

# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the December 9, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Paul Dinnel, Catey Ritchie, Matt Castle, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Jude Apple, Kari Odden
- **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson
- **Others in Attendance:** Jonn Lunsford (City of Anacortes), Jessica Espy (WSU Ext. Shore Stewards), Kristin Murray (SFEG), Craig Olsen (Volunteer)

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** November 10, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

### Tommy Thompson Trail Replacement Update: Jonn Lunsford

Jonn Lunsford shared the Tommy Thompson Trail Grant presentation that was presented to the Washington State Recreation Conservation Office in partnership with the City of Anacortes, Samish Indian Nation, and Washington Department of Natural Resources. The project aims to remove the entire riprap causeway from the trestle back to Weaverling Spit. Full removal of the causeway will increase flow and flushing of the system which will improve nearshore habitat. The trestle, including around 770 creosote pilings, will also be removed, and replaced with environmentally friendly/ non-creosote material. Jonn said they were recently awarded the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) grant for \$355k for the feasibility study which requires a match of around \$125k. Unfortunately, the match they were counting on didn't pan out. The Samish Indian Nation recently received a grant that will help with the match requirement, but it doesn't become available until 2023. In the meantime, the City of Anacortes was able to come up with around \$30k and they are hoping to get around \$20k in-kind from partners to bring the match up to around \$50k to, to help get started on the feasibility study in 2022 until the Samish's grant funding becomes available. MRC members expressed interest in supporting this project in some capacity, but MRC funds cannot be used as part of the match for the feasibility study because it would be considered pass through funding. Jonn suggested the MRC consider helping with the public education and outreach component. Public outreach will be important throughout this project because there has been a lot of concern from the public about losing the trail and there seems to be very little understanding from the public about the ecological impact of the trestle and the causeway.

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

*The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held October 29 via Zoom conference call. No NWSC meeting in November because of the NWSC Symposium.*

- **New NWSC Representative:** Pete reminded the MRC that Diane Hennebert will be taking Pete's place as the new NWSC Representative, starting in January 2022.
- **Storm Surge Monitoring:** There is currently a coordinated effort in the works to get multiple MRCs involved in collecting storm surge data at specific locations that meet certain criteria. The partners involved in this effort include The SeaDoc Society, SeaGrant, and the Northwest Straits Commission. Stay tuned for more information.
- **NWSC Symposium via Zoom- December 16, 2021 (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. The next Symposium will be held December 16<sup>th</sup> and will focus on Coastal Resilience.
- **WCC Funding for Forage Fish:** A team of Commission members are working on a letter of support for funding the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Washington Conservation Corp program for forage fish work. The letter was shared with MRC members and is anticipated to be finalized at the December NWS Commission meeting.

- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- December 10 (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/>. They are considering an in-person meeting in February.

## Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith: The SSS Training Planning Timeline is right on track. The 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program will start March 1 – May 24, 2022. The 2022 SSS training is currently slated to include in-person lectures and a field component. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. Registration deadline is February 22, 2022. Governor Inslee's mandate for vaccination extends to volunteers, thus masks & proof of vaccination will be required for the SSS Training. The Advisory Committee is working with Padilla Bay NERR on the Speaker schedule for the 2022 SSS Classes. The training curriculum has been drafted. Sara Brostrom will start contacting presenters soon. The presenters will be given the option of presenting virtually if they cannot attend in person. Promotional materials have been created and posted on the MRC website along with the Registration Form. 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.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Field work is done for the year. Surveys will start again in June 2022. The NWSC is conducting an additional multi-year trend analysis to inform the Puget Sound Kelp Canopy Vital Signs. They have selected Skagit as one of the areas to do a 'deep dive' into our kelp survey data. They will be meeting next week to discuss the details.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: December 3<sup>rd</sup> was the final beach seining session at Bowman Bay after seven years of monitoring. The Northwest Straits Foundation hosted a volunteer appreciation BBQ afterwards as a thank you to the dedicated volunteers. 23 people attended (17 volunteers and 5 NWSF staff, and 1 MRC staff). Beach seining will resume every two to three years as funding allows. Forage fish surveys will continue at the site. Over 2,000 volunteer hours have been contributed to beach seining at Bowman Bay since 2014. Recent storms at Bowman Bay caused lots of erosion along the shoreline and a pile of large logs washed up along the beach. Creosote pilings from the failing pier have also washed ashore. Pete said he reported the creosote pilings to the Department of Natural Resources through the MyCoast App. Lynne shared several photos of the storm impacts with the MRC and Lisa Kaufman. Lisa is conferring with Jim Johanessen with Coastal Geologic Services to decide what the best approach might be for protecting the shoreline plantings from future storm surge damage and where we should be planting new plants and trees, etc. The fence, benches, and interpretive signs might also need to be moved back. The Sub-Award Agreement between the County and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group has been drafted and routed for signatures with a start date of October 1, 2021. Kristin Murray with SFEG provided a brief update on the pocket estuary restoration proposal. They are continuing to work towards getting grant funding for the preliminary design and hydrologic modeling and have gotten some good estimates. They plan to apply for Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) funding when it becomes available in January. They have support from Skagit River Systems Cooperative on this project. Kristin is currently waiting to hear back from Jason Morgan regarding Chinook beach seining data in Bowman Bay which will be beneficial when applying for Salmon Recovery Board funding.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue. Forage fish surveys might be reduced next year with fewer sites to survey. The NWSC provided a Letter of Support for funding the Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) Washington Conservation Corp program to continue collecting and analyzing forage fish survey data. The letter was prepared by several of the MRC forage fish captains, NWSC staff, and WDFW forage fish folks and sent to Senator Rolfes, Rep. Ormsby, their staff, and Senate and House fiscal analysts Jed Herman, and Dan Jones. A copy of the letter was also sent to WDFW. WDFW is conducting a forage fish survey training today at Padilla Bay today for MRC volunteers.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase: Amy Eberling, the Salish Sea School Director, has selected an intern who will be working on a forage fish monitoring project at March's Point. Pete and Amy are working out the project details. Pete will have more information to share in January.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Field trips and onsite visitors are currently prohibited at the schools this fall so the Kids on the Beach program has been entirely shifted to the spring of 2022. The spring program will be a combination of field opportunities and in-class visits as schools allow.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel: Work is done for the season. Field work will start up again in April 2022. 50 bags of oyster shell with native juvenile oysters will be distributed in southern Padilla Bay in 2022. Jude said native oyster restoration in Padilla Bay has been identified as a high priority. It is anticipated that Padilla Bay NERR will receive additional funding that can be used to hire an AmeriCorps to help get the oyster shell out to more sites.

- Pinto Abalone Restoration- *Paul Dinne*: Hatchery work continues. Field work won't begin until January/February 2022. Paul reviewed the Draft Pinto Abalone Recovery Plan and provided only a few minor comments.
- 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.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- *Diane Hennebert*: Diane hopes to start working on the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) in January 2022. Sampling won't start until after the first flush in the fall of 2022 (late September-October).

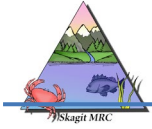
#### **MRC Project Ideas Discussion Updates: All**

The Committee reviewed and updated some of the information on the MRC's projects wish list. The projects list is still very fluid and will continue to get updated as more information becomes available. The Committee decided that more time would be needed to fully evaluate and prioritize the projects on the wish list for the federal appropriations funding. Lynne suggested scheduling a retreat for the MRC to plan and prioritize MRC projects and volunteered to be part of the Retreat Planning Committee. Jude also volunteered to help plan the retreat. Tracy will reach out to the NWSC to see if someone could help facilitate the retreat. The retreat will likely be held sometime in January or February and will hopefully be held in person at Padilla Bay. More details to come.

#### **Miscellaneous Announcements: All**

No announcements

**The meeting adjourned at 10:50am. The next virtual MRC meeting to be held January 13, 2022.**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the November 10, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

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

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** October 14, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.
- **Public Comments:** Jay Lind recently witnessed a huge storm surge on his property in Hood Canal. Sasha said this was a good reminder to report king tide and storm surge events in the [MyCoast app](#) to help document these types of events and impacts of climate change over time.

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

*The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held October 29 via Zoom conference call. NWSC meeting highlights were shared with MRC members in the meeting packet email. Pete, Lynne, and Jude attended.*

- **NWSC Staff Update:** Leslie Perkins, Communications and Outreach Specialist with the NWSC recently took another position.
- **NWSC Symposium via Zoom- Nov 18, 2021 (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. This first session in the series is scheduled for November 18<sup>th</sup> at 3:30pm. It will look at how recreation may be changing because of climate change and how various entities are responding. MRC members are encouraged to join the symposium to discuss what impacts might mean for local recreation and opportunities in your community! A Zoom link was emailed to all MRC members. No RSVP required.
- **WCC Funding for Forage Fish:** A team of Commission members are working on a letter of support for funding the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Washington Conservation Corp program for forage fish work. The letter is anticipated to be finalized at the December NWS Commission meeting.
- **NWSF Rain Garden Intern:** The NWS Foundation recently hired an intern to help with rain garden projects.
- **Sea Bin Presentation:** San Juan MRC gave an update on their sea bin project. The sea bins are maintained by volunteers.
- **MRC Retreats:** Several MRCs are planning in-person retreats to develop project ideas, priorities, and proposals.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- December 10 (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/>. They are considering an in-person meeting in February.

## **Project Status & Discussion**

- **Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith:** The 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program will start March 1 – May 24, 2022. The 2022 SSS training is currently slated to include in-person lectures and hopefully a field component. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. Registration deadline is February 22, 2022. Volunteers will be required to wear masks and provide proof of vaccination as required for all state employees. The SSS Advisory Committee is currently focusing on creating promotional materials of the 2022 SSS Training Program. The training curriculum has been drafted. Sara Brostrom will start contacting presenters soon. Padilla Bay NERR hosted a virtual social for all SSS on Wednesday, October 20th (2:30-4:30). The event featured a 90-minute presentation by Dr. Jesse Humbert of Walla Walla University on the Pacific red octopus, *Octopus rubescens* and his techniques of florescent tagging & use of UC Camera traps. 37 people attended. Here is the link to the [recording of the presentation](#) (Passcode: 03F5y@&0). There are currently 304 Trained Salish Sea Stewards on our Master List. The SSS Advisory Committee works to keep all trained SSS volunteers informed &

active! The Interlocal Agreement between the County and Ecology has been drafted and will be routed soon for review and signatures with a start date of October 1, 2021.

- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Field work is done for the year. Surveys will start again in June 2022.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: A planting work party will likely be held sometime this winter. The Sub-Award Agreement between the County and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group has been drafted and will be routed soon for review and signatures with a start date of October 1, 2021.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase: Amy Eberling has selected an intern and is in the process of developing the program plan for this pilot project. The Sub-Award Agreement between the County and the Salish Sea School is in the process of being drafted with a start date of October 1, 2021.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Field trips and onsite visitors are currently prohibited at the schools this fall so the Kids on the Beach program has been entirely shifted to the spring of 2022. The Interlocal Agreement between the County and Ecology has been drafted and will be routed soon for review and signatures with a start date of October 1, 2021.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Work is done for the season. Preliminary data indicates the oyster population increased by 15%. Unfortunately, there was also about a 15% mortality due to the heat dome. But the good news is there is still a healthy population of native oysters in Fidalgo Bay. The tile sampling also indicated heavy oyster spawning this year.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinnel: Hatchery work continues. Field work won't begin until February or March 2022. The Draft Pinto Abalone Recovery Plan is open for public comment. Paul has reviewed the Recovery Plan and will be submitting comments. The Sub-Award Agreement between the County and Puget Sound Restoration Fund has been drafted and will be routed soon for review and signatures with a start date of October 1, 2021.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Darla Gay Smith: The Fidalgo Bay Resort is not currently accepting facility reservations for 2022 events. Planning will likely start in January or February.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- Diane Hennebert: This project requires a 56-page detailed Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) which won't likely be finalized until January 2022. Because of the lengthy QAPP process, sampling has been put on hold until after the first flush in 2022.

- **MRC Project Ideas Discussion:**

There is currently an effort by Senator Murray to reauthorize the Northwest Straits Initiative and secure federal appropriations for the NWSI and MRCs. If approved, the federal funding allocated to the NWSC and MRCs is anticipated to be around \$200,000 per MRC for projects that are shovel ready and can be completed within a 12 – 24, month period. It is anticipated that a federal budget will be adopted in December and the funding would start in early 2022. This funding, if we get it, is only to be used for MRC led projects as defined in the NWSC Funding Policy. MRCs have been asked to come up with a wish list of project ideas and cost estimates by November 12. During the November 10<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting, the Committee identified and discussed the following 'wish list' of potential projects. High Priority= shovel ready. Future Priority= not shovel ready. Potential Priority= more information needed before deciding if the project is a high priority of the MRC. The list of projects will be shared with the NWSC:

1. **Salish Sea Stewards Volunteer Coordination** (Cost Estimate= \$15,000): Identified as a **High Priority**. The Salish Sea Stewards program needs a part-time Volunteer Coordinator to help with the increasing workload. The costs for this position will depend on the time commitment, what other funding sources could be leveraged, and where the position would be housed. If the position was housed at Padilla Bay, funding could be leveraged by Padilla Bay NERR or the Padilla Bay Foundation. The MRC could also consider sharing the costs of this position with another organization or MRC in need of volunteer coordination. Next Steps: Further discussion with the Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee and Padilla Bay NERR is needed.
2. **Kids on the Beach Increased Staffing Capacity** (Cost Estimates= \$0): Identified as a **Non-Priority**. It was determined that additional funding for increased staffing capacity is not needed at this time. Padilla Bay NERR staff workload had temporarily increased during the pandemic to adapt to a virtual and hybrid format. However, it is anticipated that there will be less of a challenge running the program and meeting the teachers needs in the future now that we have the tools and materials needed to implement a virtual, hybrid, and in-person program for the schools.

3. **Pre-Season Crabber Outreach** (Cost Estimates= \$5 - \$10k): Identified as a **High Priority** and is considered a regional project that involves multiple MRCs. Funding could be used to hire/contract with someone to plan and coordinate the crabber outreach effort, develop a communication, and train volunteers, prior to crabbing season. It could also be used to develop and purchase outreach materials. Costs will depend on the MRC's role and involvement in the project. Next Steps: Further discussion is needed with the NWSF and other MRCs to develop an outreach/communications plan and determine the MRC's role.
4. **Shoreline Landowner Workshops** (Cost Estimates= \$5 - \$10k): Identified as a **High Priority** and is considered a regional project that involves multiple MRCs. Funding could be used to contract with the NWSF or someone else to plan and facilitate the program, facility rental, educational materials, contracting speakers and expertise for site visits, etc. Costs will depend on the MRC's role and involvement in the project. Next Steps: We will need to continue this discussion with the NWSF and Swinomish to plan future workshops, outreach, and communications, etc.
5. **Educational Videos** (Cost Estimates= \$5 - \$10k): Identified as a **Low Priority** unless there is extra funding available after the higher priorities are met. Funding could be used to hire a college student or contract with professional firm, or Skagit 21 to create a series of short educational videos that provide an overview of the Skagit MRC and highlight specific projects. It could include interviews with MRC members and Salish Sea Steward volunteers, partner organizations, elected officials, and community members to show the wide-spread impact of our work. A link to the videos could be posted on our website and shared as a training/educational tool for volunteers, elected officials, and onboarding new MRC members. Several other MRCs and the NWSF have created their own series of educational videos. Next Steps: Check with the NWSF and other MRCs to find out who they've worked with, lessons learned, recommendations, etc.
6. **No Anchor Zone for Eelgrass Protection** (Cost Estimates= Unknown): Identified as a **Future Priority** and is considered a regional project that involves multiple MRCs. However, more groundwork needs to be done regarding the feasibility and benefits of this project at the Cap Sante Marina location. The Port of Anacortes is collecting information on the number of boats that anchor there. If the Cap Sante Marina location is feasible, funding could be used to help with project management, permitting, buoys, buoy maintenance, signage, education/outreach materials, etc. Next Steps: Continue discussion with the NWSC and NWSF staff to get an update on the timeline, project location feasibility, and other potential funding sources.
7. **Derelict Crab Pot Removal/Education** (Cost Estimates= Unknown): Identified as a **Future Priority** and is considered a regional project that involves multiple MRCs. However, the NWSF already has enough funding for derelict crab pot removal in Skagit County waters in 2022 and 2023, so additional funding will not be necessary at this time. Funding will likely be needed again in a few years for project management, derelict crab pot surveys and removal, education/outreach, etc. Next Steps: Further discussion with NWSF will be needed to get an update on the work that is being done in 2022 and 2023, future recommendations, timeline, costs, and what Skagit MRC's role might be.
8. **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance** (Cost Estimates= \$5,760): Identified as a **High Priority**. The MRC funded this project with the MRC grant in 2022, but additional funding is needed to continue planting and plant maintenance in 2023. Funding would help pay for mulch/compost, weeding, watering, volunteer training, and staff time. Next Steps: Continue working with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, State Parks, and NWSF on the 2023 plant maintenance plan and recommendations for future years.
9. **Bowman Bay Pocket Estuary Restoration** (Cost Estimates= Depends on Different Phases (*Phase 1 Feasibility, 2-D Modeling and Preliminary Design*= \$120 - \$160k): Identified as a **Potential Priority**, but more information is needed. This project was recently presented to the MRC by the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG), but it is still in the early planning stages. SFEG is currently seeking funding and letters of support for the feasibility study, 2-D modeling and preliminary design which will also require a match for the grant. If this project is feasible, funding will be needed for the different phases of this project: project management, 60-100% design, permitting, construction, culvert replacement, outreach/interp signs, invasive veg & concrete rubble removal. Next Steps: Check with the Skagit Watershed Council and Skagit River System Cooperative to make sure they are in support of this project. Get more details from SFEG on their grant proposal for the feasibility study and design before providing a letter of support.
10. **Clayton Beach Restoration** (Cost Estimates= Depends on Different Phases (*Phase 1 Feasibility/prelim design*= \$125k): Identified as a **Potential Priority**, but more information is needed. This project was recently presented to the MRC by the NWSF, but it is still in the early planning stages. Over \$125k is currently needed for the feasibility and preliminary design which will likely need to be broken into phases. NWSF currently has about \$15k and is waiting to hear back from Marathon about another \$25k. They also have funding for pre-



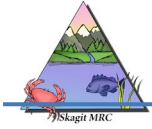
construction monitoring in 2022. Next Steps: The next step is to follow-up with the NWSC, NWSF and Whatcom MRC to get more details about the project, if our MRC funds could be used as a match, and what our role might be.

