



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **January 9, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Matt Castle, Tracy Alker, Catey Ritchie, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson,
 - *MRC Members Absent:* Paul Dinnel, Elizabeth Drozda, Darla Gay Smith, Carolyn Moulton
- **Others in Attendance:** Melissa Ciesielski (Swinomish); Sasha Horst (NWSC); Dana Oster (NWSC); Emma Kortuem (Samish); Caitlyn Blair (NWSC)

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

Approval of Minutes: December 12, 2024, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: NA

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

Last NWSC meeting occurred **December 6, 2024**, 10am-12pm, held via Zoom. Highlights shared with MRC at last MRC meeting.

- New gubernatorial appointees: Elsa Schwartz and Emily Grason (replacing Nan McKay and Julia Parrish)
- San Juan MRC State of the Marine Stewardship Area Plan – completed and available [here](#).
- Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council Meeting- Dec 11- highlighted a forum on shoreline armoring.
- The Salish Sea Institute: Climate Change in the Salish Sea Bioregion Webinar- December 11, 2024, 4pm-5pm. Recording on the [Salish Sea Institute website](#).
- 2024 NWS Conference: Presentations, tools, and other materials from the conference are posted on the [NWSC website](#).
- 2025 NWS Conference- Nov 7 & 8 at Maple Hall in La Conner.
- Next NWSC meeting: January 31, 10am-3pm. Held in person at the Coupeville Library- 788 Alexander St.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith via Email update:
 - The 2025 Training Program will commence February 18 – April 29, 2025. Classes will be held Tuesdays 1-5pm at the Padilla Bay Reserve.
 - Registration & program information is posted on the SMRC website.
 - Registration deadline is January 31. Limited to the first 26 applicants. As of January 1st, 11 applicants are registered.
 - The 2025 SSS Training Flyer and Press Release have been finalized and distributed.
 - The 2025 SSS Training flyer with registration & program information is available on the SMRC website along with an online registration form.
 - The last SSS AC meeting was held virtually December 19. We now have 10 AC members, including 4 new members. The next meeting will be held January 16.
 - The SSS AC looks forward to a successful & full Stewards Training Class & thanks Padilla Bay NERR for their vital role in the process.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
 - January 2025 forage fish survey schedule:
 - Jan 17- Bowman Bay at 1pm
 - Jan 20- Fidalgo Bay East at 2:30pm
 - Jan 20- Fidalgo Bay West at 2:30pm
 - Jan 23- Guemes Channel at 1:30pm
 - Jan 23- Similk Bay at 1:30pm
 - Forage Fish Monitoring proposal for allocating OTGP-2024 MRC grant funding to pay for forage fish survey coordination and management in 2025 in partnership with the Salish Sea School has been approved by the NWSC staff. Working on the grant amendment and a QAPP Addendum to include Skagit Sites.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - The 2024 Kids on the Beach Final Report has been completed. Three schools and over 200 kids participated in the program. 29 trained volunteers (mostly Salish Sea Stewards) assisted with field activities (around \$5k in-kind contributed).
 - 2025 KOTB program is at full capacity with five schools and 325 students signed up. Spring program: Concrete High School will participate with 45 10th and 11th graders from two classes. Sedro Woolley Evergreen Middle School is also set to participate with 3 classes of 6th graders, 86 students and Allen Elementary 4th & 5th graders (English is a second language for majority of students- engaged interpreters). Fall program is currently being developed: Concrete and Mount Vernon High Schools signed up to participate.
 - Bus funding and school bus driver shortages is a challenge. School Buses cost around \$300-\$400/day. Something for the MRC to consider for future project budget planning.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda via email update:
 - The La Conner School Rain Garden is looking great!
 - Verbiage for the interpretive signage has been created.
 - Westar, a sign company in La Conner is donating the sign. They plan to design and fabricate the sign in the next couple of months. The sign will likely be installed by the county later this year.
 - Smaller plant identification labels will also be created to identify native plants and culturally significant plants with consultation from the Swinomish.
 - The 2024 Final Report has been completed.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Pete will distribute Save the Date cards at the Storming the Sound Conference.
 - Meeting next week with Anna Thompson, the Education and Outreach Specialist for the Public Works Natural Resources Division to divide and conquer tasks and determine next steps.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel via email update:
 - Paul gave a brief (virtual) presentation on the history of abalone restoration in Skagit County waters to the Abalone Restoration Partners group on December 17th.
 - Paul is reviewing WDFW's new "Periodic Status Review for Pint Abalone" draft and will provide comments as needed.
 - Hatchery work continues as usual to produce the next batch of juvenile abalone for out planting this winter/spring
- Olympia Oyster Restoration– Paul Dinnel via email update:
 - Paul worked with Lynne on the Olympia Oyster Restoration StoryMap.
 - The next native oyster recruitment bag sampling will take place in May 2025.
 - The next bay-wide population survey is slated for 2028.

Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Tracy

Cynthia Nielsen, the MRC Project Lead for the Fidalgo Bay Trestle project decided to resign from the MRC now that the project is complete. Committee members expressed gratitude for Cynthia and her strong leadership in taking on the trestle project. She did an excellent job, and we couldn't have gotten it done without her!

- Phase 1 of this project is now complete and our grant funding and contract with the City of Anacortes ended December 31, 2024.
- Deliverables completed:
 - Draft Education & Outreach Plan
 - Hosted an outreach booth at Fidalgo Bay Day
 - Hosted meetings with the MRC and other stakeholders – including presenting project information to Rep Rick Larsen during visit to learn about collaborative work of the MRC and NWSI
 - Hosted two community meetings at the Anacortes Library
 - Provided updates to the City Council
 - Provided regular updates during monthly Parks and Rec meetings that were open to the public
 - Created a [Project Website](#) . A QR code linked to the website was created for outreach materials, social media, and interpretive signage
 - Created a project page on the Skagit MRC website. It includes links to the City's Project Website/StoryMap, video, interpretive signage, and other project partners/stakeholders websites
 - Installed 2 out of 3 interpretive signs along the Tommy Thompson Trail near the trestle. The project's first interpretive sign provides some history of the trestle, a brief overview of the project, and partners involved. The second sign is focused on the environmental impacts of the trestle and why it needs to be replaced. The third sign is currently under production and will include potential trail replacement design.
 - Two short videos: The [first video](#) has been completed and posted online. Second video is underway.
 - The preliminary conceptual design elements have been completed including: Geotech report and an engineered sketch of a portion of the trail replacement design.
 - The City plans to present the conceptual design to the City Council later this month.
 - The Final Report has been completed and submitted.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and new "Lone Tree Point" (Steven Olsen – Lead).
 - The June – September Kelp Season 2024 has wrapped up.
 - Kelp monitoring will start up again in June.
 - Jeff Whitty, NWSC Staff, will be hosting an MRC Kelp Kayak Monitoring 2024 Data Review Meeting on January 30th at 2pm via Zoom.
 - Skagit Kelp Kayak Team Leads (Lynne Wenberg-Davidson and Steve Olson) are scheduled to present to the upcoming 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training on April 1 to recruit new experienced kayakers as possible.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**
 - Monthly beach seining will continue at Bowman Bay through December 2025.
 - Jason Morgan has provided the upcoming seining schedule for January – June so far.
 - The last beach seining was held Monday, December 2nd. Caught 7 fish: surf smelt, staghorn sculpin, three spine stickleback. 4 volunteers contributed 7 volunteer hours.
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**
 - Nothing happening right now.
 - Funding is in place for NWSF to continue in the 2025 growing season (approx. May – October)

- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
Confluence Environmental has been contracted to develop a web-based interactive assessment tool for the Skagit MRC to identify high priority shoreline focus areas and future restoration projects. Funding ends 12/31/24.
 - The Shoreline Needs Assessment project with Confluence Environmental completed on December 31, 2024.
 - Confluence Deliverables completed and provided to MRC:
 - Geospatial Database is complete and developed inside the DOE Portal for displaying Skagit Shoreline-specific shoreline datasets, existing projects and visual prioritization of high value areas to consider for restoration or protection.
 - Skagit Nearshore Inventory, a comprehensive list of existing geospatial datasets from authoritative sources was completed, to include 165 total datasets of which 25 were utilized in the prioritization assessment.
 - Analytical Prioritization Framework is complete and provides the foundation for identifying relative values of ecological function and restoration potential, including target high priority focus areas.
 - Proposed High Priority Shoreline Restoration Projects is complete and includes 5 potential high priority restoration and protection projects for Skagit MRC or others to consider in the future. Summary recommendations are (details in the report):
 - Crandall Spit and March Point: 1) riparian planting around shore side of March Point Road; 2) Engagement with oil spill planning efforts; 3) Support strategic reduction of nearshore structures; 4) Green crab monitoring; 5) Coordination with FBAR and Conservation Landowners to improve conservation.
 - Samish Island and Outer Samish Bay: 1) Coordination and education of shoreline landowners regarding importance of nearshore habitats (shore friendly development); 2) Evaluate Sea level rise scenarios and impacts to habitats and structures; 3) Coordinate with landowners of undeveloped shoreline for conservation; 4) Potential consolidation or removal of multiple private boat ramps
 - Gibraltar/Campbell Creek Mouth: 1) Evaluate fish passage status of Deception Road Culvert; 2) Evaluate non-natal habitat use of Campbell Creek by juvenile salmon; 3) Address potential water quality issues; 4) Coordinate and education shoreline landowners regarding importance of nearshore habitats (shore friendly development).
 - Kiket Bay to Snee Oosh Point: 1) Partnership with Swinomish to identify restoration opportunities (Tombolo beach, clam gardening); 2) Support restoration and protection of Three Tree Point vicinity; 3) Support restoration and protection near Snee Oosh Point
 - Cranberry Lake Creek Mouth Vicinity: 1) Coordinate with COA and WSDOT to evaluate potential culvert or stream channel restoration; 2-3) Map / monitor eelgrass habitat and nearshore fish movement; 4) Engage La Merced Maritime to identify restoration opportunities
 - Interactive, web-based geospatial shoreline assessment tool The NEAP (Nearshore Assessment and Priorities) Tool was developed and completed inside the DOE Portal.
 - Two Story Maps have been completed in the DOE Portal:
 - Native Oyster Restoration
 - Skagit's NEAP Tool
 - Additional Confluence deliverable: Shoreline Needs Assessment_Technical Report detailing: objectives, approach, input data, prioritization methods and processes, framework results, proposed high priority projects, and references; also Appendices containing the Prioritization Criteria and Data Dictionary
 - **Next steps:**
 - Coordination and development of the Assessment Tool will go into the DOE Portal to interface with NWSC's SoundIQ by Suzanne. We will have links to apply to our MRC website.

- Tracy and Lynne have DOE SAW Accounts and access to the NEAP Tool and story maps are learning how best to provide appropriate functionality based on user type (ie, MRC, Environmental Groups for project development vs. Public for education and awareness).
- Developing communication plan for public roll-out and use – current plan is to use the NEAP Tool Story Map.
- For 2025: Plan to submit a follow-on proposal for unused funds to Skagit MRC in January for consideration (\$5-10K, depending on availability) to improve the tool. As a beta project, there are several updates that would be invaluable for improved functionality and communication to user communities.
- **Big thank you and acknowledgement to the Advisory Team:**
 - Suzanne Shull, NWSC GIS
 - Paul Dinnel
 - Pete Haase
 - Lisa Kaufman, NWSF
 - Andrea McBride, SWC
 - Rick Haley
 - Denby Lloyd

2024 OTGP Grant Amendment: *Tracy*

- The MRC discussed and approved the following project proposals by consensus for the remaining \$31,500 funds under year 2 (Jan 1 – Dec 31, 2025) of the OTGP-2024 grant agreement amendment:
 - Forage Fish Monitoring (\$9,700): Pete Haase, MRC Project Lead. A Sub-Award Agreement with The Salish Sea School will be needed once the grant amendment gets signed.
 - NEAP Tool Improvements (\$10,000): Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, MRC Project Lead. As a beta project, there are several updates that would be invaluable for improved functionality and communication to user communities. A contract amendment with Confluence will be needed once the grant amendment gets signed.
 - Project Administration and Management (\$11,800): The remaining \$11,800 balance will be allocated to Project Administration and Management to cover staff time for the administration of additional projects, contracts, and deliverables.

