiona Beaty with the Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative, will be presenting on her work on a First Nations community mapping project from Howe Sound.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Dale Fournier and Darla Gay Smith (via email):
 - The 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program, a 10-weeks course facilitated by PBNERR, was completed by 24 new stewards on April 29, 2025.
 - A list of volunteer opportunities with partner organizations provided to new graduates. Many have already started volunteering on different projects!
 - The results of 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training program Evaluation survey completed by new stewards has been released, with very positive results.
 - The Stewards Advisory Committee met on May 15, 2025. Annual updates made to project list in Volgistics for recording volunteer hours.
 - Steward Advisory Committee Recruitment Procedures finalized, and a New AC Member Packet is being developed. Hope to recruit at least two new AC members from 2025 graduates with fresh eyes on the Program.
 - SSS Social Event planned for June 14th at Padilla Bay with a presentation from Wolf Hollow Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. All SSS and SMRC are invited to join. Lunch will be provided.
 - The next AC meeting will be held in-person on June 18th at the PBNERR facility to review Training evaluation results and discuss 2026 training topics and speakers and budget. It will be the last meeting until the fall.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Skagit MRC has contract with the Salish Sea School's Catherine Houck to coordinate the forage fish surveys in Skagit.
 - Surveys take around 1.5 -2 hours to complete.
 - June 2025 forage fish survey schedule wrapped up early:
 - June 4- Bowman Bay at noon
 - June 5- Fidalgo Bay East at 9am
 - June 5- Fidalgo Bay West at 9:30am
 - June 11- Guemes Channel at 9am
 - June 11- Similk Bay at 9am
 - Lots of spawning happening in the usual spots. DNR's Fidalgo Bay survey sites were packed full of eggs! It was exciting to see for the new volunteers.
 - Two new SSS volunteers have been helping with surveys and will likely continue.
 - Interesting observations:
 - Volunteer Hal Lee discovered a shiner perch that had died in the middle of giving birth to 6 or 7 baby perch.
 - Several people and dippers catching surf smelt at March's Point last weekend. A good sign that the forage fish population is doing well there.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - The 2025 Spring KOTB program wrapped up in May. Over 200 students participated from three schools- 10 classes, including Allen Elementary which has been a great addition to the program. Many are from migrant families that have never been to the beach before and English is their second language.
 - 1 school, 3 classes scheduled for the fall 2025 KOTB program.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel (via email):
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund wrapped up the field work after one last week of diving in early May.
 - The work in Skagit this year included collaborative diving with teams from PSRF, WDFW, Samish, the Seattle Aquarium and Shannon Point Marine Center. Each of these latter three organizations now manage a network of their own outplant sites.