11. **School Rain Gardens** (Cost Estimates= Depends on leveraged funds/community support): Identified as a **High Priority**. Although this is considered a high priority of the Skagit MRC, there are other sources of funding that could be used for this project instead of the MRC federal appropriations. Next Steps: The next step would be contact the City of Anacortes, La Conner, and the School Districts, to prioritize potential rain garden locations, and identify sources of leveraged funding. Catey also recommended looking into the possibility of connecting the Swinomish Tribe's "Between the Two Worlds" program with the La Conner School raingarden curriculum.
12. **Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement** (Cost Estimates= Unknown): Identified as a **Potential Priority** of the MRC because of the large scale. Next Steps: Diane volunteered to invite a representative from the City of Anacortes to provide an update on the project. Further discussion with project partners is needed to determine if there is a potential role for the MRC.
13. **N. March Point Beach Enhancement/Restoration** (Cost Estimates= \$300k): Identified as a **High/Medium Priority**. Funding is needed for project management, permitting, rock removal and beach enhancement. Marathon has a pot of funds that the Samish could apply for if they are interested in partnering on this project. Next Steps: Continue project discussions with the NWSF and the Samish to see if they are interested in partnering on this project, if additional funding is needed from the MRC, and what the MRC's role might be.
14. **S. Fidalgo Bay Restoration (Old Carsten's Property)** (Cost Estimates= Unknown): Identified as a **Potential Priority**. Funding is potentially needed for beach enhancement/riprap removal/restoration at Skagit Land Trust's old Carsten property in S. Fidalgo Bay. The feasibility and benefits of beach enhancement at this location are still unclear. It could end up being more of a cleanup project. Further discussion is needed with Skagit Land Trust and NWSF to see if this would be a good project.
15. **Samish Island Property Restoration** (Cost Estimates= Unknown): Identified as a **Potential Priority**. Funding will be needed to support the restoration and possible riprap removal at the Skagit Land Trust's newly acquired Samish Island property (formerly Squire's property). There is likely a need for additional matching funds and resources. Padilla Bay NERR could help leverage funding. Next Steps: Further discussion is needed with the Skagit Land Trust and Padilla Bay NERR to find out what Skagit MRC's role might be, cost estimates, and timeline.
16. **Similk Bay Pocket Estuary Restoration** (Cost Estimates= Unknown): Identified as a **Potential Priority**. The Swinomish Tribe and Skagit River Systems Cooperative are working on a tidal marsh/ pocket estuary restoration project at Similk Bay (west of golf course). This is a huge project that is part of the Chinook Recovery Plan and is currently undergoing a feasibility study. There might be a good opportunity for Skagit MRC to partner on this project in some way, particularly with the education/outreach component for public meetings. Next Steps: Further discussion is needed with the Swinomish Tribe and Skagit River Systems Cooperative to find out if there is an opportunity for the MRC to get involved. Catey volunteered to try to get more information about this project and what Skagit MRC's role might be.
17. **Shannon Point Riprap Removal** (Cost Estimates= Unknown): Identified as a **Future Priority**. This project was first initiated by Skagit MRC in 2015 in partnership with NWSF to remove approximately 2500 cubic yards of riprap along 7770 linear ft of shoreline at Shannon Point. A feasibility study was completed including a geotechnical assessment. Volunteers conducted pre-construction monitoring 2015-2016. This project was put on hold due to uncertainties regarding the City's trail design. Next Steps: Diane will check with City of Anacortes to see what their plans are with the trail. We will need to make sure the City is in support of this project before moving forward.
18. **More Intensive Olympia Oyster Surveys** (Cost Estimates= \$5 - \$10k): Identified as a **High Priority**. Funding is needed to hire/contract someone such as Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF), to manage and conduct more intensive oyster surveys across a wide area in Fidalgo Bay every three to five years. The next one is scheduled to occur in the spring/summer of 2023. Next Steps: Confirm the availability and costs of PSRF to manage this project with the help of volunteers in 2023. The MRC could also look at other options.

#### **Miscellaneous Announcements:**     *All*

No announcements

**The meeting adjourned at 10:50am. The next virtual MRC meeting to be held December 9, 2021**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the October 14, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Betsy Stevenson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson, Diane Hennebert, Jude Apple, Jay Lind, Pete Haase, Paul Dinnel, Catey Ritchie, Kari Odden, Matt Castle
- **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson
- **Others in Attendance:** Kristin Murray, SFEG; Sasha Horst, NWSC; Leah Robson, NWSC; Lucas Hart, NWSC; Craig Olsen, volunteer; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council

**Call to Order and Introduction:** Betsy Stevenson called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** September 9, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** See Bowman Bay Pocket Estuary Restoration Project below.

## **Bowman Bay Pocket Estuary Restoration Project:** *Kristin Murray, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group*

Kristin Murray with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group shared the conceptual design for Bowman Bay pocket estuary restoration project that she and Tom Slocum of the Skagit Conservation District have been working on. The wetland near the Bowman Bay restoration site used to be connected to the bay prior to the installation of the former fish hatchery which filled in a good chunk of the wetland. The fish hatchery has since been removed, but the fill that is still there completely disconnects the wetland from the bay. The conceptual design reconnects the wetland to the bay in three breaches along the beach berm, removes the derelict outfall pipe, constructs a new foot bridge at each breach, and establishes a protective buffer at the north end of the wetland by removing invasive vegetation and concrete rubble, restoring the natural grade, and planting native vegetation. Aundrea McBride suggested they consider just one breach along the beach berm rather than three for better tidal flushing. The conceptual design also includes a potential new trail around the marsh with interpretive signage, a feasibility analysis of replacing the elevated culvert that connects to Pass Lake under Rosario Road, and the possible need to replace the culvert and inlet structures in the Pass Lake parking lot. The elevated culvert that connects to Pass Lake under Rosario Road currently prohibits regular flushing of the lake which frequently experiences toxic algal blooms. Jude pointed out that a new culvert might not have much of an impact on algal blooms in Pass Lake since algal blooms typically occur during the summer months when there is less rain fall, so there wouldn't be much flushing at that time anyways. Kristin said State Parks is in full support of this project and hopes to get a Letter of Support from the Skagit MRC when she applies for upcoming grants. Financial support would also be appreciated if the MRC is able. The Committee would like to have more detailed project information included in the grant application before providing a Letter of Support. Kristin offered to schedule a site visit with the MRC if interested.

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

*The NWSC/ NWSF Retreat was held September 23-24 via Zoom conference call with 25-30 participants. There was no regular NWSC monthly meeting in September. NWSF highlights were shared with MRC members in the meeting packet email.*

- **NWSC/NWSF Retreat- Sept 23-24:** Lucas Hart and Don Hunger summarized the challenges faced over the last couple of years including fundraising, staffing shortages, and hiring freezes. They talked about current projects and programs and the reauthorization process of the NWS Initiative. Several MRC reps expressed concern over the lack of MRC projects currently supported by the Foundation which is supposed to be the primary function of the Foundation. It was pointed out that we need to do a better job of communicating how our work benefits others in the community, because that is what is important to legislators.
- **MRC Conference via Zoom- Nov 18, 2021 (3:30pm):** The conference will be a virtual series this year and the theme is Climate Change Action at the Local Level. MRC members are encouraged to attend at least one virtual session. This first session in the series will look at how recreation may be changing as a result of climate change and how various entities are responding. Join with fellow MRC members to discuss what impacts might mean for local recreation and opportunities in your community! A Zoom link was emailed to all MRC members. No RSVP required.



- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- October 29 (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/>

### **Tribal Acknowledgement Discussion:** *All*

The NWSC adopted the Tribal Acknowledgement which was developed in consultation with tribes. It is read at the beginning of each Commission meeting. Several other MRC's have adopted the NWSC Tribal Acknowledgement as well. The Skagit MRC discussed the possibility of adopting the NWSC's "Tribal Acknowledgement" at the July 8<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting. However, the Committee decided to table the decision until we were able to find out why two of the four tribes in Skagit county were not included. Pete later found out that it was because only two tribes in Skagit County responded to the Commission's request for input and to "opt in" to the Tribal Acknowledgment. After further discussion, the Skagit MRC decided to table the decision once again until we can get a response from all four tribes. Catey Ritchie offered to reach out to the Upper Skagit and Sauk-Suiattle Tribes.

### **NW Straits Reauthorization/Federal Appropriation Discussion:** *Sasha Horst*

There is currently an effort by Senator Murray to reauthorize the Northwest Straits Initiative and secure an ongoing federal appropriation. Sasha and Lucas recently met with MRC staff, MRC Chairs, and NWSC Representatives to provide an overview of what reauthorization and an appropriation might mean for our MRC. If approved, the federal funding that would be earmarked for the NWSC and MRCs is anticipated to be around \$200,000 per MRC over a 12 – 24, month period. It is anticipated that a federal budget will be adopted in December and the funding would start in early 2022. This funding, if we get it, is only to be used for MRC led projects as defined in the NWSC Funding Policy. The MRC's role in the project must be clearly identified and the project must have measurable results. It cannot be used as pass through funding to outside organizations. However, we can work with other partners on a project (e.g. City, County, Port, Tribes, Padilla Bay, non-profits, etc.). Any remaining funds that the MRC cannot use will be distributed to other MRCs and/or regional NWS Initiative projects. MRCs are being asked to come up with a wish list of project ideas and cost estimates by November 12. Things to consider: What projects are shovel ready? Are there components of a project that need an influx of funding? Could the project be realistically completed in one year or two years? Project ideas that have been tossed around by other MRCs include: Clayton Beach restoration, rain gardens, derelict vessel removal, eelgrass protection zones, pre-season crabber education workshops, shore friendly landowner workshops, database dashboard and data analysis on website, educational workshops, and technical services for coastal resilience to climate change, etc. Skagit MRC members were asked to email Tracy a list of project ideas and cost estimates prior to the next MRC meeting in November. Tracy will send out a reminder.

### **Project Status & Discussion**

- Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith: The 2021 Salish Sea Stewards (SSS) Annual Report was finalized and shared with MRC members. Skagit MRC partners with Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to administer the SSS program. The SSS Advisory Committee provides leadership, guidance and oversight of program development and the recruitment and training of volunteers. The SSS Advisory Committee met on September 28<sup>th</sup> to start planning the 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program which will run March 1 – May 24, 2022. The 2022 SSS training is currently slated for a blended program to include in-person gatherings, lectures online, and hopefully a field component. The Department of Ecology is currently allowing in-person gatherings of 15 or less which limits the SSS in-person training program size. The online class of 2021 graduated 38 Stewards. Governor Inslee's vaccine mandates for state workers extends to volunteers. Registration for the 2022 SSS Training Program will require proof of Covid vaccination. The SSS Advisory Committee is currently focusing on creating promotional materials of the 2022 SSS Training Program. Padilla Bay NERR is hosting a virtual social for all SSS next Wednesday, October 20<sup>th</sup> (2:30-4:30). The event will feature a 90-minute presentation by Dr. Jesse Humbert of Walla Walla University on the Pacific red octopus, *Octopus rubescens* and his techniques of florescent tagging & use of UC Camera traps. Skagit MRC members are invited to attend. There are currently 304 Trained Salish Sea Stewards on our Master List. The SSS Advisory Committee works to keep all Trained SSS volunteers informed & active!
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Kelp surveys were finished up for the season in September. Preliminary survey data indicated the kelp beds at Shannon Point were relatively smaller than they have been during the same growing period in previous years.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group hosted the last plant maintenance event with two Shell Puget Sound Refinery staff on September 24 and the final walk through with Tracy and Lynne. Tracy and Lynne also stepped in to help with the mulching since they were short handed. The 2021 Bowman Bay Final Report was completed in September. A total of four volunteer work parties were

held in 2021 and 40 volunteers contributed an average of two hours of labor, totaling 82 hours of maintenance and planting. Under the new MRC Grant, we will plant 120 native trees and shrubs in the restoration area, apply compost mulch, plant eight additional conifers in the lawn area east of restoration site, provide supplemental watering throughout summer season, and apply educational materials to help train volunteers.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue. It's been a better than average year for surf smelt spawning at our survey sites. Surf smelt spawning season has started to wind down at most of our survey locations. This Saturday is Orca Recovery Day and the forage fish survey crew is on tap to educate the Salish Sea School students on how to conduct surveys.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern- Pete Haase: The MRC Intern is a new project under the new MRC grant agreement that just got signed in October. The Salish Sea School will acquire an intern to help support projects the MRC is involved in or are of interest to the MRC. We are still in the very early stages of planning. A Sub-award agreement between the County and the Salish Sea School will be drafted soon. Pete shared a link to a youtube video by Amy Eberling that provides a nice overview of the Salish Sea School:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9sDul01RGk>
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: The 2021 Kids on the Beach Annual Report was finalized and shared with MRC members. Annie England has been working with the schools to set them up for the Kids on the Beach program for the 2021-2022 school year. Field trips and onsite visitors are currently prohibited at the schools this fall so the Kids on the Beach program will be shifted entirely to the spring of 2022. The spring program will focus on forage fish surveys and beach seining. The participating schools for the spring program include Concrete, Sedro-Woolley, and Conway with around 150 students. And for the first time, Anacortes Elementary and Middle Schools have also expressed a lot of interest in participating in the program. Jude said we will need to closely monitor our limited staffing capacity before adding more schools and students to the program. It is also important to note that we now have all the tools and materials we need to transition from an in-person program to a hybrid or virtual learning format if needed.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Work is done for the season. Preliminary data indicates the oyster population increased by 15%. Unfortunately, there was also about a 15% mortality due to the heat dome. But the good news is there is still a healthy population of native oysters in Fidalgo Bay. The tile sampling also indicated heavy oyster spawning this year.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinnel: The 2021 Pinto Abalone Annual Report was finalized in September and shared with MRC members. An additional 4300 juvenile pinto abalone were outplanted in Skagit County waters this year for a total of 18,000 outplanted since 2009. 7 out of the 8 sites in Skagit County have a density greater than 0.15 abalone per square meter which is the level deemed necessary for successful reproduction to take place. Two of the restoration sites had about 10 times that density of pinto abalone!
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Tracy Alker: The MRC Grant funds for Fidalgo Bay Day were used to update our MRC display booth. The booth has already been shipped and ready to go for our next event. Tracy shared the final design for the 8' pop-up- curved exhibit booth. It turned out very nicely and is easy enough for one person to transport and setup. We also purchased a giant wooden disc drop game also called "plinko" that will be painted to look like a kelp forest. Participants will drop the disc which will land into a slot with a category. Each category will have marine science related questions to answer. Planning for the 2022 Fidalgo Bay Day event will start soon. The next step is to pick a date and reserve the facility.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling- Diane Hennebert: This is a new project under the new MRC grant agreement that just got signed in October. There is not a whole lot to report right now. Diane was originally hoping to collect stormwater samples from the first flush this fall. Unfortunately, Ecology requires a full QAPP prior to sampling which will take much longer than originally anticipated. We will have to wait until 2022 to catch the first flush. Diane is currently working with Amy Eberling's Salish Sea School on a similar project to take stormwater samples at the Anacortes ferry dock.

#### Mt. Erie Elementary School Rain Garden Update: Diane Hennebert

The Mt. Erie Elementary School Rain Garden is a project funded by the NWSF grant from Shell Puget Sound Refinery in partnership with the MRC and the City of Anacortes. This is a highly visible project and it's coming along nicely. The plan is to start construction in the spring of 2022. The rain garden will include a walking path and interpretive signage. Shell employees will take part in the construction part of it. A curriculum focused on stormwater and the rain garden is currently being developed for the students in collaboration with Denise Crowe, the Education Program Manager for the Samish Indian Nation. The Northwest Straits Foundation has a raingarden intern who will also be working on this project. Diane said she would like to see the rain garden program expand to all elementary schools in Skagit County. The Mt. Erie Elementary School Rain Garden curriculum could be used as a template.

### **Swinomish Shore Friendly Program Update:** *Catey Ritchie*

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community received funding in 2020 to start their own Shore Friendly program on tribal land. The Swinomish Shore Friendly program targets two areas: West Shore (primary area of focus) and Shelter Bay (secondary area of focus). They are in the process of developing the West Shore Feasibility Report that will be used as an education and outreach tool. It identifies and prioritizes the feasibility of potential shoreline armor removal and restoration of West Shore properties in the near term and long term. The secondary area of focus is Shelter Bay which used to be a large pocket estuary before it was filled in. There aren't a whole lot of Shore Friendly restoration opportunities at Shelter Bay, but they are looking at a couple of potential projects. The Swinomish's Shore Friendly program takes a neighborhood approach to have a larger impact. It includes technical site visits on several properties combined with educational beach walks that help highlight the properties' connection to the drift cell and cultural history. The site visits provide technical guidance for landowners concerned about erosion or drainage, etc. A group of five to eight participating neighboring properties typically band together to select a stewardship demonstration site as a model for drainage and vegetation improvements and possibly armor removal. The Northwest Straits Foundation is hosting a virtual Vegetation Management Workshop for shoreline landowners on Thursday, October 21<sup>st</sup> from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Information about the workshop can be found on the Skagit MRC website as well as the Northwest Straits Foundation's website.

### **MRC Grant Reporting- Volunteer Hours Clarification:** *Tracy Alker*

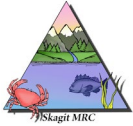
MRC members asked for clarification regarding MRC grant requirements for reporting volunteer hours and matching leveraged funding. MRC member/volunteer hours and leveraged funding reports are due quarterly. MRC members are asked to email their hours to Tracy each quarter including. The reporting format should include the month, day, and hours for each task. If MRC members report volunteer hours in Volgistics, there is no need to report hours to Tracy since she receives quarterly Volgistics reports from Padilla Bay. For example, volunteer hours can include: MRC meetings and meeting prep, NWSC/NWSF meetings, workshops, conferences, training, and events, MRC subcommittee meetings, MRC project planning and implementation, MRC project proposal and report prep, MRC correspondence and administration, etc. MRC Project Leads are also asked to provide quarterly reports for any additional funding leveraged for MRC projects including work in kind, donations, facilities, insurance, supplies, equipment, etc.