2025-2027 Project Wish List: *Tracy/All*

- The NWSC is requesting a draft list of projects that the MRC anticipates proposing for the next two-year cycle - Due by February 13.
- This is just a draft list that doesn't require a detailed description or budget. This list also does not obligate the MRC to submit them as a project proposal once the RFP is issued in March.
- The RFP will include two grant funding sources with different funding timelines:
 - EPA/PSP and Washington State (estimated \$124k/yr): Year 1= October 1, 2025 – September 31, 2026. Year 2= October 1, 2026 – September 31, 2027
 - NOAA (estimated \$67,500/yr): Year 1= January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026. Year 2= January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2027
- The following project list is currently being considered by the MRC. It will be reviewed, modified if needed, and approved by consensus at the February 13 MRC meeting:
 - Ongoing projects to potentially continue with the new funding 2025-2027
 - Fidalgo Bay Day (***Needs Skagit MRC Project Lead***)
 - Kids on the Beach (***Needs Skagit MRC Project Lead***)
 - Pinto Abalone Restoration (*Skagit MRC Project Lead, Paul Dinnel*)
 - Salish Sea Stewards (*Skagit MRC Project Lead, Darla Gay Smith*)
 - Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance (*Skagit MRC Project Lead, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*)
 - Forage Fish Monitoring (*Skagit MRC Project Lead, Pete Haase*)
 - School Rain Gardens (*Skagit MRC Project Lead, Elizabeth Drozda*)

- Potential new projects for new funding 2025-2027
 - European Green Crab Outreach (*Skagit MRC Project Lead, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*)
 - Collaborative Derelict Crab Pot Survey/Removal in Skagit Bay with Island and Jefferson MRCs. (*Skagit MRC Project Lead, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*)
 - Gibraltar/Campbell Lake Creek Mouth -Confluence project recommendation (*Skagit MRC Project Lead, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*)

MRC Operations Report: Tracy

- MRC Vice-Chair appointment- Pete volunteered to take Lynne’s place as the new MRC Vice Chair if nobody else is interested. The Committee decided to postpone the vote until the February MRC meeting when more MRC members can attend.
- MRC Executive Committee- Will consist of MRC Staff, MRC Chair, and MRC Vice-Chair and others as needed. The overall goal is to act as a small “steering team” to improve and organize MRC member activities and aid committee decision-making to reduce MRC operations and member workloads. Some of the priority tasks could include:
 - MRC Project Planning Support including reviewing and updating the project review, prioritization and approval process and reviewing Draft RFPs before submitting to MRC and NWSC for approval.
 - MRC Membership Recruitment and Onboarding Strategy
 - MRC 5-Year Strategic Plan Update
 - Engagement Plan/Strategy with Elected Officials
 - Adopt and Implement Land Acknowledgement - NW Straits Commission’s Land Acknowledgement statement was developed and approved in collaboration with multiple tribal partners within the NW Straits region. However, it does not currently list the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe and Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe in Skagit County because they have yet to approve of the NWSC’s Land Acknowledgement statement. The Commission plans to try reaching out again.
 - Skagit MRC members agreed it is important not to hold off any longer on adopting a Land Acknowledgement statement. The Committee considered adopting the NWSC’s Land Acknowledgement statement and leave off the list of specific tribal partners so that its more generic and doesn’t exclude any tribes. However, after a lot of discussion, the Committee decided it would be best to modify the NWSC’s Land Acknowledgement to be more specific and authentic to Skagit by only listing Skagit MRC’s tribal partners, the Samish Indian Nation and the Swinomish Indian Community. The Land Acknowledgement statement can always be modified again later.
 - Emma Kortuem (Samish Indian Nation tribal member) offered to review Skagit MRC’s Land Acknowledgement statement and provide feedback prior to the next MRC meeting.
- 2025 MRC Annual Work Plan- The Work Plan has been drafted but will need to be modified to include project planning info and timeframe. The Plan will be shared with the MRC for review and approval, hopefully in February.