- PSRF is also working with SPMC and their REU and OWU scholars this summer to outplant an additional 1000 juveniles in July at two sites in Burrows Bay along with conducting additional research on outplant methods and survival.
- Almost 12,000 juvenile abalone were outplanted this year at 17 sites across Skagit, San Juan, Island and Jefferson counties. Approximately 5600 of these abalone were seeded to 8 sites in Skagit County, 3 of which were brand new sites in Skagit.
- Six of the outplant sites were experimentally seeded with juveniles to determine if spreading out the juveniles across the site reduces competition and predation. Two of the six experiment sites are in Skagit County.
- All ~4200 juveniles in this experiment were tagged with unique color dots and survival by age cohort and module treatment will be tracked over the next year.
- New broodstock were collected at the tail end of the dive season and into the hatchery production season as soon as field work was completed.
- Have already conducted two successful spawns at the Chew Center during the month of May. Twenty-five new, genetically distinct families have been produced from 9 females and 9 males. These induced spawns have resulted in 998k larvae settled into 89 culture tanks at the Chew Center and 22 tanks at the Seattle Aquarium ACC, mostly filling out both nursery facilities to capacity.
- Plan to attempt one more spawn this summer to fill out any remaining tanks that get cleared when moving juveniles to SPMC for their outplant projects.
- PSRF will start working on the 2025 Year- End Report soon.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration– Paul Dinnel (via email):
 - Last month Paul assisted several UW grad students with collection of a bunch of Olympia oysters for their predation experiments.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda (via email):
 - Elizabeth has been dropping by the garden about once per month to pull a few weeds.
 - County Intern Halee drafted the content for the School Rain Garden Project page for the Skagit MRC website which has been reviewed by Elizabeth. It will be up and running soon.
 - Westar Solutions printed and delivered the School Rain Garden interpretive sign. We will need to order the metal pedestal sign base and frame. Need to contact the school to see if they would be willing to install it. If not, the county can probably install it.
 - School Rain Garden project funded through December 31, 2025. Will most likely have around \$10k of unspent funds left in the budget that could potentially go towards other existing projects under the same grant if needed. Would have to do a grant amendment to reallocate funds to another project.
 - Due to a heavy workload with the Salish Sea School, Elizabeth announced she will need to step down from her position on the Skagit MRC and as such, will no longer be the MRC Project Lead for the School Rain Gardens but plans to continue to help with the rain gardens as a volunteer as time allows.
 - Elizabeth's recommendations for the school rain gardens:
 - Get an agreement in place with the schools for watering and maintaining the new plantings for the first couple of years.
 - It will be important to continue weeding. NWSF recently hired a couple of interns to help with stewardship projects this summer through September including maintaining the La Conner and Mt. Erie School rain gardens.
 - Once the main La Conner Rain Garden sign is installed, there is no great need to purchase individual plant signage. The QR code on the interpretive sign can be a place for folks to look to see what is currently blooming in the garden (if they are interested). Also, the Swinomish Between Two Worlds Program is installing a large teaching ethnobotany garden nearby that will provide an opportunity for plant signage.
 - Keeping about \$1000 in the budget per year for replacement plants and mulch (for both rain gardens) would be a great thing to do, but it would also be ok for the funds to be devoted to other

projects because the rain gardens should be fine with continued water and weeding as mentioned above.

- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:

- 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
- Save the Date cards and links to the online registration form has been shared with past participating organizations and volunteers.
- 23 organizations have registered to participate. We have space for 35.
- 9 volunteers have signed up so far including 2 new Salish Sea Stewards. Would like to have at least 20 volunteers.
- Beach seining, shellfish samples, and no-host salmon BBQ have been confirmed.
- NWSF will be coordinating the chowders and food permits this year. Erika De La Rosa with NWSF will start contacting restaurants this month. Hope to get at least one restaurant on board.
- Jenn Dumas, Salish Sea Steward AC member, volunteered to coordinate Fidalgo Bay Day this year starting the end of June as part of her Skagit Valley College class requirement and college credit.
- FBD Planning Kickoff meeting scheduled for June 24th at 9am.

- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

- **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**

- MRC funding is in place for NWSF to continue beach seining January – December 2025. Beach seining is now occurring twice a month at Bowman Bay.
- Beach seining statistics for **May 7** using 7 volunteers and 3 volunteer hours (the 2nd event was cancelled due to excessive ulva):

Date	Species	Count
5/7/2025	staghorn sculpin	66
5/7/2025	english sole	9
5/7/2025	starry flounder	1
5/7/2025	Chum salmon	7
5/7/2025	Juvenile sculpin	13
5/7/2025	Bay pipefish	1
5/7/2025	Pacific herring	58
5/7/2025	Post-larval smelt	1
5/7/2025	Shiner perch	90
5/7/2025	threespine stickleback	2
5/7/2025 Total Fish:		248

Beach seining schedule for rest of the year:

6/4	CANCELLED (too much ulva)
6/20	1:00pm
7/18	12:00 PM
8/14	9:00 AM
9/12	10:00 AM
10/10	12:00 PM
11/19	10:00 AM
12/12	11:00 AM

- **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**

- MRC funding is in place for NWSF to continue plant maintenance at the restoration site through the 2025 growing season (May-October). Funding ends December 31, 2025.
- June 4 was Bowman Bay Stewardship Day with 11 volunteers engaged in weeding and plus our forage fish teams were there. The beach seining team had to cancel (again) due to excessive ulva. The native plantings are so healthy, it was tough to find weeds – so we had a Weed Treasure Hunt!

- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and new “Lone Tree Point” (Steven Olsen – Lead).
 - One new kayaker has joined the team!
 - June 6 – Skagit Kayak Team Shakedown Cruise at Bowman Bay with six kayakers (Steven Olsen, Catherine Houck, Elizabeth Drozda, Joan Magee, Hal Lee, Lynne Wenberg)
 - June surveys completed:
 - June 8 (Biz Point) – 5 kayakers, including 1 new volunteer. Kelp beds relatively small so far, but growing and healthy
 - June 9 (Coffin Rocks) – 4 kayakers
 - June 10 (Lone Tree) – 4 kayakers
 - Next survey is June 17 (Shannon Point)
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
 The contract with Confluence Environmental has been extended through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K). Updates this month:
 - The NEAP Tool and NEAP Story Map are now completed as of June 11, 2025.
 - A “how-to video” will be made as a tutorial for general public NEAP functionality once it is housed in the new SoundIQ2 – ECD July 2025
 - The NEAP Tool, Story Map, How-to Video as well as back up materials will be posted onto SoundIQ2 as soon as available – ECD July 2025.
 - The 5 high priority restoration projects identified in 2024 are in process of further development – ECD August 2025.

Skagit Bay Derelict Crab Pot Project Consultation with SAC: Lynne and Melissa

- Consultation held on June 5th with NWSC staff: Dana Oster and Sasha Horst and Science Advisory Council: Emily Grason, Emily Horton, and David Trimbach.
- Focused on the following tasks that wouldn’t start until year 2 of the NOAA grant in 2027:
 - To improve the predictive modeling element for determining where derelict crab pots could be found and incorporate recreational crabbing intensity /density data and ecological impacts.
 - To show data correlation of derelict crab pot removal on crab harvest/population and habitat. Is there evidence that removals are having an impact on the fishery? How has it improved? Similar studies in Chesapeake Bay. This information could help boost our education/outreach efforts.
- SAC Comments and Recommendations:
 - Validated overall project goals and scope.
 - A better understanding of areas to target can have cost savings in the future.
 - Emily Grason drafted a schematic on what the predictive model could look like.
 - Swinomish Tribal fishing community perspectives can be correlated and validated with side scan sonar, recreational density location.
 - Participatory Community mapping is a great tool for gathering recreational crabbing data- using an open-source map (such as google maps) can be systematic, accessible, and easy and could be done by the MRC or work with UW students such as Capstone program. Stakeholder Engagement Strategies for Participatory Mapping: <https://coast.noaa.gov/data/digitalcoast/pdf/participatory-mapping.pdf>
 - Education and outreach could be strengthened by a more nuanced understanding of the motivations and barriers to desired behaviors. This could be done by interviewing recreational crabbers and Swinomish Tribal fishing community to better understand priority/high density crabbing areas to gain insights that could inform a more tailored approach to outreach.