- **MRC Quarterly Report Due Dates:**
  - QTR 1: (October-December) **Due January 15**
  - QTR 2: (January-March) **Due April 15**
  - QTR 3: (April-June) **Due July 15**
  - QTR 4: (July-Sept) **Due October 15**

### **Miscellaneous Announcements:** *All*

No announcements

**The meeting adjourned at 10:50am. The next virtual MRC meeting was originally scheduled to be held November 11, 2021 but was rescheduled to November 10<sup>th</sup> since November 11<sup>th</sup> is a holiday.**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the September 9, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Betsy Stevenson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Kevin Anderson, Jodi Bluhm, Diane Hennebert, Sara Brostrom (Jude Apple's Alternate), Jay Lind
- **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Kari Odden, Pete Haase, Paul Dinnel, Jude Apple, Catey Ritchie, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Annie England, PBNERR; Sasha Horst, NWSC; Aundrea McBride, Skagit

**Call to Order and Introduction:** Betsy Stevenson called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

- **Approval of Minutes:** August 12, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

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

*The last NWSC meeting was held August 27, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm). 20-25 attendees. Meeting highlights were shared with MRC members in the meeting packet email.*

- NWSC Meeting Introduction: Clallam County Commissioner, Mark Ozias, gave an introduction. He was very knowledgeable and complimentary of the MRCs.
- Shoreline Master Program Learning Group: Barbara Bennett of Island MRC is coordinating a Shoreline Master Program (SMP) learning group for anyone interested in being involved in the next round of SMP updates. The group will meet in September.
- Meeting with Senator Patty Murray- Sept 7: Sen. Patty Murray met with Commission Staff at Padilla Bay to discuss the reauthorization effort of the Northwest Straits Initiative. The reauthorization could mean a boost of more consistent funding for the MRCs.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Retreat (via Zoom) September 23 (1:30-3:30pm) and September 24 (10am-1pm): The agenda will be available soon. There will be no regular Commission meeting in September.
- MRC Conference via Zoom- Nov 18, 2021 (3:30pm): The conference will be a virtual series this year and the theme is Climate Change Action at the Local Level. More details coming soon. MRC members are encouraged to attend at least one virtual session.
- Caroline Gibson Memorial: A memorial for Caroline Gibson will be held October 24, 2021 (4-7pm) at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Masks and covid vaccinations will be required for everyone's safety. All are invited to attend and celebrate Caroline's wonderful life and legacy.

### Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith: The Stewards Advisory Committee did not meet in August because they decided to take a month-break before starting to plan for the 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program. Training will likely be a hybrid format. The Committee is working on a General SSS Planning Timetable template as well as a detailed 2022 Program Planning Timetable. There are currently 304 Trained Salish Sea Stewards on our Master List. The Committee is mindful of keeping the Trained SSS volunteers informed & active! A picnic was originally scheduled for Saturday August 28, 2021 at Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (1 - 3pm). However, due to the rising number of COVID cases, the SSS Advisory Committee decided to cancel the picnic. Instead, the Committee and Padilla Bay are considering hosting a virtual gathering this fall with an educational component.

- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: There are three kelp bed locations that are currently being surveyed by MRC volunteers including: Shannon Point (2 kelp beds east and west), Biz Point, and Coffin Rocks. Kimberly Cauvel, Environmental Reporter with the Skagit Valley Herald, recently wrote an excellent article about the kayak kelp surveys after participating in a survey with volunteers at Coffin Rocks on August 5. Here is the [link to the article](#). The article sparked some interest from folks wanting to get involved including an individual who is an experienced kayaker with a data analytics background. He volunteered to help analyze the kelp data. Dana and Allie presented to the Hole in the Wall Kayak Club at their meeting on September 8<sup>th</sup>. Several club members expressed interest in participating in the surveys next year and possibly taking the lead in surveying new sites in Skagit County. Surveys are wrapping up for the season. The Coffin Rocks survey team just finished up their last survey on September 4<sup>th</sup>. On August 20<sup>th</sup>, volunteers surveyed the two kelp beds at Shannon Point and their last survey of the season is scheduled for September 17<sup>th</sup>. The Biz Point survey crew surveyed on August 26<sup>th</sup> and their last survey of the season is scheduled for September 16<sup>th</sup>. They observed several sea stars on the rocks during their survey. All kelp beds at all three locations surveyed appear to be very dense and healthy. Lots of new growth this year.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The first maintenance event was held July 19<sup>th</sup> and the second plant maintenance event was held August 17<sup>th</sup> to coincide with the nearshore monitoring at the Bowman Bay nearshore restoration site and on September 8<sup>th</sup>. On August 17<sup>th</sup>, 400 gallons of water from the County water truck was used to water the plants at the site. 31 volunteers, including students from the Salish Sea School, participated in small groups at the nearshore restoration event at Bowman Bay. Lisa Kaufman presented an overview of the restoration project to the volunteers and public onlookers. Volunteer activities included 2 hours of weeding (very few weeds to pull) and mulching with compost over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the shoreline restoration area, picking up trash, forage fish spawning surveys, and beach seining. The plants are looking a little dry and sun damaged but hanging in there. The watering has helped a lot. Soil testing at the restoration site indicated a lack of nitrogen so a compost mixture of cow manure and mulch was applied to add nitrogen back into the soil and to help retain moisture around the plants. On September 8<sup>th</sup>, the SFEG AmeriCorps crew planted 500 dune grasses in just one and a half hours! The County water truck will be used to water the plants tomorrow. Tracy and Lynne will attend the final walk through with SFEG staff and the last plant maintenance event of the season with Shell Refinery staff on September 24.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue with good spawning results. The new Salish Sea Stewards class of 2021 will get a chance to attend field training on September 8 and 18 in small groups of 5 or so members each day for lessons and experience doing forage fish surveys at the Fidalgo Bay RV Park. There was a nice article in the Anacortes American about the forage fish surveys. Pete and Kevin were both quoted in the article. Pete thanked Kevin for arranging the interview.
- Kids on the Beach – Annie England: We have the tools and materials we need to transition from an in-person program to a hybrid or virtual learning format as needed. School just started, so nothing is set in stone yet. Annie is still waiting on a confirmation from the teachers. Ideally, Annie would like to provide a fall program that focuses on forage fish since forage fish eggs are more plentiful in the fall so kids are more likely to find them. But the program will likely be postponed until spring because things will hopefully be opening up more for in-person learning and field trips. There are several ideas being tossed around for the spring program including: Batellaria, eelgrass, beach seining, etc.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: No updates.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinnel: No updates. The 2021 Annual Pinto Abalone Report will be finalized by the end of September.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Tracy Alker: The MRC Grant funds for Fidalgo Bay Day will be used to update our MRC display booth. Tracy drafted a concept design for the 8' pop-up- curved exhibit booth that was reviewed by Betsy, Pete, and Lynne. The text is very minimal with several colorful photos to help highlight the MRC and the work we do without being too project specific including: Restoration, Protection, Monitoring, Education/Outreach, Community Science, and Stewardship. The concept design was also shared with MRC members at the MRC meeting. Tracy asked for feedback on the text and photos used. Revisions and final design will be made based on feedback received.

#### **2021 - 2023 MRC Grant:** *Tracy Alker*

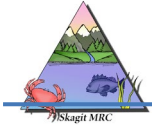
The Committee reviewed the draft 2021-2023 MRC Grant Agreement prior to the MRC meeting. Each MRC will be awarded an additional \$8,000 for year one (Oct 1, 2021 - Sept 30, 2022) in the new MRC Grant Agreement. Tracy proposed that most of the additional funds be allocated towards the Bowman Bay Restoration project under a sub-award agreement with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group. The Bowman Bay restoration site needs additional shrubs and trees planted this fall/winter to fill in ground cover and help provide some protection to the other plants that are struggling. In addition to monthly weeding, compost should also be applied and the watering should be increased to twice a month next summer. The Committee voted by consensus in favor of allocating \$7,383 of the funds towards the Bowman Bay Restoration and the remaining \$617 allocated towards MRC Operations.

#### **Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:** *All*

No announcements.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held October 14, 2021





# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the August 12, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Paul Dinnel, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Catey Ritchie, Kevin Anderson, Jude Apple, Matt Castle, Kari Odden
- **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind
- **Others in Attendance:** Dana Oster, NWSC; Allie Simpson, NWSC; Jessica Espy, WSU Ext.; Lisa Kaufman, NWSF; Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** July 8, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

### Shore Stewards Program Introduction: *Jessica Espy, WSU Ext.*

Jessica Espy is the new Program Coordinator for the Shore Stewards Program through WSU Skagit Extension. Jessica is in the process of building this program and connecting with local community members and organizations to look for ways to collaborate, share information, and increase public involvement in protecting our shorelines. The Shore Stewards Program currently highlights 10 guidelines for watershed preservation and offers quarterly newsletters, educational videos, and easy access to additional resources. The program is small but has the potential to do a lot of good in the community. After learning about the Northwest Straits Foundation's Shore Friendly program and all the wonderful shoreline landowner outreach that is already happening in the nearshore community, Jessica decided to focus her efforts on lakefront shorelines. Jessica is interested in implementing a volunteer water quality monitoring program in Lakes Erie and Campbell in partnership with Skagit Valley College, Samish Indian Nation, and lakefront property owners. She also hopes to host a few educational workshops and events for lakefront property owners.

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

*The last NWSC meeting was held July 30, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm). Meeting highlights were shared with MRC members in the meeting packet email.*

- **State of the Salish Sea Report:** The Salish Sea Institute recently published the State of the Sea Report. Ginny Broadhurst presented the report at the NWSC meeting. The report can be downloaded for free here: <https://wp.wvu.edu/salishsea/>. The Commission will provide each MRC with one hard copy if interested. Hard copies are also available for purchase.
- **NWSC Funding Policy:** The NWSF Funding Policy has been approved as written.
- **Clallam MRC's Tumwater Creek Internship Project Report:** The Tumwater Creek Internship Project was presented by Clallam MRC member Tim Cochnauer. Clallam MRC's internship programs are typically for three months (40-80 hours) in the summer. The interns are assigned to work on specific projects under the supervision of an assigned mentor. The interns present their projects to the MRC at the end of their term.
- **Federal Reauthorization of NWSI:** The NWSC Executive Committee has been working on the reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative to get included in the federal programs that automatically receive funding to help make it more sustainable.
- **2021-2023 MRC Grant:** The 2021-2023 MRC Grant Proposals have been approved for funding! Commission staff will work with MRCs to finalize project budgets in the next month.
- **Caroline Gibson Scholarship Fund:** In honor of Caroline Gibson and her amazing legacy to the Salish Sea, the Northwest Straits Foundation established the Caroline Gibson Scholarship Fund to grant scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students in Marine Studies. Planning is underway for Caroline's memorial.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom) August 27, 2021:** 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/>.

### Voluntary No Anchor Zone Discussion: *Allie Simpson and Dana Oster, NWSC*

Allie and Dana presented an overview of Jefferson MRC's Voluntary No Anchor Zone project and discussed the next steps Skagit MRC would need to take to potentially establish something similar in Skagit County. The goal of this project is to protect eelgrass beds by placing buoys seaward of the beds to let boaters know where they should anchor to avoid physical damage to the eelgrass. It is completely voluntary and so far in Jefferson County, they've had 98-99% compliance rates each year. The NWSC secured some funding in 2022 in partnership with the Northwest Straits Foundation to expand this project to other MRCs and start permitting some potential sites. Lisa Kaufman will help with the permitting across multiple counties. Partner organizations in B.C. are also interested in establishing No Anchor Zones in their area, so the NWSC will be working with them to develop and share consistent branding and messaging with the boating community. At a previous Skagit MRC meeting the MRC discussed the possibility of establishing a Voluntary No Anchor Zone at Seafarer's Memorial Park in Anacortes. Allie asked MRC members to help create a list of local stakeholders to contact about the Seafarer's Memorial Park location as a potential candidate for the Voluntary No Anchor Zone. The MRC identified the following local stakeholders to contact: Jimmy Blais, MJB Properties; Kevin Anderson, Port of Anacortes; Libby Grage, City of Anacortes; Anacortes Waterfront Alliance; Cap Sante Marina Advisory Committee; Brad Johnson, Cap Sante Marina Harbor Master; Samish Indian Nation; Swinomish Tribal Community; Anacortes Rowing Society; and Anacortes Yacht Club. Allie also asked MRC members to identify one or two photo point locations for counting the number of boats in the bay at a given time, particularly in the area where the eel grass beds are located. This information will help determine whether a Voluntary No Anchor Zone would be beneficial at the Seafarers Memorial Park location. Kevin said the Port of Anacortes has a camera that record boats entering the bay that can be used to help count boats with screen capture. The camera can be controlled and can zoom into a specific location and can rotate 360 degrees to capture lots of different angles. Kevin pointed out that the Harbor Master also does weekly counts of vessels that he has access to. Paul volunteered to take photos and count vessels at the end of the Cape Sante Pier if an additional on-the-ground perspective is needed. Dana said the NWSC has data sheets for the volunteers to record data. Paul said it would also be a good idea to know the location of the eelgrass beds to determine if the buoys could potentially become a navigational hazard if placed out seaward of the beds. Kevin said the Port of Anacortes has some good data on nearby eelgrass beds that can be shared.

## **Project Status & Discussion**

- Salish Sea Stewards - Darla Gay Smith: A picnic is currently scheduled for **Saturday August 28, 2021** at Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (1 - 3pm potluck) to welcome in the 38 new Salish Sea Stewards graduates who completed the Program in June of this year. But plans could change, depending on COVID restrictions. Skagit MRC members are invited to attend. The SSS Advisory Committee is in the process of developing a timeline template to help with program planning (registration, advertising, social media platforms, securing gear and scheduling speakers). The Committee is also working on a Communications Plan and developing a job description for a part-time Volunteer Coordinator. Next year's training is slated to be a hybrid format with some in-person and some virtual classes.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: There are three kelp bed locations that are currently being surveyed by MRC volunteers including: Shannon Point (2 kelp beds east and west), Biz Point, and Coffin Rocks. On July 20<sup>th</sup> volunteers surveyed Shannon Point east and west kelp beds. The rust on the kelp that they had observed previously appeared to be going away. The next survey will take place August 20<sup>th</sup>. Kimberly Cauvel, Environmental Reporter with the Skagit Valley Herald, participated in a survey with volunteers at Coffin Rocks on August 5. She plans to write an article about the kelp surveys in the next week or two. The Biz Point survey crew went out on July 11<sup>th</sup>, but the waves were just too big and unsafe to complete the survey. The next survey is scheduled August 26<sup>th</sup> and September 16<sup>th</sup>. All kelp beds surveyed appear to be dense and healthy.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: A special volunteer event was held at the Bowman Bay restoration site on July 19 from 11am to 1pm. 11 volunteers helped with weeding and watering. Volunteers hauled buckets of water (500 gallons) to water plants throughout the site with water from the County's water trailer. The volunteers removed thistles, poison hemlock, and blackberries before they went to seed. Four volunteers helped with forage fish spawning surveys and two volunteers helped with the forage fish interpretive station. The interpretive station was a huge hit with the public. Seven volunteers helped with the beach seining. They found lots of juvenile Chinook and had lots of great interaction with the public. The next plant maintenance event is scheduled for August 17<sup>th</sup> from 10am-12pm to coincide with the nearshore monitoring. The County water truck will be used again. This time we have permission from the Park Manager to drive on the grass next to the pathway to water the plants. Lisa Kaufman recommended planting additional trees and shrubs this fall and increasing the watering to twice a month next year during the hot summer

months. Lisa said there is a grant available for purchasing plants, but it will require a match. Tracy said there also might be some additional MRC Grant funding available for Bowman Bay if approved by the NWSF.

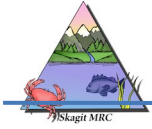
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue at our 3 MRC restoration sites and our 3 Forage Fish Index sites as well as the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve. The sampling schedule in August has been reduced to work around vacations and other obligations. In July they found a few eggs in all their samples at Bowman Bay. They plan to complete a more intensive survey at Bowman Bay in August. Pete is working with Sara Brostrom to schedule a field trip in September to Fidalgo Bay with the Salish Sea Stewards class of 2021 to run through the forage fish sampling protocols. Forage fish survey volunteers hosted an educational forage fish station at the Fidalgo Bay Resort for several small groups of Latinx kids from the Washington Gear Up Program in Burlington and Edison High School in Mount Vernon. It was part of a larger program that took place over the course of a three-week period with 7 or 8 different education stations that focused on the marine environment. In addition to forage fish, some of the different topics include tide pool exploration, marine mammals, boat-based research, kayaking, stormwater, data analysis, report writing, presentations, etc. Many of the kids have never even been to a beach before. The kids were very enthusiastic and eager to learn and had a great experience. Pete said he felt inspired just being a part of it. On Tuesday, August 24<sup>th</sup> from 10am-11am via Zoom, the Washington Conservation Corps forage fish team will present an overview of their experience in the last year collecting and processing forage fish samples from across the Sound and supporting other work to monitor forage fish in the state.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Nothing new to report. The 2021 Kids on the Beach Annual Report will be finalized in September. Padilla Bay staff are working on the 2021 fall line-up for the Kids on the Beach program.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel: Paul observed lots of oyster settlement on the ceramic tiles, more than he has seen in the last five years. There are lots of bags of oyster shell in Fidalgo Bay that are currently collecting oyster spat to transfer elsewhere (e.g. Skagit Bay and Padilla Bay). It is anticipated that the shell bags will also have lots of oyster settlement. Paul surveyed the impacts of the recent heat dome. It did not appear to impact the mussels, barnacles, or Pacific oysters. There was some mortality of Olympia oysters due to the heat wave of around 13.2% to 14.6%. Luckily the temperatures in Fidalgo Bay didn't get quite as high as it did in other parts of the state. It could have been a lot worse. Pete noted that they conducted intertidal monitoring at the Custom Plywood site one or two weeks after the heat dome event. Luckily, it didn't appear to have an impact on the clam population at the Custom Plywood site.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinneel: 2021 was a very good year for pinto abalone restoration. Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) was able to outplant twice as many abalone than originally anticipated. Several abalone were found at two restoration sites that previously had really low numbers. PSRF is currently working on data analysis and the annual report. The 2021 Annual Pinto Abalone Report will be finalized in September.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Tracy Alker: The MRC Grant funds that were set aside for Fidalgo Bay Day will be used to update our MRC display booth since we had to cancel Fidalgo Bay Day this year. The funds must be spent by September 30, 2021. We currently have a three-panel tabletop display, but it is old and falling apart. A new tabletop display would cost around \$355. Tracy researched other options to get a fresh new look for the MRC display. The Northwest Straits Commission and the Northwest Straits Foundation both have free standing floor banners which are very professional looking with custom printed graphics and are easy to store and transport. However, they are kind of flimsy and tend to snap back into the roll. The Skagit County Clean Water Program just purchased a new 8' pop-up curved exhibit booth for the Poop Smart campaign that staff took to the Skagit County Fair. The large display seemed to really draw a lot of attention. It looks very professional, is sturdy but light weight, easy to set up and comes with a carrying case with wheels and a podium with storage, so no table required, and it leaves more room for games and activities. The backdrop is one large graphic printed on fabric that can be custom designed to make it look more professional. We would just have to provide the design elements such as our logo, text, pictures, and anything else we would like included. The total cost for the backdrop, podium, and custom design is \$1,125. The backdrop can also be replaced for around \$350. Even though we won't be able to change the custom backdrop, we can still highlight specific projects by creating posters in-house and display them on an easel or sandwich board. We can also print project fact sheets. Committee members expressed their support for purchasing the 8' pop-curved exhibit booth. Tracy will start working on a concept design and asked for help with refining the messaging and selecting a few good photos for the backdrop. Tracy also asked for ideas for new activities for the display booth.

Lisa shared information about a potential restoration project at Clayton Beach in Larrabee State Park that offers a wonderful opportunity for both Whatcom and Skagit MRCs to work together on a project. Technically the beach is in Skagit County, but the project is on the WRIA 1 project list, so it spans the geographies of both MRCs. There are remnant materials from the old railroad spur including about 1,300 linear feet of rock armor, old pilings, as well as more recent rock debris on the shoreline. Lisa said the folks that she talked to at State Parks are super excited about the prospect of a project out there and they are interested in getting involved. They talked about the possibility of creating a demonstration clam garden at that location to include cultural aspects. They currently have plans to reroute the trail to the beach including an overpass over the railroad which is supposed to get underway this fall. Lisa applied for funding from Marathon to get started on the feasibility study (around \$25,000). She will know in a couple of weeks if she was able to secure the funding. Assuming restoration is feasible, there will be lots of opportunities to get volunteers out on the beach for monitoring. Jason Morgan has funds available through the Foundation's restoration monitoring grant for this project. Monitoring would likely include intertidal surveys, beach seining, forage fish surveys, elevation surveys, beach wrack, large woody debris (LWD), and anything else Jason can come up with that makes sense. There will also be lots of opportunities for public outreach and engagement. Lisa will try to schedule a site visit soon and will send an invite to MRC members.

#### **Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:**     *All*

- **Port of Anacortes- Seabin Pilot Project:** Kevin reported that the Port of Anacortes recently installed a Seabin at A Dock earlier this winter as a pilot project. It has been running continuously since the end of March. The Seabin gets emptied daily. Most of what the Seabin has collected so far includes eelgrass, seaweed, gunnels, and polystyrene beads. They also get the occasional chip bag and soda bottle. The Port has absorbent pads that they can throw into the Seabin if there is a spill in the marina basin. They are eager to see how it does throughout the winter to decide how beneficial it is and whether it's worth installing additional Seabins at multiple locations. If so, there might be a good opportunity for volunteers to get involved in monitoring and maintaining the Seabins.
- **MJB Development Activity Along the Fidalgo Bay Waterfront:** Pete reported that several Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Citizen Stewardship Committee members are committed to stay informed on what is happening with the huge development project along the Fidalgo Bay Waterfront and to see if there might be a role for citizens or the MRCs to play. They recently learned that Coastal Geologic Services is doing the studies for this project. But the actual construction phase is still a long way out.
- **Similk Bay Bulkhead Removal:** The Northwest Straits Foundation is currently under contract to remove the bulkhead on two private properties in Similk Bay in September.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:55am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held Sept 9, 2021**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the July 8, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Paul Dinnel, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Catey Ritchie, Diane Hennebert, Jay Lind, Jodi Blum (Matt's Alternate), Kari Odden
- **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Kevin Anderson, Matt Castle, Jude Apple
- **Others in Attendance:** Kristin Murray, SFEG; Jackie Lindsey, COASST; Dana Oster, NWSC

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** June 10, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

### Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST): Jackie Lindsey

COASST is a citizen-science program of the University of Washington that was established to collect data on marine bird carcasses and marine debris along the beaches of the Pacific Northwest from California all the way to Alaska. The COASST office consists of a small team of 6 staff members, interns, and AmeriCorps. Survey data and photos are collected monthly at each location to help build a baseline record. Over the long-term marine bird carcasses monitoring data will be used to detect any changes in status and track trends of our marine bird populations and identify any new or rare bird species. This information can also help identify unusual mortality events and potential causes and can also translate into effective marine conservation solutions. The marine debris data collected is used to track patterns, trends, types of debris, origin, sources, sizes, density, and potential environmental impacts. The inner coastal shorelines appear to have larger amounts of marine debris compared to outer coastal shorelines, but the outer coastal beaches appear to have a lot of small plastic debris that could be harmful to marine life. The information could be used to drive targeted marine debris cleanup efforts. To participate in the COASST program, volunteers must attend an in-person training (5-6 hours) for marine birds or marine debris and are then assigned their own beach to survey. Participants can either pick a beach to survey or work with COASST to set up a new one. No previous bird identification experience is necessary. COASST staff includes a data verification expert that checks all data for accuracy. Jackie asked the MRC to consider participating in this kind of program more directly and adopt a particular stretch of beach as a project of Skagit MRC to ensure the data collection is continuous over the long-term. A team of volunteers could take turns monitoring a particular stretch of beach if it's too hard for any one volunteer to commit to monthly surveys. Jackie can set up trainings with anybody who is interested: [jackielindsey@gmail.com](mailto:jackielindsey@gmail.com).

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

*The last NWSC meeting was held June 25, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm). Meeting highlights were shared with MRC members in the meeting packet email.*

- **Ecology Shorelands and Environmental Assistance (SEA) Program:** Presented by Joenne McGerr. Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and the Northwest Straits Commission are both housed under Ecology's SEA Program.
- **MRC presentations:** Jefferson MRC presented "Voluntary Eelgrass & Shellfish Protection No-Anchor Zones". They shared lots of lessons learned which could be useful to other MRCs who are thinking about doing something similar; Skagit MRC (Dr. Jude Apple, Sara Brostrom, and Annie England) presented "Kids on the Beach and Salish Sea Stewards, Adapting Padilla Bay MRC programs to the virtual world". The presentation was well received; Whatcom MRC presented "Using a Beach Seine to Observe Migrating Juvenile Salmon in an Intertidal Corridor". Whatcom's program will involve schools, similar to the Kids on the Beach program.
- **Annual MRC Conference and NWSC/NWSF Retreat:** The annual MRC conference will be held virtually this fall. Planning for the Conference is currently underway. Planning is also underway for the NWSC/NWSF Retreat in September. There is a possibility the Retreat could be held in person this year.
- **External Relations Committee:** Chair Chriss Castner is putting together information on how the difference MRCs engage with County Commissioners and other local elected officials. He encourages MRCs to look for opportunities to improve those communications.



- Northwest Straits Commission Tribal Acknowledgement: The NWSC adopted the tribal acknowledgement which was developed in consultation with tribes. It will be read at the beginning of each Commission meeting. Pete shared the “Tribal Acknowledgement” with the Skagit MRC at the July 8<sup>th</sup> monthly meeting for the Committee to consider whether to use this statement at our meetings or possibly a modified version to make it more local. No decisions were made at the meeting. It was tabled for further discussion at a later date.
- Northwest Straits Commission MRC Project Funding Policy: MRCs have been asked to review and discuss the NWS Commission’s MRC Project Funding Policy and bring forward any questions or comments. The Commission will revisit it at the July meeting to consider approval. The general policy is as follows: “Funding secured and distributed by the Commission to MRCs may only be used for *MRC projects* as defined above. Projects that do not meet *MRC project* criteria are considered pass-through funding. If a sub-contract is necessary to carry out the project, the sub-contractor must be working under the direction of the MRC or an identified MRC project lead or subcommittee. In some cases, sub-contractors may be project partners that are also contributing funds to the overall project, but the scope of the sub-contract must be directed by the MRC”. Several examples of what projects would qualify for funding and what projects would not qualify for funding were provided for additional clarification. The consensus of the Skagit MRC was that the Policy did a pretty good job clarifying how the NWSC funding can and cannot be used.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom) July 30, 2021: 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 SSS Advisory Committee met on June 23 and July 21. We welcomed 2 new members from the graduating SSS Class of 2021, bringing the AC’s membership to 13 (of which 7 are general volunteers doing planning & implementation work & 6 are advisory representatives of involved organizations (PBNERR, Skagit MRC, Coastal Training Program & Friends of Skagit Beaches) overseeing the process. 2021 was a very successful year in both graduate numbers (38 Completed the Program) & trainee satisfaction as indicated by the end of program Survey taken by the SSS graduates. Next year’s training is slated for a hybrid format, in-classroom at Padilla Bay & tentatively several on-line Speaker experts from further reaches. There are currently 304 Trained Salish Sea Stewards on our Master List. Citizen Science volunteer opportunities are opening slowly, but most are limited to an established core of pre-trained, past volunteers. The AC has completed streamlining & updating *Volgistics* (the tool for reporting of volunteer hours). We are working on finalizing a SSS Planning Timeline template for future years (registration, advertising, utilizing social media platforms, gear & working with PBNERR on Speakers). We have started brainstorming the funding search for a part-time paid coordinator and are currently developing a job description.
- Crabber Outreach- Darla Gay Smith: Darla tried to recruit volunteers to help with crabber outreach at the public boat launches on opening weekend through the Salish Sea Stewards electronic news bulletin, The WAVE. Unfortunately, there was not enough interest from volunteers to participate this year. Darla said that it is always a “hard sell” to recruit enough volunteers to help with crabber outreach for several reasons: the volunteers haven’t received proper training on this topic, the timing to conduct outreach is too early in the morning for most volunteers, and there is nothing to entice the crabbers to take the time to engage with the volunteers while they are busy launching their boats and have already geared up for crabbing, so there is very little volunteer satisfaction. Darla suggested the MRC rethink our educational approach. Some of the ideas the MRC discussed included: 1) providing crabber outreach materials in new crab pots sold at local businesses; and 2) Providing demos with properly equipped crab trap display and outreach materials at scheduled times at public beaches, docks, and boat launches, etc. prior to the opening of crabbing season. Dana said the Clallam MRC provides outreach materials in new crab pots sold to recreational crabbers. Darla submitted a crabber outreach article in the Guemes Island Community newsletter including a link to the Northwest Straits Foundation’s online crabber training workshop on June 30th. Darla said it was the best crabber workshop she has ever been to.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The survey teams are up and running and have scheduled surveys. The kelp beds include Shannon Point, Biz Point, and Coffin Rocks. Surveys were conducted at Shannon Point and Biz Point in June. The volunteers observed a large healthy kelp bed at Shannon Point. The Biz Point kelp beds were just starting to grow in June, but they appeared to be healthy. The Coffin Rocks kelp bed was surveyed in early July. The Coffin Rocks kelp bed appeared to be very healthy with a huge growth at the northeast corner that they’ve never seen before. A reconnaissance survey was conducted at the Hope Island kelp bed in Skagit Bay as a potential new survey site. The volunteers found a lot of narrow growth with small



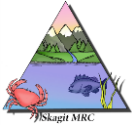
clumps of bull kelp that really didn't quite line up with our normal survey protocols. We are currently looking at the possibility of applying a different protocol (a single way point method) at that location. Hope Island has some strong currents so it will be important to pay attention to the tides at that location. They will look at that site again in August before making a final decision about adding it as a new survey site.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue at our 3 MRC restoration sites and our 3 Forage Fish Index sites as well as the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: We have wrapped up this season, and Annie England, the lead KOTB Educator, gave a great presentation at the recent NWSC meeting as part of our Skagit MRC presentation. All past participating schools and teachers want to continue this program next year and would prefer to do it in person including a field trip. However, No one wanted to make solid plans yet - most of the teachers seem confident next year will be in person and that field trips will be allowed but depending on what COVID protocols will be in place, it could impact the KOTB program. In the fall 2021, Conway and Concrete High Schools will participate in the KOTB program focused on forage fish. Then there will be invasive snail surveys in the spring 2022 with potentially Concrete high school students, and fish seines with Sedro-Woolley elementary students. This might be changed up a bit based on need and ability. We will not be able to finalize things with teachers until the beginning of the school year. We are still working on how Between Two Worlds (Swinomish tribal education program) fits into the KOTB. More to come there.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel: Paul is working with the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to try to restore the native oyster population in the southern channels of Padilla Bay. Around 200 bags of shell were purchased from the former Blau Oyster Company with Skagit Restoration Initiative (SRI) funds from the NWSF which were loaded on to the County dump truck by volunteers and hauled to a farm on south Padilla Bay for the oyster restoration project. 50 shell bags were transported to Fidalgo Bay at Little Crandall Spit, to collect seed oysters to outplant in Padilla Bay next spring. Paul collected oyster recruitment data on stacks of ceramic tile at two-week intervals and replaced the tile stacks with new ones. Results indicated the highest oyster settlement ever seen on the tiles in July (we usually don't see high settlement until August), which suggests we will also likely get a nice set of new juvenile oyster settlement on the shell bags this year. Paul also observed a high percentage (approximately 35%) of dead oyster seed on the ceramic tiles, most likely due to the recent 'heat dome'. He plans to conduct another survey to analyze the mortality rates of Olympia oysters at our oyster restoration sites in Fidalgo Bay.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration- Paul Dinneel: Nothing new to report. Hatchery work and data analysis of oceanographic data and abalone survey results continues. The 2021 Annual Pinto Abalone Report will be finalized in September.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Tracy Alker: Tracy is looking for ideas for the MRC display booth and activities for future events. What do we want the display to look like (e.g. a 3 panel tabletop display, large banner, floor display, etc.? What do we want to highlight? What should the messaging be? Please share your ideas!
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: A sub-award agreement with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) for plant maintenance at Bowman Bay has been drafted and is waiting signatures. The contract start date is July 1<sup>st</sup>. A special volunteer event will be held at the Bowman Bay restoration site on July 19 from 11am to 1pm. A notice about the event will be posted in "The WAVE" and on the SFEG and MRC websites. Volunteers will be recruited to help with weeding and watering, forage fish spawning surveys, the forage fish interpretive station, and beach seining.

#### Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: All

- The Committee discussed the possibility of meeting in person again. The County office is now open to the public. Masks are required when meeting with the public whether vaccinated or not. The Samish Indian Nation and Swinomish Tribal Community employees are not allowed to meet in person at this time. The consensus of the Committee was to meet virtually in August and play it by ear for the September meeting. Tracy will look into the possibility of continuing to keep the virtual meeting option open for the long term for those who are unable to meet in person.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:55am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held August 12, 2021**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the June 10, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) MS Teams Meeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Paul Dinnel, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Jude Apple, Darla Gay Smith, Catey Ritchie, Diane Hennebert
- **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Kevin Anderson, Matt Castle, Jay Lind
- **Others in Attendance:** Adam Airoidi, SFEG; Jessica Huybregts, ECY

**Call to Order and Introduction:** Betsy Stevenson called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions. Due to technical difficulties, the meeting was switched from GoToMeeting to Microsoft Teams.

- **Approval of Minutes:** May 13, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus, with one minor edit to the Kelp Survey update.
- **Public Comments:** No comments.

## Vessel Sewage No Discharge Zone (NDZ) / Pumpout Don't Dumpout Outreach Campaign: Jessica Huybregts

**Vessel Sewage No Discharge Zone:** The Washington State Department of Ecology established a vessel sewage No Discharge Zone (NDZ) for Puget Sound and certain adjoining waters around three years ago to help protect public health, water quality, and sensitive aquatic resources. The NDZ rule is enforceable and prohibits sewage from being discharged from all boats within the designated body of water, whether its treated or not. The NDZ area includes all of Puget Sound, Lake Union, Lake Washington, the Northwest Straits region, and the area east of New Dungeness Lighthouse and all the way up to the Canadian border. Vessel sewage must be stored or disposed of at an onshore or mobile pumpout facility or discharged in the open ocean beyond three miles from shore.



**Pumpout Don't Dumpout Outreach Campaign:** Ecology's Pumpout Don't Dumpout Outreach Campaign was launched in May – June 2021, in partnership with the Washington State Parks Clean Vessel Act Grant Program, Washington Sea Grant, Pumpout Washington, and Clean Marina Washington. The social marketing study and outreach campaign was funded by a National Estuary Program (NEP) grant. The goal is to remind boaters that Puget Sound is a [No Discharge Zone](#) and encourage everyone to properly dispose of their boat sewage at pumpouts. Outreach materials and strategies for getting the message out include: magazine advertisements, metal signage to place at boat launches, social media posts, boating outreach events, a free pumpout navigation app that shows where the closest pumpout facility or restroom is, and [Sam the Clam video](#). MRC members and other organizations can help spread the word:

- Snap a photo of yourself pumping out and post it to social media by tagging [@EcologyWA](#) with the hashtags [#PumpoutWA](#) and [#PugetSoundNoDischargeZone](#). Or email your pictures to [justine.asohmbom@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:justine.asohmbom@ecy.wa.gov)
- Follow and join the conversation on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and share links.
- Get on social media with the [template kit](#).
- Get free [signs](#) for your marina or boat launches. Send a photo of your sign when it's up!

**Dye Tab Pilot Program:** Ecology also plans to launch a new voluntary dye tab pilot program in the fall of 2021 to encourage marina managers and vessel owners to use dye tabs to identify vessel sewage system leaks. The dye tabs will be provided free of charge.

**Enforcement Plan:** Illegal sewage dumping, spills and leaks can be reported online through the statewide Environmental Incident Report Form (ERTS), or email [nwroerts@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:nwroerts@ecy.wa.gov), or call 206-594-0000. If caught illegally dumping vessel sewage, Ecology will provide boater education for the first offense. For the second offense, Ecology will provide a warning letter and additional boater education. If it happens a third time, there will be a Notice of Violation with a monetary penalty. The NDZ rule will be included in the statewide boater education manual and training program. The Coast Guard will inspect vessel sewage valves to make sure they are closed and aren't leaking. Ecology will also assist Counties in creating a County Ordinance for marine sewage management, provide training for different agencies, and provide online presentations to help with compliance of the NDZ rule.