2025-2027 Project Proposal Prioritization: Tracy

- Project Proposal Prioritization Results:
 - 7 out of 10 MRC members completed the evaluation form
 - MRC members with a real or perceived conflict of interest abstained from evaluating that project including financial gains from the project and MRC Project Leads and MRC members involved in developing the project proposal:
 - Committee debated whether it would be a conflict of interest for the MRC Project Lead to evaluate their own project. Could they rank their own project without being biased?
 - No decisions made at meeting. Will need to clarify before finalizing project prioritization results if project prioritization is necessary for balancing the budget.
 - Projects ranked in order of priority (**Note: might need to re-do evaluations if the MRC determines there is no conflict of interest for Project Leads and other MRC members involved in proposal preparation to rank their own projects*):
 - Forage Fish Surveys (1 Abstain)
 - Pinto Abalone Restoration (1 Abstain)
 - Derelict Crab Pot Prev & Removal/Outreach (2 Abstain)
 - FBAR Intertidal Monitoring (1 Abstain)
 - Kids on the Beach (2 Abstain)
 - Salish Sea Stewards Training (5 Abstain)
 - The large number of Abstains for SSS was primarily due to MRC members on the SSS subcommittee who prepared the proposal, in addition to the MRC Project Lead.
- MRC Grant Funding Update:
 - NOAA FY24 (Year 1) and EPA (Year 1) grant funding is currently delayed and there is a chance it might not get approved.
 - The approval process and timeline for these sources is unknown.
 - Funding that has already been approved and will be awarded in the expected grant timeframe includes: WA State General Funds - awarded starting Oct 1, 2025, and NOAA FY23 - awarded starting January 1, 2026.
 - MRCs need to prepare contingencies for funding delays and prioritize projects within the limits of our awarded funding. This might mean reducing the number of projects or scaling back one or more projects to reduce costs (see table below).

Grant #1: Shorelands Northwest Straits 2023 (SEANWS2025)

Source	Year One	Year Two
	Oct 1, 2025-Sept 30, 2026	Oct 1, 2026-Sept 30, 2027
US EPA via Puget Sound Partnership - DELAYED	\$61,000/MRC	\$61,000/MRC
	Oct 1, 2025*-June 30, 2026	July 1, 2026-June 30, 2027
WA State general fund	\$65,000/MRC	\$65,000/MRC
TOTAL AWARD	\$126,000	\$126,000

*State funds begin July 1, 2025, but are combined with EPA funds if available by October 1.

Grant #2: One-Time Grant Program 2026

Source	Year One	Year Two
	Jan 1, 2026-Dec 31, 2026	Jan 1, 2027-Dec 31, 2027
NOAA FY23	\$69,000/MRC	
NOAA FY24 - DELAYED	\$6,000	\$71,000/MRC

- MRC's contingency plans with prioritized projects are needed **by the end of August** to ensure grant agreements can be completed in September.

- NWSC Staff and the Science Advisory Committee will continue to review all proposals as submitted.
 - If federal funding is available before the September deadline, those sources will be added back to MRC grants.
 - If federal funding becomes available after the grant start dates, grant amendments will be conducted accordingly.
 - Everyone in this industry is in a similar position and experiencing the same uncertainty.
- **Action Item- Tracy:** Tracy will email a summary of the of the 2025-2027 MRC Grant Funding discussion along with the current proposed budget for projects and an example of a contingency budget for all projects within the current award amount if the NOAA FY24 and EPA federal grant funding is delayed or doesn't get awarded for Year 1. MRC Project Leads will need to determine if and how their project scopes can be reduced to fit within the reduced budget and if its feasible.
 - **Action Item- MRC Project Leads:** Propose how your project could be scaled back and what the impacts might be before the July 10th MRC meeting (including deliverables and overall feasibility of accomplishing project with reduced budget and scope). Modified project scopes/budget could be done in tiers/levels/scenarios, etc. Are there other resources or sources of funding that could be used to fund or supplement the project? Could the project be delayed one or more years? What would be the impact? Would it be feasible to move the project to another funding timeline and if so with what impacts?

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Salmon Day at the Mt Vernon Farmer's Market, Saturday, September 6: Conservation Alley with conservation organization outreach booths. MRC is invited to participate. Contact Holli Watne at the Skagit Watershed Council to sign up to participate or for more information: hwatne@skagitwatershed.org.
- Around the Americas Sailing Expedition- recently launched in May from Anacortes for a 14-month research voyage including studying kelp forest density, distribution, health, and environmental conditions. It will be the first-ever comprehensive pole-to-pole study of giant and bull kelp, spanning from Alaska to Patagonia.

*The meeting adjourned at 10:22am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams, **July 10, 2025.***