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

*The last NWSC meeting was held April 30, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm). Meeting highlights were shared with MRC members in the meeting packet email.*

- MRC presentations: Island and Snohomish MRCs gave a presentation on the Joint Port Susan Stewardship Area Plan. San Juan MRC gave a presentation on the Derelict Vessel Prevention Program and No-Anchor Zone Monitoring projects.
- State of the Salish Sea Report Now Available: [https://cedar.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=salish\\_pubs](https://cedar.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=salish_pubs)
- Crabber outreach extended to ferries: This year the Northwest Straits Foundation will be adding crabber outreach and education to the WA Ferry system. 25,000 rack cards will be distributed on the ferries and a 30 second video will be cycled through on screens located on all ferries and ferry terminals.
- Virtual Crabbing Workshop- June 30<sup>th</sup>, 6pm -7pm: Hosted by the Northwest Straits Foundation. The flyer with registration information is on the [Foundation's website](#) and is also posted on the Skagit MRC website and the Salish Sea Stewards Facebook page and went out in The WAVE, the Salish Sea Stewards electronic news bulletin.
- NWSF New Shore Friendly Video: <https://youtu.be/BAZK0FV88tA> "Restoring the Connection between Land and Water" focuses on marine ecosystems and impacts of shoreline armoring, featuring Bowman Bay.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom) June 25, 2021: All MRC members are welcome to attend. Several MRCs will be presenting project proposals. 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: 38 participants completed the Salish Sea Stewards "virtual" training program on June 3. There are now 304 Salish Sea Stewards that have successfully completed the training program since 2014. Darla Gay gave kudos to Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve staff, particularly Jude Apple and Sara Brostrom, for administering the virtual classroom portion of the program with all the challenges of 2020-2021. This year's course ran an extended 4 months. The remaining field training portion will be accomplished by project sponsors for specific tasks. Graduation packets were distributed to class participants including a t-shirt, name badge, congrats letter, and a Certificate of Completion. Citizen Science volunteer opportunities are slowly starting to open back up again but are mostly limited to a core of pre-trained volunteers. The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee proudly welcomes two new 2021 Salish Sea Stewards graduates to join the Committee which will bring the total to 13 members. The Committee will start brainstorming to find funding for a part-time paid coordinator. Lynne thanked Darla Gay for doing such a wonderful job as Project Lead for the Salish Sea Stewards and keeping the AC team on task. Lynne also gave kudos to Chandler for updating and maintaining Volgistics to make it easier for volunteers to post hours and to make it more accurate in tracking volunteer hours.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The survey teams are up and running and have scheduled surveys. The kelp beds that are surveyed in Skagit County include: Shannon Point, Biz Point, and Coffin Rocks. The Coffin Rocks survey team conducted their first survey this week and has another one scheduled in July and August. The Shannon Point survey team is planning to survey tomorrow, June 11, but might have to be postponed due to a small craft advisory. Lynne is still waiting to get an update from the Biz Point survey team. A reconnaissance survey will be conducted at the Hope Island kelp bed as a potential new survey site. Betsy thanked Lynne for stepping in as Project Lead and participating in the surveys.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue at our 3 MRC restoration sites and our 3 Forage Fish Index sites as well as the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve. Surf smelt spawning activity is picking up rapidly, especially in Fidalgo Bay. On May 24<sup>th</sup> the forage fish survey crew hosted a small group of kids from a private school in Bellingham. The volunteers brought the forage fish interpretive stand and the kids got to participate in the forage fish surveys and looked at eggs under microscopes. Later this month, a few kids from the Salish Sea School will be doing something similar. Eventually, the new class of Salish Sea Stewards will get to have an orientation on forage fish surveys out on the beach, after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Jude said he will be able to provide a good summary of the spring KOTB program next month. Some of the KOTB presentations from Conway 8<sup>th</sup> graders were put together on Prezi: <https://prezi.com/view/RYhlWJzxtgtYBplmDyl/>. A few of the loom videos from Concrete 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> graders were also posted: Watch Video Alex J. KOB Template - Google Slides - Watch Video Kelsey x Kelsey KOB Template - Google Slides - Watch Video. La Conner's Swinomish 'Between Two Worlds' 9<sup>th</sup> grade (30 students) recently completed the program in June. It was a modified/shortened version. The La Conner Weekly News recently wrote an article about the collaboration between Kids on the Beach and Between Two Worlds.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery – Paul Dinneel: The Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) and WDFW finished up monitoring and outplants of 10,000 juvenile abalone at 10 different restoration sites in the San Juan Archipelago, including 4,000 abalone at sites in Skagit County waters. That is twice the number of abalone they had planned on outplanting. PSRF now has around 50,000 time-lapse images that they will be analyzing for predation. They are also looking at the oceanographic data collected from the sensor arrays that were deployed at six abalone restoration sites. The data collected includes temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, light intensity, and sedimentation. They will have one more field session to collect additional oceanography data this summer.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel: It has been a very busy month with native oyster restoration. Paul and his son collected bags of shell that were distributed in Fidalgo Bay to monitor last year's oyster settlement. So far last year's oyster settlement appears to be moderate. It's not great, but good enough to keep the oyster population going. Paul said it's typical to have some good years and others that aren't so good. They also replaced the bags of shell with new bags to monitor this year's oyster settlement. Paul and his son also deployed stacks of tile that they will be monitoring at two-week intervals throughout the summer. Paul went up to Chuckanut Bay to help with Whatcom MRC's native oyster restoration project and put out stacks of tile for monitoring oyster settlement. Paul is also working with the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to try to restore the native oyster population in the southern channels of Padilla Bay. They found a good location that looks very promising for oyster restoration. Around 200 bags of shell were purchased from the former Blau Oyster Company which were loaded on to the County dump truck by volunteers and hauled to a farm on south Padilla Bay for the oyster restoration project. 50 shell bags will be deployed in Fidalgo Bay to collect oyster seed to outplant in Padilla Bay next spring. Brian Robson with Shell Puget Sound Refinery gave permission to use the RV Park to access the tide flats to put the bags of shell. Jude thanked Paul for coordinating the project.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Tracy Alker: The MRC decided to cancel Fidalgo Bay Day this year due to the pandemic. The Fidalgo Bay Day grant funding will most likely be used to upgrade the MRC booth for future outreach events. The MRC is also considering doing a much smaller scale outreach event later this summer but will need to play it by ear. The Fidalgo Bay Resort is also not allowing any events at their facility this year so it would have to be held at a different location.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Lynne is the new MRC Project Lead for Bowman Bay and will be directly involved in maintaining the site. Lynne and Tracy visited the restoration site with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement staff recently to try to come up with a plan for maintaining the riparian vegetation at the site this year. Lynne and Adam Airoidi, the new Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Riparian Restoration staff person, reviewed the project goals, design plan, the MRC grant agreement, and previous scopes of work for the restoration project to get up to speed. Adam developed a plant maintenance plan for 2021 with the MRC grant funding that is available for Bowman Bay. A new sub-award agreement between the County and SFEG will need to be drafted for plant maintenance work through September 30, 2021.

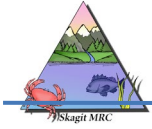
### **Administrative Update:** *Tracy Alker*

- 2021 – 2023 MRC Grant Application: The application was finalized and submitted on June 8<sup>th</sup> and is currently being reviewed by the Northwest Strait Technical Advisory Committee. Tracy thanked the MRC Project Leads for helping with the project proposals. The MRC will likely get approved for an additional \$8,000 for year 1. The Committee will need to decide where those funds should go.
- MRC Presentation- June 8<sup>th</sup>: Tracy gave a presentation to the Board of County Commissioners on June 8<sup>th</sup>. She provided a brief history of the NWSI, an overview of the MRC, and 2020 project highlights. The presentation was well received with lots of positive feedback and great questions. The Commissioners seemed impressed by the work. The presentation can be viewed on Skagit 21.
- County staff schedule update: The County Natural Resources Division staff will be transitioning back to the office on a hybrid schedule, two days a week starting in July. Tracy will be working in the office Tuesdays and Thursdays and working remotely Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Tracy asked when the MRC might be interested in meeting in person again. The Committee decided to play it by ear.
- Crabber Outreach: Tracy asked if there was any interest from the MRC to conduct crabber outreach at the public boat launches during the opening weekend of crabbing season this year. Darla Gay said she has performed crabber outreach in the past and is willing to take the lead this year because she feels that crabber outreach is very important. Darla will try to recruit volunteers to help with crabber outreach through the Salish Sea Stewards electronic news bulletin, The WAVE.

### **Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:** *All*

- No announcements.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:55am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held July 8, 2021**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the May 13, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) GoToMeeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Paul Dinnel, Matt Castle, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Brian Robson, Kari Odden, Darla Gay Smith, Jay Lind
- **MRC Members Absent:** Catey Ritchie, Diane Hennebert
- **Others in Attendance:** No others in attendance

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** April 8, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus, with minor edits. The budgets were corrected for the Salish Sea Stewards (year two) and the Kids on the Beach (year one).
- **Public Comments:** Brian Robson announced the recent acquisition of Shell Puget Sound Refinery by HollyFrontier. The sale is not final until it goes through the regulatory approval process. If the sale does not go through, Shell will continue to operate the site. If the sale does go through, Shell operations and current employees are expected to transition over to HollyFrontier later this year. Brian said he is uncertain whether or not he will be able to continue to serve on the MRC as a representative of HollyFrontier, but they have expressed interest in continuing the community relationships that Shell has been involved in.

### Skagit County Shoreline Master Program Update: *Betsy Stevenson*

Betsy Stevenson is the Project Manager and Senior Planner with the Skagit County Planning Department and the Team Supervisor of the Natural Resources group. Betsy and her team began the comprehensive update of the Shoreline Master Program back in 2010 with some grant money they received from Ecology to do the work. They spent a couple of years working with the Shoreline Advisory Committee, hiring a consultant, and working on all the background documentation and baseline data that they needed to prepare the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) and make some decisions on environment designations in Skagit County. Because of all of the changes in the laws, they ended up having to create a brand new document from scratch. The draft document was presented to the Planning Commission in 2012. The Planning Commission reviewed three different draft versions of the SMP until completing their work in 2016 after lots of public meetings, public outreach, open houses, a public hearing, and a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. The SMP update was later put on hold in order for the County to finish the Environmental Impact Statements in a timely manner for two refineries. The comprehensive update of the SMP, which hasn't been adopted yet, was due in 2020. Ecology agreed to allow the County to combine the SMP Update with the Periodic Review process of the Comprehensive Plan update. Ecology and the Planning Commission have been actively involved in the process and have provided comments and feedback to make sure the County is still meeting all of the guidelines and requirements to help keep things moving. The Planning Commission meeting topics and changes to the 2016 SMP Update included addressing discrepancies in agency standards, changes in laws and regulations, Critical Area Ordinance (CAO) integration, uses and, pre-existing docks and structures standards table changes, shoreline environment designation mapping, environmental designation map changes, and the Channel Migration Zone removal of maps, and the Administrative Variance Process for buffer reductions between 25-50% and mitigation. They opted to address the Channel Migration Zone in a separate stand-alone process. Sections on forest practices and ongoing agriculture are excluded from the CAO and covered under their respective sections in the SMP. The changes in forest practices and agriculture are something that is happening state-wide, not just in Skagit County. Wetland impact minimization measures and mitigation rations have been included instead of cross-referencing Ecology's guidance. Another draft SMP Update document was issued followed by the public comment period: April 22-June 22, 2021. The Public hearing with the planning Commission occurred on May 11. Virtual monthly project updates starting May 13. SMP Online Open House: [www.skagitSMPopenhouse.com](http://www.skagitSMPopenhouse.com). County's project website: Mail comments to: Planning and Development Services, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273. Email questions to: [SMPPDS@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:SMPPDS@co.skagit.wa.us). Ecology also has an adoption process that will take a few months.

### Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: *Pete Haase and Jay Lind*

The last NWSC meeting was held April 30, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm). Meeting highlights were shared with MRC members in the meeting packet email.



- **NWSC Officer Elections:** Elsa Schwartz (Island MRC), was elected Chair and Tom Cowan was elected Vice-Chair.
- **Skagit County Board of Commissioners Letter of Support:** The County Commissioners submitted a letter of support to Senator Murray for ongoing federal funding to support the NWSI and MRCs. It is anticipated that this could add around \$100,000 to MRC budgets while also funding other emerging NWSI programs.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom)- May 28, 2021:** Pete and Paul are both unable to attend the next meeting and are looking for a MRC member to take their place at the meeting. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>

### **Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Report:** *Jay Lind*

*The April highlights provided by the Foundation were shared with MRC members in the meeting packet email.*

- **Kelp Kayak Training Video:** The Foundation secured a small grant to create training videos for kelp kayak volunteers.
- **Passport for Marine Adventure:** The Foundation launched the “Passport for Marine Adventure”, a free and fun game to get the public outdoors and educate them on the NW Straits Initiative. The Passport includes a game board with three sites per each MRC for a total of 21 sites. Once you visit three sites and send photos of each, you will get a gift from the Foundation and once you get to 7 you get an accommodating gift from the Foundation.
- **NWSF Board Meetings:** Will occur every other month. Jay was unable to attend the meeting last month.

### **Project Status & Discussion**

- **Salish Sea Stewards- Darla Gay Smith:** Just four more weeks of the 2021 Salish Sea Stewards classes to go! For one of the remaining classes, MRC member Pete Haase put together a panel session of unique individuals who have successfully implemented new marine programs to help inspire the new volunteers. We had a really low dropout rate of just one person this year! 39 out of 40 registered participants are expected to complete the program on June 1. The graduation celebration will include a virtual tour of the PBNERR Aquarium. The program graduates will be given a certificate as well as a t-shirt and name tag with funding from private donations received through the Padilla Bay Foundation and Friends of Skagit Beaches. The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee will recruit new Salish Sea Stewards to join their team and help match volunteers with other partner organization’s volunteer opportunities.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:** Surveys will likely start up again in June. The kelp beds in Skagit County include: Shannon Point, Biz Point, and Coffin Rock. Six new Salish Sea Stewards have expressed interest in helping with the kelp surveys. For now, the plan is to continue to monitor in small groups following COVID-19 safety precautions. Brad Smith’s volunteer group for monitoring Shannon Point in June is already full! The virtual 2021 Kelp Monitoring Kickoff Meeting was held May 6<sup>th</sup> from 1-4pm. The agenda topics included kayak safety and liability coverage, the volunteer agreement, the KoboToolbox with smart phone app to upload monitoring data right from the kayak, Island County’s new underwater GoPro technique to document kelp beds (it’s a lot more tricky than it sounds), an update from kelp partners and volunteers, and an overview of the Puget Sound Restoration Fund’s Kelp 7 day Expedition to map the Kelp Highway in Puget Sound. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) are asking MRCs to note the presence of urchins in the kelp beds to help determine if they might be contributing to kelp declines. Volunteers can use GoPro cameras to look for urchins. Volunteer scuba divers would also be a great resource to take pictures of urchin presence and note their location.
- **Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:** Forage fish surveys continue at our MRC restoration sites (Marchs Point- 2/month, Bowman Bay- 1/month, and Kukatali Reserve -2/month) and at our Forage Fish Index sites (Similk Bay, Samish Island, and Ship Harbor). We haven’t seen much spawning at any of our sites yet, but that will likely start picking up again in May. Several new Salish Sea Stewards have expressed interest in helping out with the surveys, but we plan to continue to monitor in small groups for now. Phil Dionne with WDFW recently gave a talk on forage fish as part of the Salish Sea Stewards training. The forage fish survey field trip that was planned for the Salish Sea Stewards was postponed due to COVID-19.
- **Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:** Two schools, Sedro-Woolley 6<sup>th</sup> grade and Conway 8<sup>th</sup> grade have completed the spring Kids on the Beach program with over 131 students participating. Concrete 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade will be wrapping up the program in the next couple of weeks. La Conner 9<sup>th</sup> grade is scheduled to start the program on June 1<sup>st</sup>. The classes were hybrid with some students in the classroom and some students attending virtually. Annie, the Kids on the Beach program coordinator, was able to implement the program in person in the classrooms. The curriculum focused on forage fish. The schools were unable to do any field trips, so the forage fish surveys and beach seining were all done virtually. Students in the classroom got to look at eggs under

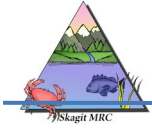
microscopes. The students analyzed and compiled all of the data into reports and are working on presentations. Unfortunately, they are unable to do the symposium this year, due to the pandemic.

- Pinto Abalone Recovery – Paul Dinnel: The Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) and WDFW divers have been out doing field work since March. They've outplanted 10,000 juvenile abalone at 10 different restoration sites in the San Juan Archipelago, including 4,000 abalone at sites in Skagit County waters (twice the number of abalone they had planned on outplanting). They now have around 50,000 time-lapse images that they will be analyzing for predation. They will also be looking at the oceanographic data collected from the sensor arrays that were deployed at six abalone restoration sites. The data collected includes temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, light intensity, and sedimentation.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Paul gave a presentation on the native oyster restoration work for the Salish Sea Stewards class on April 13. Paul will be assisting Whatcom MRC with their oyster restoration efforts in northern Chuckanut Bay in May. Paul and his son will also start up routine field work again the end of May to look at post larval recruitment patterns. Monitoring will be reduced this year in Fidalgo Bay, but will increase again in 2022. Paul will be meeting with Roger Fuller and Sylvia Yang at the Padilla Bay Reserve next week to take a look at the southern channels in Padilla Bay for potential oyster restoration locations. In the past, we've gotten our oyster shell for oyster larvae recruitment from Blau Oyster Company. Unfortunately, they are no longer in business, so we will need to find a new source of oyster shell. One option would be to purchase oyster shell from Taylor Shellfish who would deliver pallets of oyster shell from the south Sound to Samish Bay. One or two pallets of shell will likely be needed which would cost around \$200 each. Volunteers will be recruited to help bag and deploy the oyster shell next year.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Tracy Alker: The 2021 event date was originally set for Saturday, August 28 (11am-3pm) at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. However, at our last meeting, the MRC decided not to host the Fidalgo Bay Day event this year due to so many unknowns with the pandemic. In addition, the Fidalgo Bay Resort is no longer accepting reservations for large events. As an alternative, the Committee talked about the possibility of doing a very small scale outreach event. Please let Tracy know if there are any other ideas, or if anybody wants to take the lead for another virtual event. Otherwise we will plan on applying the Fidalgo Bay Day grant funding to upgrade the MRC booth for future outreach events.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Tracy Alker: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson will be taking over as the new MRC Project Lead. Lynne and Tracy will be meeting Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group staff at the site on May 24<sup>th</sup> at 1pm to do a walk through and figure out a maintenance plan for this year.

#### **Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:**     *All*

- Tommy Thompson Trestle Project Update: Pete reported that the Estuary Salmon Recovery Program (ESRP) funds for the Tommy Thompson Trestle project was approved and it included enough money to fund the study part of the project for replacing the trestle and part of the causeway across Fidalgo Bay. The Washington Department of Natural Resources Aquatic Reserve team, the Samish Indian Nation, and the City of Anacortes are the co-leaders of the project and are beginning to meet to determine how the planning process will unfold. It will be a long process and will involve public input.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:38am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held June 10, 2021**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the April 8, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) GoToMeeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Paul Dinnel, Matt Castle, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Jay Lind, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Brian Robson, Darla Gay Smith
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Kari Odden, Diane Hennebert
- **Others in Attendance:** Catey Ritchie, Swinomish (MRC Membership Applicant); Alex Gradwohl; Andrea McBride, Don Hunger, NWSF; Kimberly Cauvel, SVH

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** March 11, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** No comments

### Maritime National Heritage Area: Alex Gradwohl

National Heritage Areas (NHA) are cultural landscapes of national importance designated by Congress and supported by the National Park Service. NHAs are not government owned and are non-regulatory. There are currently 55 NHAs across the country, mostly concentrated on the east coast and mid-west. The Maritime Washington National Heritage Area (MW-NHA) was officially designated by Congress in 2019 and is managed by the nonprofit Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. It is the first NHA in the country focused entirely on maritime heritage. It encompasses 3,000 miles of Washington State's saltwater shoreline from Grays Harbor County to the Canadian border and includes 18 federally recognized tribes and 13 counties. The MW-NHA will build partnerships and increase collaboration to be responsive to the locally identified needs and provide a platform to preserve, maintain, celebrate, and share stories of the diverse cultural maritime heritage landscape and identity along our coast. There are six primary goals of the MW-NHA including: 1. Share cultural stories; 2. Support tribes and local organizations in sharing and maintaining their maritime heritage; 3. Connect coastal communities and cross-sector groups working in this field to maximize impact; 4. Celebrate working waterfronts; 5. Help draw connections to maritime heritage and healthy shorelines and marine waters; and 6. Amplify diverse and underrepresented stories of western Washington's maritime heritage and culture. The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation is currently working on developing a MW-NHA Management Plan. It takes three years to complete and they are currently in their second year. The Plan will be completed in 2022 and submitted to the National Park Service for approval. Pete asked if there would be any opportunities for volunteers after the Plan is implemented. Alex said the final plan will include goals and strategies for developing partnership networks which could potentially involve volunteer opportunities. This year the main focus will be on conducting outreach, hosting work groups, seeking input, advice, and expertise from tribes and the MW-NHA Steering Committee, and seeking public comments which will be compiled into a MW-NHA Management Plan. There are several opportunities for MRC members to get involved including: take and share the online survey at [www.preservewa.org/mwnha-survey](http://www.preservewa.org/mwnha-survey), participate in virtual regional workshops, identify important maritime sites using the online mapping tool, and reviewing and providing comment on the draft management plan. MRC members can sign up for email updates at: [preservewa.org/mw-nha](http://preservewa.org/mw-nha). MRC members were invited to attend the Maritime Focus group and Workshop on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 5pm. Pre-registration is required. The purpose of the invitation-only focus group is to bring together a range of private and public perspectives from Whatcom and Skagit Counties for a conversation about the current state of cross-sector collaboration around maritime projects, identify the biggest threats, and where there is room for growth.

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

*The last NWSC meeting was held March 26, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm).*

- **NWSC Staff Update:** Pete gave special recognition to Sasha Horst for taking on additional duties until they are able to fill Katie Harris's position. The NWSC is hiring two new positions from the Veteran's Conservation Corps for a period of six months each. The first one will be starting in April and the second one will start in June.
- **NWSC Tribal Acknowledgement:** Members of the Commission drafted a Tribal Acknowledgement that will be presented at all NWSC meetings and special events. MRCs are invited to modify the Acknowledgement with guidance from local tribes.
- **Northwest Straits 101:** Will be held on April 15. It is recommended for new MRC members.

- NWSI Virtual Conference – October 29, 2021: Stay tuned for more information.
- Eelgrass Protection Zone Grant: The NWSC is applying for the Community Project Fund grant to support the social marketing component of eelgrass protection zone expansion. The total request is \$72,500. The NWSC requested a letter of support for this grant opportunity from Skagit MRC. Unfortunately, the request was short-notice and the MRC was unable to reach a consensus before the deadline.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom)- April 30, 2021: Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>

### **Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Report: *Jay Lind and Don Hunger***

- Mt. Erie Elementary School Rain Garden: NWSF was recently awarded a grant from Shell Puget Sound Refinery, for a rain garden/stormwater retrofit project in partnership with Mt. Erie Elementary School, City of Anacortes, and Skagit MRC. There will be planting and outreach opportunities for MRC volunteers and Shell employees. The project will likely take about one year to complete.
- Fellowship/Intern Needs Assessment Survey: The Foundation is considering sponsoring a program to fund and recruit interns or fellows to support MRC projects. The MRCs would be able to request an individual with specific skills and abilities for a period of time between three months to twelve months. MRCs would have to provide the project, mentoring, office space, etc. Don will be sending out a survey to MRC Members about this opportunity to see if there is enough interest or need.
- Nearshore Monitoring: The Foundation will be able to begin working with volunteers again as the state enters phase three of the recovery plan.
- Shore Friendly Workshops: Two virtual workshops were held in February and March. A combined total of over 315 people attended the workshops! The Foundation will provide further assistance through site visits.
- Passport for Marine Adventure: The Foundation is creating a “Passport for Marine Adventure”, a free and fun game to get the public outdoors and educate them on the NW Straits Initiative. The Passport will include a game board with three sites per each MRC for a total of 21 sites. Once you visit three sites and send photos of each, you will get a gift from the Foundation and once you get to 7 you get an accommodating gift from the Foundation.
- NWSF Board Meetings: Will occur every other month.

### **Project Status & Discussion**

- Salish Sea Stewards- Darla Gay Smith: 2021 was the first year that the SSS Training Program was advertised to the public as an all-virtual, on line program, which resulted in a significantly larger class. 41 students registered and 39 are on track complete the training, this is an additional 15 trainees compared to 2020 (62.5% increase over past average). The AC attributed the low drop-out rate to host Sara Brostrom’s hosting skills and Padilla Bay’s polished administration of the program. The 9 member SSS Advisory Committee typically meets once a month with Padilla Bay NERR staff to talk about how the program is going, any issues that arise, and how we can make improvements. At the last meeting, the AC discussed all of the benefits of a virtual program and whether or not the larger class size and expanding base of volunteers would impact PBNERR’s ability to administer the program effectively, which it was decided would not. They also acknowledged all of the benefits of in-person classes. For the 2022 SSS training, the AC and PBNERR are now considering a combination of: virtual, in-person classroom, and hands on field training.
- Fidalgo Bay Day- Tracy Alker: The 2021 event date is tentatively set for Saturday, August 28 (11am-3pm) at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. The MRC decided not to host the traditional large-scale Fidalgo Bay Day event this year due to so many unknowns with the pandemic. Especially since several past participating organizations have already indicated they will not be participating in any in-person outreach event this year. As an alternative, the Committee talked about the possibility of doing a very small informal outdoor public outreach activity/s, if it is determined safe to do so. The activity could be something we combine with the Foundation’s Passport Marine Adventure or it could be something completely separate and spontaneous. The Committee agreed that whatever we decide to do, it should not be promoted as Fidalgo Bay Day in order to avoid any confusion or ruin any expectations of those who are familiar with the traditional event. Another possible alternative that was discussed, is to apply the Fidalgo Bay Day grant funding to upgrade the MRC booth for future outreach events.
- Bowman Bay Restoration – Tracy Alker: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson and Tracy Alker will be maintaining the plants at the site this year starting later in May or early June, under the guidance of the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group’s Restoration Technician. Pete commented that while conducting forage fish surveys at the site, he noticed some erosion happening around the fence posts located closest to the beach that we might want to keep an eye on. He is concerned that some of the posts might soon be gone with the next big storm

and suggested taking pictures to help document changes to the shoreline. Paul said he has a series of photos that he has taken over the years of the Bowman Bay restoration site that he could share.

- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Surveys will likely start up again at the three different kelp beds in June or July 2021. The kelp beds include: Shannon Point, Biz Point, and Coffin Rock. Five new Salish Sea Stewards have expressed interest in helping with the kelp surveys. The virtual 2021 Kelp Monitoring Kickoff Meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 6<sup>th</sup> from 1-4pm. The agenda topics will include kayak safety training, the online data reporting tool, Island County's new underwater GoPro technique to document kelp beds, an update from kelp partners and volunteers, and an overview of the Puget Sound Restoration Fund's Kelp 7 day Expedition to map the Kelp Highway in Puget Sound. Interested MRC members and volunteers are welcome to attend.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue at our MRC restoration sites (Marchs Point- 2/month, Bowman Bay- 1/month, and Kukatali Reserve -2/month) and at our Forage Fish Index sites for the NWSI and WDFW (Similk Bay, Samish Island, and Ship Harbor). Lots of surf smelt eggs have been found at the Marchs Point restoration site. The Bowman Bay restoration site is a high energy site which has made it difficult to find any surf smelt eggs because the fine sands tend to get washed away. Surf smelt have also been found at the Similk Bay and Ship Harbor sites, but very few have been found at the Samish Island site. The forage fish surveys are all coordinated and conducted by a team of trained volunteers. Volunteers are also conducting forage fish surveys along the beaches of the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve for the Washington Department of Natural Resources. The surf smelt are found at this location in huge abundance during the summer months! There are potentially two new sites that are currently being considered as additional forage fish index survey sites including: the beach at Skyline in partnership with Amy Eberling's Salish Sea School students. The second potential location of interest is at the proposed MJB Development site in Anacortes along the Fidalgo Bay shoreline. The area is currently heavily armored.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: The Kids on the Beach program is still on track for virtual classroom and field trip experiences this spring, starting April 26<sup>th</sup> through June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Over 200 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be participating from four different schools including Sedro-Woolley, Conway, Concrete and La Conner. The curriculum will focus on forage fish. The virtual field trips will consist of beach seining and forage fish spawning surveys. Students will also get to look at eggs under microscopes. The students will analyze and compile the data into reports to present at a virtual symposium.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery – Paul Dinnel: Field work started up again in March with Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) and WDFW divers. Field work consists of monitoring and outplanting juvenile abalone at 10 different restoration sites in the San Juans including 4 sites in Skagit County waters, scouting for potential new restoration sites, collecting wild adult abalone for broodstock in the hatchery, and deploying underwater cameras to study predation. Since 2009, around 14,000 abalone have been outplanted at 6 different sites in Skagit County waters. PSRF had a bumper crop of around 10,000 abalone produced at the hatchery this year. They are planning to outplant 1,000/each at four different restoration sites in Skagit County. This is about twice as many as they had proposed to outplant this year. During a recent survey, they discovered lots of pinto abalone at two sites in Skagit County waters that were previously thought to have low survival rates and had been removed from the list to receive any additional outplanting. The two sites are now back in the fold to receive future outplants! PSRF will be working with a UW Graduate Student to deploy oceanographic arrays at six sites around the San Juans to track temperature, pH, Dissolved Oxygen, salinity, sedimentation, and currents, for a number of months during the summer, pre- and post-outplanting of pinto abalone. They will also deploy cameras to take a look at predation.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Routine field work will start up again in May with a reduced amount of monitoring at different sites in Fidalgo Bay to look at post larval recruitment patterns. Paul Dinnel will be giving a presentation on the native oyster restoration work for the Salish Sea Stewards class on April 13. Paul will be meeting with Roger Fuller, Jude Apple, and Sylvia Yang at the Padilla Bay Reserve soon to take a look at the southern channels in Padilla Bay for potential oyster restoration. Darla posted a YouTube video of Paul's oyster restoration work in Fidalgo Bay on the Salish Sea Stewards Facebook page.



- MRC Project Presentation (May 28 or June 25): Each MRC will need to present one project at the May 28 or June 25 NWSC meeting. The project can either be a new project proposal or a current project to discuss Actions to Impacts and lessons learned.
- 2021 – 2023 MRC Grant Projects: MRC Project Leads shared details about their projects and budget request. The following list of projects and budget was approved by consensus and will move forward with the application process.
  1. **MRC Operations** (Project Lead- Tracy Alker): Year 1 Budget= \$32,500; Year 2 Budget= \$32,500. The budget would primarily be used for staff support, MRC meetings and communications, supplies and refreshments for MRC meetings, MRC member travel costs for MRC Conference and other approved workshops/training, and NWSC meetings.
  2. **Fidalgo Bay Day** (Project Lead- TBD): Year 1 Budget= \$2,500; Year 2 Budget= \$2,500  
The budget would primarily be used for supplies and event promotion. *\*Note: The Committee recommended moving forward with the Fidalgo Bay Day proposal without an official MRC Project Lead until the position can be filled. Darla Gay Smith said she would be willing to fill in as the lead for now until we can find someone to take her place. If we are unable to recruit a new lead by February, we will need to amend the grant and reallocate the funds.*
  3. **Salish Sea Stewards** (Project Lead- Darla Gay Smith): Year 1 Budget= \$21,000; Year 2 Budget= \$21,000 The budget would primarily be used to pay for Padilla Bay NERR staff time for the administration of the Salish Sea Stewards program through a Sub-Award Agreement. The program model would be similar to previous years in the development and implementation of a 40-hour volunteer training curriculum. *\*Note: Jude Apple recused himself from any decisions regarding the budget and funding for this project.*
  4. **Kids on the Beach** (Project Lead- Jude Apple): Year 1 Budget= \$13,000; Year 2 Budget= \$13,000. The budget would primarily be used to pay for Padilla Bay NERR staff time for the administration of the Kids on the Beach program through a Sub-Award Agreement. The program model would be similar to previous years in the development and implementation of KOTB to engage school kids (primarily middle-school) in a variety of hands-on marine science activities in the field and in the classroom. *\*Note: Jude Apple recused himself from any decisions regarding the budget and funding for this project, but said the Kids on the Beach program could use some additional funding if there is any available to help build on and expand the program. The consensus of the Committee was to increase the Kids on the Beach budget by \$3,000 (originally \$10,000) by re-allocating the funding originally budgeted for the Samish Flower Farm Signage project which the MRC decided to drop from this grant proposal.*
  5. **Pinto Abalone** (Project Lead- Paul Dinnel): Year 1 Budget= \$21,000; Year 2 Budget= \$21,000. The budget would primarily be used to pay for Puget Sound Restoration Fund staff time to administer the program through a Sub-Award Agreement. Skagit MRC will continue working in collaboration with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to build upon existing outplant efforts of juvenile pinto abalone to establish a sustainable population at the restoration sites in Skagit County. Divers will conduct surveys of the outplant areas to monitor survival, growth and movement of abalone.
  6. **MRC Intern** (Project Lead- Pete Haase): Year 1 Budget= \$2,000; Year 2 Budget= \$2,000. The budget would primarily be used to pay for Salish Sea School staff time through a Sub-Award Agreement to carry out a specific project for the MRC (e.g. forage fish surveys at Skyline, boat-based kelp surveys, marine bird surveys, etc.). At the end of the program the intern will present the project to the MRC.
  7. **Stormwater Sampling** (Project Lead- Diane Hennebert): Year 1 Budget= \$2,000; Year 2 Budget= \$2,000. The budget would be used to pay for the lab analyses. Skagit MRC would partner with Friends of Skagit Beaches, the Samish Indian Nation, and the City of Anacortes to build on their sampling efforts at the Sharpes Corner outfalls to test for hydrocarbons and metals in the stormwater runoff from the new roundabout. Jude offered to help out with review and/or input on the stormwater proposal to make sure this work yields something interesting, that is also useable and defensible – and that we are confident in the findings and what it tells us. For example, if we find elevated hydrocarbons, it would be good to know that those levels are elevated relative to background, or what was there before.



**\*\*Flower Farm Nearshore Signage in Partnership with the Skagit Land Trust:** Skagit MRC decided to drop the Samish Island Flower Farm Nearshore Signage project for several reasons including: A budget shortfall (only \$3,000 was budgeted, but the project will cost around \$5-\$6k to implement), no MRC Project Lead, and there were concerns over the eligibility of the project to get funded due to the perceived pass through funding to another organization. The consensus of the Committee was to re-allocate the \$3,000 to the Kids on the Beach project which was in need of additional funding.

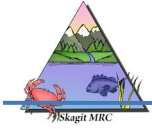
### **MRC Membership Applicant**

Skagit MRC voted unanimously by consensus to make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Catey Ritchie to the MRC. Catey will replace Todd Mitchell as the representative for Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. Catey was recently hired as an Environmental Specialist for the Swinomish Tribe and is overseeing the new Swinomish Shore Friendly Program and is involved in several restoration and improvement projects.

### **Miscellaneous Events and Announcements: All**

- **Shoreline Master Program Update:** Betsy said the Skagit Shoreline Master Program Update will be available for public comment soon. The Committee discussed whether or not the MRC should try to comment as a group or as individuals. It was determined that it would be much easier to just leave it up to individuals to comment on their own rather than trying to formulate something as a Committee via consensus. Betsy offered to provide an overview of the Shoreline Master Program Update at the next MRC meeting.
- **MJB Shoreline Development Proposal in Anacortes:** Pete suggested inviting Diane or someone from the City of Anacortes to one of our future MRC meetings to talk about the proposal so that we could get a better understanding of the project. Pete asked the MRC to consider what the Committee's role might be in reviewing and providing comments on potential impacts to the shoreline and marine waters. Particularly the potential impact on nearby shoreline restoration work. The Committee decided there could be potential conflicts with the MRC providing comments and recommended the comments come from individuals rather than the MRC as a group.
- **Tommy Thompson Trestle Project Update:** Pete reported that the Estuary Salmon Recovery Program (ESRP) funds for the planning part of the project was approved in the State's Capital Budget by the Senate, but Congress voted for a much smaller budget which didn't cover the Trestle project (House Bill 1080). Pete suggested MRC members contact the legislators to let them know the importance of the project and the need for funding.
- **Port of Anacortes Beach Cleanup for Earth Day- April 22 (1pm-3pm):** To celebrate Earth Day, the Port of Anacortes is hosting small beach cleanups at three locations (no more than 15 people per site): Railroad Avenue Beach, N Avenue Beach, and Ship Harbor Beach on April 22. Please register on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/port-of-anacortes-earth-day-beach-cleanup-tickets-147888140409>.
- **Samish Island Conservation Area:** Skagit Land Trust purchased an additional 50 acres at the entrance to Samish Island for a total of 100 acres for protection, including over a half a mile of marine shoreline! Public access will be allowed along Padilla Bay for low-impact recreation.

**The meeting adjourned at 11:15am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held May 13, 2021**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the March 11, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) GoToMeeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Paul Dinnel, Matt Castle, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Jay Lind, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Diane Hennebert
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Brian Robson, Darla Gay Smith, Kari Odden
- **Others in Attendance:** Bob Weathers, Kelp Survey Lead; Sasha Horst, NWSC; Dana Oster, NWSC

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** February 11, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** Bob Weathers, shared concerns from a local resident over possible illegal harvesting of bull kelp at Yokeko Point. The concerned citizen would like to see the area closed to harvesting. Pete said the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is tasked with enforcing daily bag limits on seaweeds and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) is the managing entity. Betsy suggested contacting the WDFW to report any suspected illegal harvest. Kevin shared the link to WDNR's website and brochure on [seaweed harvesting](#). Bob expressed interest in possibly adding the Yokeko Point kelp bed to the bull kelp surveys to see if the harvesting is having an impact on the kelp bed. MRC members expressed support of adding Yokeko Point to our kelp survey locations if there is enough interest from the volunteers to take on a new site and if the Northwest Straits Commission staff has enough capacity to process the data. The Committee discussed the possibility of designating the Yokeko Point area as a Marine Protected Area for kelp to restrict harvesting. Paul pointed out that designating a Marine Protected Area for kelp could be very complicated and could impact local treaty rights and could also receive pushback from the public. Dana recommended taking the education and outreach approach first before imposing new restrictions. Pete suggested adding kelp signage at the Deception Pass State Park boat launch using WDNR's graphics. Lynne volunteered to talk to the Park Manager at Deception Pass State Park about adding WDNR's kelp signage. Lynne also offered to talk to her neighbors at Yokeko Point about setting up a "community watch" program to educate and watch for kelp harvest violators.

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

*The last NWSC meeting was held February 26, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm).*

- **New Science Advisory Chair:** Julia Parrish was recently appointed as the new Chair of the NWSC Science advisory Committee. Julia is a professor at the University of Washington and also runs the citizen science-based Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COAST).
- **NWSC Staff Update:** Katie Harris, NWSC Communications and Outreach Specialist, has accepted another position. Her last day with the Commission is February 19. Sasha will be taking over Katie's duties until her position is filled. Unfortunately, there is currently a hiring freeze at Ecology.
- **Maritime National Heritage Area:** Alexandra Gradwohl of the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation presented on the Maritime Washington National Heritage Area (MNHA). Pete said it was a very interesting presentation that raised some very interesting questions about what the roles of an MRC and other various other organizations might be. The MNHA presentation slides were shared with MRC members. Alexandra will present to the MRCs on the MWNHA if interested.
- **Voluntary No Anchor Zone:** The NWSC is looking for funding opportunities to expand the Jefferson MRC's Voluntary No Anchor Zone project to other counties, including Skagit County at Cap Sante. The grant that they recently applied for did not get approved so they will continue to look for other opportunities.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom)- March, 2021**

### **Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Report:** *Jay Lind*

- The February NWSF Board Meeting was cancelled. Jay said there was nothing new to report. Updates will be shared at the next MRC meeting in April.

## Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards: The 2021 Salish Sea Stewards Training commenced on Feb 23, 2021. We have 41 registered trainees (normally classes average 25 trainees), representing a 64% increase. This is likely due to offering an all-online program & doubling our advertising. Additionally, we are averaging 9 previously trained Salish Sea Stewards attending the lectures for a total of 50 people a week benefiting from the lectures. The next Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee will be held on March 19<sup>th</sup> at 10am via Zoom. Jude pointed out that the state is starting to loosen restrictions on the number of people that can do field work which will likely influence volunteer opportunities.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: The 2021 event date is tentatively set for Saturday, August 28 (11am-3pm) at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. Tracy recommended not offering free samples of seafood at the event this year due to the impacts COVID-19 has had on the restaurant industry and seafood business, in addition to the health concerns and permit requirements. A survey will be sent to past participants and volunteers sometime in May to see if there is any interest to host activities in person this year.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson and Tracy Alker will be maintaining the plants at the site this year starting later in May or early June, under the guidance of the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group's Restoration Technician.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Surveys will likely start up again at the three different kelp beds in June or July 2021. The kelp beds include: Shannon Point, Biz Point, and Coffin Rock. A training session will likely be scheduled before the surveys start up again.
- Forage Fish Surveys: All forage fish survey sites continue to be surveyed once or twice a month with small groups and all COVID-19 safety precautions. Two additional hoses were purchased to help with this effort. Pete thanked Matt and the Samish Indian Nation for allowing the volunteers access to the nice warm water inside their Fidalgo Bay Resort facility this winter when it was so cold. Pete said the logs have really piled up along the shoreline and it's been interesting to watch how the beach changes after the winter storms roll in.
- Kids on the Beach: The Kids on the Beach program will be virtual this spring (April-May) with over 200 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> graders participating from four different schools including Sedro-Woolley, Conway, Concrete and La Conner. The curriculum will focus on forage fish. The virtual field trips will consist of beach seining and forage fish spawning surveys and eggs under microscopes. The students will analyze and compile the data into reports to present at a virtual symposium. Annie has a meeting with the teachers at the end of this month to plan logistics and discuss if there are any other options for the Kids on the Beach program this spring other than just virtual learning.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Hatchery work continues to raise juvenile abalone for outplanting. Field work started up again this month. More information will be provided at the April MRC meeting. Field work consists of monitoring and outplanting of 2,000 juvenile abalone, scouting for potential new restoration sites, collecting wild adult abalone for broodstock in the hatchery, and deploying underwater cameras to study predation.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Routine field work will start up again in May with a reduced amount of monitoring at three different sites in Fidalgo Bay to look at recruitment patterns. Paul Dinnel will be giving a presentation on the native oyster restoration work for the Salish Sea Stewards class on April 13. Paul met with Roger Fuller and Sylvia Yang at the Padilla Bay Reserve about going out this summer to take a look at the south channels in Padilla Bay for potential oyster restoration with seed oysters. Seed oysters could be collected from Fidalgo Bay with the help of volunteers to reduce costs. Brian Allen with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund surveyed the shell beds that were put out by barge at Weaverling Spit last winter. Results indicated a very good oyster settlement last year. Paul said this is a good indication that the oysters will continue to spawn and settle increasing the oyster population on the west side of the Bay. Paul and Brian discussed goals for monitoring in the future. For the last two years we've been on an abbreviated sampling schedule, which was recommended to do every three to five years. They agreed that next year would be a good time to do a full scale sampling effort. Paul said that he will need additional assistance either from a new MRC Project Lead or from the Puget Sound Restoration Fund which might require additional funding of around \$4,000. The Northwest Straits Foundation had originally allocated Skagit Restoration Initiative Funds for oyster restoration in Fidalgo and Padilla Bay. Tracy will contact Lisa to see if those funds are still available for oyster restoration.

## MRC Project Planning Process: *Tracy Alker*

- Project Ideas: Each MRC selects their projects a little differently, including projects or actions that don't necessarily require any funding. Some MRCs host an Annual Retreat to develop project ideas based on priority issues. Others form subcommittees to select projects. For Skagit MRC, project ideas are typically brought forward by an individual MRC member or partner organization. We don't currently have a formal process, but if there is

any interest in planning an annual retreat, forming additional subcommittees, or doing things a little differently, please let Tracy know. Pete suggested revisiting this topic later this year after this grant process has been finalized to determine if we want to take a different approach in planning our projects in the future.

- **Project Ranking:** Project priorities are ranked based on the following criteria:
  - There must be a benefit to the marine or nearshore environment.
  - The MRC must have a clear role, if it is part of a larger project. There must be a part of the project the MRC can take ownership of or credit for.
  - Each MRC project must have a Project Lead/s. The degree of the Project Lead's involvement varies depending on the project. Project Leads typically help develop project proposals, provide monthly updates at our MRC meetings, and make sure deliverables are met. Sometimes the Project Leads are asked to give presentations or help write reports. Project Leads can also form subcommittees if they need the extra help.
  - Some form of community engagement is also desirable.
  - Final decisions about MRC project priorities are made by consensus.
- **Project Timeline:** The timeline of the project, whether it's a one-time effort or ongoing, when it needs to be implemented, and the duration and commitment requirements will help determine the best available resources to tap into to implement the project. It's always good to have a wish list of projects that are ready to go, because you never know when funding might become available.
- **Resources:** Determining which resources to use will also depend on the estimated costs and if any other partners will be involved to help leverage funding. Some of the project ideas that are brought to the table don't necessarily require any funding, but do require a Project Lead to see it through. There are several resources that are readily available to the MRC:
  - **NWSC:** The NWSC secures the core funding for the MRCs including federal funding from the EPA through the PSP, as well as funding from the State in the form of a 2 year grant that starts October 1 through September. They can also seek for funding for regional projects and provide technical expertise and communications for our projects. There are certain restrictions tied to the NWSC's state and federal funds. The NWSC Budget Tips information sheet was shared with MRC members.
  - **NWSF:** The Foundation is a great resource for our larger restoration projects. They can provide project management expertise and help with contracting and permitting which is sometimes easier and faster than going through the County. They can also help apply for grants and seek private donations for projects, facilitate training and workshops, provide technical expertise and provide liability insurance to volunteers. If the MRC is interested in collaborating with the Foundation on a project, we will need to refer to the Partnership Project Plan and fill out their new agreement form.
  - **Skagit County:** The Skagit County Public Works Department's Natural Resources Division's Clean Water Program provides funding to support MRC Operations and administration including part-time staff. It can sometimes be used to provide refreshments at our special events, volunteer recognition, and projects that improve or protect water quality and shellfish, but must be budgeted and approved ahead of time.
  - **Partner Organizations:** Our projects often involve support from partner organizations whether it's in-kind support, or other sources of funding. For example: Friends of Skagit Beaches sponsors the passport activity and prizes for Fidalgo Bay Day and has paid for t-shirts and speaker gift bags for Salish Sea Stewards. Padilla Bay has provided their facility free of charge as well as some of their staff time and office space for our SSS and KOTB programs. The Samish hosts Fidalgo Bay Day and several MRC meetings and other events at their resort. And the Puget Sound Restoration Fund supplements the larger Pinto Abalone Recovery project with various other sources of funding.
- **(2021-2023) MRC Grant:** A Request for Proposals will be issued March 15. The online grant application process will start in May. Online grant applications will be due in June. MRCs will also be asked to present one MRC project proposal to the NWSC in June. The MRC Grant Application is divided into 3 project categories: Monitoring/Research, Restoration/Protection, and Education Outreach. There is a different form to fill out for each category. Some projects might fall under more than one category. For Example, Pinto Abalone Recovery falls under the Monitoring/Research as well as the Restoration/Protection category so it will require both forms to be filled out. The MRC Project Leads will be responsible for filling out the application forms for their projects. Tracy will post the information provided by the Project Lead in the online application in EAGL.

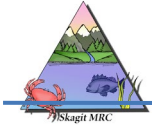
- 2021-2023 Skagit MRC Grant Projects: Projects currently being proposed include: Fidalgo Bay Day, Salish Sea Stewards, Kids on the Beach, Pinto Abalone, MRC Intern, Stormwater Monitoring, and Samish Flower Farm Interpretive Signage. MRC Project Leads will help prepare the proposals for the MRC Grant Application. The project proposal list will be finalized by consensus at the April 8 MRC meeting. A MRC Project Lead is still needed for Fidalgo Bay Day, otherwise it will be removed from the list.
- 2019 -2020 MRC Projects for all 7 MRCs: Tracy shared a spreadsheet of the recent projects for all 7 MRCs.

#### **Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:** *All*

- Navy Aircraft Noise: Implications for Salish Sea and Olympic Region- March 16 (4pm-6pm): Virtual webinar hosted by the San Juan MRC and Salish Sea Institute.
- Skagit MRC Presentation to the Board of Skagit County Commissioners- April 20 (8:30am) Tracy will provide a brief overview of the NWSI and highlight Skagit MRCs recent accomplishments in the 2020 Annual Report. MRC members were invited to present on specific projects if interested.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:30am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held April 8, 2021**





# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the February 11, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) GoToMeeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Kathy Thornburgh, Paul Dinnel, Matt Castle, Diane Hennebert, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Darla Gay Smith, Jay Lind, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Brian Robson
- **Others in Attendance:** Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Dana Oster, NWSC; Jason Morgan, NWSC; Haley Sherman, NWSF

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** January 14, 2021, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** No comments

### Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: *Paul Dinnel*

*The last NWSC meeting was held January 29, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm).*

- New NWSC Representatives: Julia Parrish, a professor at the University of Washington, was recently appointed to the NWSC as the new gubernatorial appointee. Tim Ellis was appointed as the new representative for Snohomish MRC.
- NWSC Staff Update: Katie Harris, NWSC Communications and Outreach Specialist, has accepted another position. Her last day with the Commission is February 19.
- NWSC Communications: Katie provided an update on the NWSC Communications Plan. NWSI 101 presentations will be held on a quarterly basis to help new members get a better understanding of the Initiative. MRC symposiums were also very popular so there will be more symposiums planned in the future. Monthly NWSI newsletters and monthly NWSC meetings will continue.
- MRC Grant (2021-2023): A Request for Proposals will be issued in mid-March. The online grant application process will start in May. Online grant applications will be due in June. MRCs will also be asked to present one MRC project proposal to the NWSC in June.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom)- February 26, 2021

### Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Report: *Jason Morgan*

- MRC staff/Chair Workshop “Working Together for the Salish Sea”: The Foundation recently hosted a virtual workshop on January 21 for MRC staff and Chairs to address how the Foundation functions and how they can help support the MRCs including: applying for and managing grants and private donations, fundraising, contracting, training/orientation, liability insurance, and project management, etc. Workshop materials were shared with Skagit MRC members, including the new Partnership Project Plan and form. If the MRC has a project that will need support from the Foundation, we will need to fill out this form in order to create consistency, transparency, and reliability for projects funded in part or whole by the Foundation.
- Marine Conservation Fellowship: Jason Morgan introduced Haley Sherman, a University of Washington graduate, who was recently hired by the Foundation for their new Marine Conservation Fellow position to assist with Bowman Bay beach seining work, data management, analysis and report writing. She will also be tasked with presenting the data analysis results to the MRC at the end of her contract.
- Bowman Bay Monitoring Report: Jason Morgan is currently working with Jason Toft at the University of Washington on a grey literature report that analyzes the monitoring data collected at 6 restoration sites in WA, including Bowman Bay and Cornet Bay. The sites that were selected for this report each have a minimum of 5 years of monitoring data. The report will include a two page fact sheet for each site. The report will be ready for distribution by the end of March 2021. A more in depth report for peer review and eventual publication will be finalized by the end of December 2022. The nearshore beach seining data at Bowman Bay will not be included in the grey literature report but might be included in the full manuscript that will be published in 2022.
- Marine Shoreline Restoration Story Map: The Foundation recently launched the GIS-based Story Map on their website to illustrate their work. [www.nwstraitsfoundation.org](http://www.nwstraitsfoundation.org).

- Shore Friendly Webinar – February 24: Shoreline landowners will learn how to protect and maintain their shoreline property and access while also protecting the fish, wildlife and habitats that we all enjoy. Presenters will be Jessica Cote, a coastal engineer and Traci Sanderson, a coastal ecologist, both employed at Blue Coast Engineering. Register on the [NWSF website](#).
- Mt. Erie Elementary School Rain Garden Grant Proposal: Diane assisted the Northwest Straits Foundation in applying for Shell Puget Sound Refinery grant funding for the Mt Erie School Rain Garden. The grant funds would help leverage construction by the City of Anacortes, and cover the cost of native plants, signage, and 4th-5th grade curriculum. This project will also include all sorts of fun volunteer opportunities for kids, MRC members and Shell employees. They hope to find out if this project will get funded in 6-8 weeks. If awarded, the project will start this year!

### Kelp Survey Update: Dana Oster

Dana Oster provided a summary of the 2020 bull kelp data that was recently presented at the MRC Kelp Monitoring Workshop on January 21. A link to the presentation and data was shared with MRC members. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) monitors the kelp beds in south Puget Sound and the MRCs are a huge proponent in collecting the much needed kelp data in the Northwest Straits region. 80% of the kelp beds in the south Puget Sound region have already disappeared and are now starting to disappear as far north as Snohomish County. So far the kelp beds appear to be remaining fairly stable in most of the Northwest Straits region, but it is important to continue monitoring to look for any changes. In 2020, 40 MRC volunteers from 6 counties paddled 230 miles, surveyed 22 kelp beds, and documented 416 acres of kelp! Dana pointed out that kelp surveys take a lot of effort and dedication by our amazing volunteers. In Skagit County we now have over four years of kelp data from three different locations including: Biz Point, Shannon Point, and Coffin Rocks. Each location has a designated experienced volunteer in charge of leading the kelp surveys which helps improve the accuracy of our data. The lead volunteers in Skagit have been really great at bringing on new Salish Sea Steward recruits and safely teaching them the kelp monitoring protocols. Samish Indian Nation is currently surveying two kelp beds at Cypress Island using the same kayak-based survey protocols. They are also using aerial surveys and satellite imagery to assess the kelp beds as well as traditional tribal knowledge of historical kelp beds. Dana presented the MRC kelp data at the virtual Salish Sea Ecosystem to an audience of 800 people in 2020! The Kelp Recovery Plan was also released in 2020. To help make sure the Kelp Recovery Plan is being put to good use, the NWSC is working with the Pew Charitable Trust to host workshops to learn from State and local municipalities in terms of how they currently use best available science to help implement policies for habitat protection. Betsy said that as a local government employee involved in shoreline management she is very interested in participating in this effort. Dana said that WDNR would like to host workshops to train local jurisdictions on how to incorporate kelp protection into Shoreline Master Programs (SMPs). Most SMPs only have eelgrass protections, but kelp is equally important. Skagit County is still in the early stages of updating their SMP. The NWSC is seeking state funding in the 2021-2023 biennium to increase staff capacity to help make sure the Kelp Recovery Plan is implemented and for data analysis of the MRC regional kelp monitoring.

### Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards: The SSS Advisory Committee met on January 20<sup>th</sup> to continue planning for the 2021 Salish Sea Stewards Training which will commence on Feb 23 – June 1, 2021. Classes will be held virtually via ZOOM on Tuesdays from 1pm to 3:30pm with two speakers and 2 optional field sessions from 1pm -5pm. The registration deadline is February 16, 2021. The 2021 curriculum, including 20 speakers and 10 training sessions, has been finalized and shared with MRC members. To date there are 26 registrants. Geographically, half of the registrants hail from Anacortes, with the balance from Sedro Woolley, La Conner, Mt Vernon, Burlington, & 5 from Snohomish, Seattle & Bainbridge Island. Lynne updated the Master SSS Member List which was no easy task! There are currently 272 trained SSS graduates. Sara Brostrom & Lynne integrated the list with Mail Chimp so we have a way to communicate with all the trained SSS. This week, the new SSS Member Master list was successfully used to invite all past SSS to the upcoming 2021 training sessions. MRC members were also invited to watch the presentations. The SSS Advisory Committee continues to communicate volunteer opportunities through the electronic news bulletin, “The Wave”. The SSS Facebook pages have also been revamped. The Advisory Committee looks forward to using new communication tools to keep all the Stewards informed, engaged & connected. Since 2014 the SSS have contributed over 35,000 hours of volunteer service to Salish Sea projects. Jude said he is very pleased with Sara’s enthusiasm, positive energy, and adaptability in taking on the leadership role to develop and facilitate the SSS training program this year. Jude thanked the MRC for the progress being made in keeping this program going. The Committee shared Jude’s sentiments and are very pleased with how the program is progressing in partnership with Padilla Bay.

- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** The 2021 event date is tentatively set for Saturday, August 28 (11am-3pm). The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility has been reserved. A FBD Planning Committee meeting will likely be scheduled sometime in the next couple of months to discuss the different possible scenarios, options, and alternatives depending on COVID-19 safety restrictions for public events. A decision will need to be made soon so that we can start planning and promoting the event. Please let Tracy know if you are interested in helping with the planning process.
- **Bowman Bay Restoration:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson and Tracy Alker will be maintaining the plants at the site this year starting later in May or early June, under the guidance of the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group's Restoration Technician.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys:** Surveys will likely start up again at the three different kelp beds in June or July 2021. The kelp beds include: Shannon Point, Biz Point, and Coffin Rock.
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** All forage fish survey sites continue to be surveyed once or twice a month with small groups and all COVID-19 safety precautions. Spawning season is pretty much done until spring except in Fidalgo Bay where it is common for light spawning to continue into February. Pete shared an infographic of the 2020 forage fish data collected for WDNr's Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve that was put together by Rondi Nordal, AmeriCorps with RE-Sources. A forage fish survey is planned at Fidalgo Bay this Saturday, weather permitting.
- **Kids on the Beach:** The Kids on the Beach program will be virtual this spring with over 200 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> graders participating from four different schools. The curriculum will focus on forage fish. The virtual field trips will consist of beach seining and forage fish spawning surveys and eggs under microscopes. The students will analyze and compile the data into reports to present at a virtual symposium. On a side note, Jude said that he will need to recuse himself from any discussions or decisions related to funding for MRC programs hosted by Padilla Bay (i.e. Kids on the Beach and Salish Sea Stewards) in order to avoid any potential conflicts that might be perceived. However, he said that he would be happy to continue to provide program updates.
- **Pinto Abalone Recovery:** Hatchery work continues to raise juvenile abalone for outplanting. Field work, including monitoring and outplanting of 2,000 juvenile abalone, will begin later this month or early March, when there is minimal algae cover at the site. Field work will also include scouting for potential new restoration sites, collecting wild adult abalone for broodstock in the hatchery, and deploying underwater cameras to study predation.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration:** Not much happening right now. Routine field work will start up again in May with a reduced amount of monitoring this year at three different sites in Fidalgo Bay. Paul Dinnel will be giving a presentation on the native oyster restoration work for the Salish Sea Stewards class on April 13.

### **Earth Day Celebration:** *Kevin Anderson*

The Port of Anacortes is in the very early stages of planning a community-based event to celebrate Earth Day this year. They are thinking about hosting a beach cleanup at two Port-owned beaches in Anacortes including: Railroad Avenue Beach at the Port Office and Ship Harbor Beach, which is co-managed by the City of Anacortes. The idea is to have beach cleanups at multiple locations to help maintain social distancing and other COVID-19 safety measures. In addition, the Port plans to convert to 100% renewable energy and is looking for other creative ways to celebrate Earth Day and possibly collaborate with other organizations. Matt said the Samish Indian Nation might be interested in participating. Tracy suggested posing the question at the upcoming Skagit ECO-Net meeting on February 16. Several different organizations belong to Skagit ECO-Net which focuses on environmental education and outreach opportunities and promoting special events. Please let Tracy or Kevin know if you have any ideas on how the MRC and the Port could collaborate on an activity for Earth Day.

### **MRC Officer Elections**

- **NWSC Representative and NWSC Alternate:** Diane said she is interested in the NWSC Representative position but is unable to commit until 2022. No other MRC members expressed interest in the position. Pete agreed to continue to serve as the NWSC Representative. Paul and Diane will fill in as the NWSC Alternate as needed. Pete encouraged MRC members to sit in on the NWSC virtual meetings to learn what it's all about. NWSC meetings are open to the public so anybody can attend. Tracy or Katie can forward meeting materials to those who are interested in attending.
- **MRC Chair and MRC Vice-Chair:** Betsy was appointed to serve another term as MRC Chair. Jay will continue to serve as MRC Vice-Chair until the position is filled, but strongly recommended appointing someone new. MRC members were asked to consider filling this role and to let Betsy, Jay, or Tracy know if interested.

### **Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:** *All*

- **MRC Membership Resignation Announcement:** Kathy Thornburgh announced she is stepping down from her seat on the MRC after taking on new work for the Skagit Land Trust. Kari Odden will take over as Kathy's Alternate on

the MRC until she can find a replacement. Betsy thanked Kathy for all of her hard work and the time she committed to the MRC. We are all extremely grateful.

- Skagit ECONet Virtual Meeting/Presentation- February 16 (11am – 12:30pm): A special presentation by Betty Carteret, representing Citizens' Climate Education called "Climate Change Progress and Solutions – There's Still Room for Optimism". MRC members are welcome to attend.
- NOAA Marine Debris Program's Webinar Series, Salvaging Solutions to Abandoned and Derelict Vessels: Starting February 24, 2021 at 12pm "Salvaging Solutions: Knowing the Ropes" <https://noaaorr.adobeconnect.com/adv/>. Webinars will be recorded and posted on NOAA's [website](#).
- Kelp Webinar, February 24<sup>th</sup> (7-8pm): The Clallam MRC will be hosting a virtual kelp webinar on February 24th from 7-8pm featuring Tom Mumford. The webinar is open to the public.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:18am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held March 11, 2021**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

## Summary of the January 14, 2021, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) GoToMeeting

### Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Pete Haase, Betsy Stevenson, Kathy Thornburgh, Paul Dinnel, Matt Castle, Diane Hennebert, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Brian Robson, Darla Gay Smith
- **MRC Members Absent:** Todd Mitchell, Jay Lind, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson
- **Others in Attendance:** Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Allie Simpson, NWSC; Catherine Houck, SSS volunteer

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

- **Approval of Minutes:** December 10, 2020, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written by consensus.
- **Public Comments:** None

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

*The last NWSC meeting was held December 11, via Zoom conference call (10am – 12pm).*

- **NWSC Representative:** Pete reminded the MRC that we will need to elect a new NWSC Representative soon.
- **Actions to Impacts:** Dana gave an update on the Actions to Impacts diagram to help illustrate the benefits of our work and how it can be used as a communication tool for a broader audience.
- **Eelgrass No Anchor Zone Grant Update:** The NWSC did not receive the grant for expanding the eelgrass No Anchor Zone project to other MRCs. They will continue to look for other grant opportunities for this project.
- **2021-2023 MRC Grant RFP:** Pete and Tracy will be meeting with NWSC staff this Friday to discuss Skagit MRC's project proposals and the RFP process for the next two-year MRC Grant (2021-2023). The project proposals that will be discussed include several ongoing projects: Fidalgo Bay Day, Salish Sea Stewards, Kids on the Beach, Pinto Abalone and three new projects: MRC Intern, Stormwater Sampling (Sharpe's Corner outfall), and Flower Farm Interpretive Signage.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Meeting (via Zoom)- January 29**

### **MRC Officer Elections**

- **NWSC Representative and NWSC Alternative:** Diane expressed interest in the NWSC Representative position, but would be unable to commit until 2022 due to other obligations. The election was postponed until the February 11 MRC meeting since no other MRC members expressed interest in the position. Pete will continue to serve as the NWSC Representative until a new person is elected. Both Pete and Paul volunteered to serve as the NWSC Alternate if nobody else is interested. Pete encouraged MRC members to sit in on one of the NWSC virtual meetings to learn what it's all about. NWSC meetings are open to the public so anybody can attend. Tracy or Katie can forward meeting materials to those who are interested in attending.
- **MRC Chair and MRC Vice-Chair:** Betsy volunteered to serve one more term as MRC Chair if nobody else is interested. Jay said he would be willing to continue as MRC Vice-Chair until the position is filled, but strongly recommended appointing someone new. Jay has already served as Vice-Chair and Chair for a few years. He said the MRC Vice-Chair is the easiest position in the world because there isn't a huge time commitment. The Vice-Chair might be asked to lead one or two meetings if the Chair is unable to. Because there wasn't any interest at the time of the meeting, the MRC Vice-Chair election will be postponed until the February 11 MRC meeting.

### **Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF) Report:** *Jay Lind*

- **NWSF Shore Friendly Living Video Series #2:** The Foundation's newly released episode #2 in the Shore Friendly Living video series "Managing Shoreline Erosion: Bulkheads or Natural Solutions" was recently posted in Skagit County's Clean Water electronic news bulletin that goes out to over 800 subscribers. The Foundation is planning for a virtual landowner workshop in January or February.
- **MRC staff/Chair Workshop with the Foundation:** The Foundation is hosting a virtual roundtable workshop on January 21 for MRC staff and Chairs to discuss collaboration with the NWSF in 2021 and beyond. Some of the services provided by the Foundation include applying for and managing grants and private donations, contracting, liability insurance, and project management, etc.



- **NWSF Board Members:** Two new board members were appointed in December. Jay's term expired and he was given a huge thanks and the board sent him a beautiful Pendleton blanket for his many years of service. They also approved an *Emeritus Board* amendment to the board's by-laws, and then unanimously approved Jay and Anne Murphy's nominations as Emeritus non-voting members.

## Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards:** The 2021 Salish Sea Stewards training program will commence on Feb 23 – June 1, 2021. 10 virtual classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 3:30pm with two speakers and 2 optional field sessions for small groups from 1pm -5pm. The 2021 SSS Training Program flyer and new Registration Form are posted on the MRC website: [www.skagitmrc.org](http://www.skagitmrc.org). We sent out flyers and press releases to 19 organizations, newsletters & newspapers with a goal to recruit and train at least 25 new SSS volunteers. Sara Brostrom, SSS Training Coordinator at Padilla Bay, is nearing completion of securing 20 Speakers for the 10 training sessions. MRC & SSS Advisory Committee member Lynne Wenberg has completed a Master SSS Volunteer List and is working on revamping *Volgistics*, an online system for reporting and tracking volunteer hours. We currently have a strong, hard-working, 11-person Advisory Committee that bring many talents to the group. The Committee recently met with the SSS Training Coordinator on December 10 and January 20 to continue planning the 2021 SSS program. In March, the Advisory Committee will focus on the first steps to developing Volunteer SSS Coordination to hopefully implement a future part-time SSS Coordinator. We look forward to keeping all of the Stewards informed, engaged & connected.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** The 2021 event date is tentatively set for Saturday, August 28 (11am-3pm). The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility has been reserved. A FBD Planning Committee meeting will likely be scheduled sometime in February to discuss the different possible scenarios, options, and alternatives depending on COVID-19 safety restrictions for public events. A decision will need to be made soon so that we can start planning and promoting the event. Please let Tracy know if you are interested in helping with the planning process.
- **Bowman Bay Restoration:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson and Tracy Alker are the new co-lead stewards responsible for maintaining the plants at the site in 2021. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group recently hired a new Restoration Technician who will provide guidance on how to properly maintain the site and will provide a walk-through with the lead stewards at the end of the season to see how the plants are doing and if any additional plantings or watering will be needed in 2022. Paul Dinnel shared recent photos he took at Bowman Bay a few days before and after the big storm and king tide event on January 13. The boat launch was inundated with large logs. Although the dune grass did a good job of protecting the shoreline from erosion, there were areas in between the dune grass and along the boat launch that had a fair amount of erosion. The picnic area was also flooded where the dune area was breached to the north of the parking lot. Several big trees were also down. Catherine Houck made the suggestion to move the footpath trail further east, through the grassy field and move the native plantings further east between the shore and trail to provide a larger area to accommodate winter storms and driftwood accumulation.
- **Kayak Kelp Surveys:** Surveys will likely start up again at the three different kelp beds in June or July 2021. The kelp beds include: Shannon Point, Biz Point, and Coffin Rock. Brad Smith, one of the kelp survey leads, is interested in possibly adding the kelp bed at Hope Island as a new survey site. Claudia Ross-Kuhn, a Salish Sea Steward volunteer, reported seeing a large kelp bed along the Samish Island shoreline if the MRC is interested in surveying additional locations. She said there is a deep point at the tip of Point Williams just to the north of that kelp bed where there are usually a lot of salmon. Dana said she thinks this would be a great location because it is in a more sheltered area that has direct influence from the river. Whereas Samish is more similar to the other sites we are currently surveying because it has lots of currents and exchange of oceanic water.
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** All forage fish survey sites continue to be surveyed as planned with small groups and all COVID-19 safety precautions. Spawning season is pretty much done until spring except in Fidalgo Bay where it is common for light spawning to continue into February. This is sand lance spawning season, but we have yet to find any sand lance eggs at any of our sites.
- **Kids on the Beach:** The Kids on the Beach program will likely be completely virtual this spring, but things could change. The two KOTB spring programs include a beach seine program geared toward Elementary students, and a forage fish program geared toward Middle School students. The KOTB program manager, Annie England, created three videos that will enhance the KOTB virtual field trip experience. These videos include a beach seine at Bayview State Park, a beach seine off of Marches Point, and a video of forage fish volunteers taking samples at Fidalgo Bay. Teachers set to participate in the KOTB 2021 spring program include: Charlie Huddleston, Sedro Woolley 6th Grade; Ron Haywood, Conway 8th Grade; Sacha Buller, Concrete 7th and 8<sup>th</sup> Grades; and Jen Willup and Dean Dan, La Conner/Swinomish 9th Grade- Between To Worlds. The 4 day virtual spring KOTB program will include: Day 1: Virtual intro to forage fish or beach seine. Day 2: Virtual field day via video, kids will collect data. Day 3: Virtual unpacking data and preparing for presentations. Day 4: Symposium. The symposium will hopefully include different schools

connecting virtually although this may not be possible. Charlie, from Sedro-Woolley, already said this will not work for his class.

- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Mostly just hatchery work going on right now to raise the juvenile abalone for outplanting. Field work, including monitoring and outplanting of 2,000 juvenile abalone will begin in February or March 2021 when there is minimal algae cover at the site.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Not much happening right now. Routine field work will start up again in April or May.

#### **Miscellaneous Events and Announcements:**     *All*

- Maritime Washington National Heritage Area Public Information Session- **January 14th at 4:00pm**: The Maritime Washington National Heritage Area was designated by Congress in 2019. The Washington Trust is creating a management plan for the heritage area and are seeking input from local communities. There may be a role for MRCs to engage in this process. A public information session will be held January 14<sup>th</sup> at 4pm. A link to sign up for the information session can be found at the bottom of this article: <https://www.thedailyworld.com/news/public-input-sought-on-maritime-washington-national-heritage-area/>, and here: <https://www.preservewa.org/programs/maritime-national-heritage-area/mw-nha-events/>.
- PSEMP Workgroup Sand Lance Mini Symposium: **January 14 (9am-12:30pm)**. The Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program (PSEMP) Forage Fish & Food Webs Workgroup symposium will consist of seven speakers across a range of topics on the importance of Pacific sand lance to the food web and ecosystem, followed by a panel discussion. Login link: [tinyurl.com/PSEMPSymposium](https://tinyurl.com/PSEMPSymposium).
- Puget Sound Marine Waters Annual 2019 Report: Details the effects of climate change and trends on Puget Sound, marine life, and seafood consumers: <https://www.psp.wa.gov/PSmarinewatersoverview.php>
- North Sound Riparian Conference: **January 19 (9:30am-4pm)**. The conference is for riparian restoration practitioners and other interested folks. There will be two sessions: the morning session focuses on adapting riparian restoration for climate change, and the afternoon session on working in wetlands. The program is sponsored by Skagit River System Cooperative, Skagit Watershed Council, Skagit Land Trust, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and Skagit County (our Skagit Riparian Working Group). Registration is open to the first 100 participants.
- Storming the Sound: **January 29 (9am-4pm)**. Regional environmental education conference will be virtual this year. Planning is underway. The planning team will create an online space for discussion, thinking, inspiration, and sharing. Please send your ideas for sessions to Susan Wood ([swood@padillabay.gov](mailto:swood@padillabay.gov)), and let her know if you're willing to facilitate the conversation.
- Illuminight 2021 Event: **January 29**. Skagit Watershed Council is hosting a virtual Illuminight event on Facebook, at 6pm on Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>. They will also post a recording of the event on their [website](#). This January, you can get a free luminary globe kit at Tri-Dee Arts, in Mount Vernon and at the Museum of Northwest Art in La Conner while supplies last. You can also enter their luminary-making contest for a chance to win a prize! All entries must be received by midnight on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Winners will be announced at the 2021 virtual Illuminight Winter Walk event which will be streamed live on Facebook.
- Sound Waters University - **February 6, 2021**: Sound Waters University a, "One Day University for All", brought to you virtually by Sound Water Stewards of Island County, on February 6, 2021. Discounts available for students, teachers, military, and AmeriCorps. Attendance is limited, register today at [www.soundwatersuniversity.org](http://www.soundwatersuniversity.org). All information can be found here <https://www.soundwatersuniversity.org/>.

**The meeting adjourned at 9:45am. The next virtual MRC meeting will be held February 11, 2021**