Northwest Straits Initiative Definition and Defining Partnerships: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- NWSI Retreat: One theme that emerged from the retreat was confusion about the NWS Initiative structure. Historical documents, such as the NWSI founding legislation and reauthorization bills, were reviewed to understand what the NWSI structure was intended to be. It distinguishes the NWS Commission and MRCs as the organizational structure of the NWS Initiative.
- Proposed Definition: The Northwest Straits Initiative is a community-led collaboration dedicated to protecting and restoring the marine environment of northwest Washington. It is composed of the NW Straits Commission and seven locally based Marine Resources Committees. Together they identify and address priority NW Straits marine conservation issues.
- Partnerships: Although the NWSI structure/proposed definition does not reference the NWS Foundation, it does not impact the ability of the NWS Foundation and MRCs to continue existing project partnerships.

- Next Steps: The NWS Commission will be discussing and potentially voting on the proposed definition at its January 31 meeting in Coupeville. More conversations are needed to fully understand how communications and branding would need to change to accommodate the definition.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: *All*

- No announcements.

*The meeting adjourned at 11:18am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams, **February 13, 2025.***



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **February 13, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Matt Castle, Tracy Alker, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Elizabeth Drozda, Darla Gay Smith, Carolyn Moulton, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate)
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Caitlyn Blair (NWSC), Dana Oster (NWSC), Don Hunger (NWSF), Jenn Johnson (SCPW)

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

Approval of Minutes: January 9, 2025, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: NA

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

Last NWSC meeting occurred **January 31, 2025**, 10am-3pm, held in person at the Coupeville Library. Highlights shared with MRC via email.

- Nan McKay - received special recognition for her contributions as a gubernatorial appointee to the NWS Commission for 11 years.
- Science Advisory Committee Workshop Series - is being planned for October 2025.
- Norms for Courageous Conversations - solutions for tackling difficult conversations adopted for Commission meetings and will be shared with the MRCs.
- NWS Initiative Definition - proposed at the September 2024 retreat was discussed. Additional information from the NWS Foundation needed for further the discussion before decision can be made.
- Salish Sea Institute Speaker Series- "Commercial Shipping: Impacts and Risks in the Salish Sea". The event recording is [available online](#).
- 2025 NWS Conference- Nov 7 & 8 at Maple Hall in La Conner. **Seeking Skagit MRC representative to join the planning committee to help craft the agenda and build out sessions.** There will be 4 or 5 virtual meetings (1-1.5 hours) March/April through Sept/October. Contact Caitlyn for more information.
- Next NWSC meeting- **February 28**, 10am-12pm. Held virtually via Zoom.

Skagit MRC Vice-Chair Election: All

The Committee voted by unanimously by consensus to appoint Pete Haase as the new Skagit MRC Vice-Chair.

MRC Executive Committee Proposal: Lynne

- The recommendation to establish an MRC Executive Committee was brought forward by Lynne and Tracy.
- The Executive Committee would consist of MRC Staff, MRC Chair, and MRC Vice-Chair and others if interested or as needed.
- The overall goal of the Executive Committee is to act as a small "steering team" to organize and improve MRC administration/operations and project planning processes to help reduce MRC member and staff workloads. Some of the priority tasks could include:
 - MRC Project Planning Support including reviewing and updating the project review, prioritization and approval process and reviewing Draft RFPs before submitting to MRC and NWSC for approval.

- MRC Membership Recruitment and Onboarding Strategy.
- MRC 5-Year Strategic Plan Update.
- Education/Outreach.
- Engagement Plan/Strategy with Elected Officials.
- Draft a Land Acknowledgement statement.
- Questions raised about what authority the Executive Committee would have. Need more clarification. Will develop a more formalized statement before adopting the Executive Committee's Role and Responsibilities which would need to be approved by the whole MRC

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith via Email update:
 - The 2025 Training Program will commence February 18 – April 29, 2025. Classes will be held Tuesdays 1-5pm at the Padilla Bay Reserve.
 - Registration & program information is posted on the SMRC website.
 - Registration deadline was January 31 but has been extended until the class is filled. As of February 12, 24 applicants are registered. The class limit is 26 applicants.
 - The Stewards Advisory Committee met on January 17, 2025. We were pleased to welcome back to the Advisory Committee past Chairman & longtime member & Rachel Best. The Committee welcomes her historical insights & input.
 - Discussed volunteer hour reporting in Volgistics and potential methods for its use to increase SSS volunteer hours and a strategy for engaging non-active SSS.
 - Padilla Bay staff also worked on some of the SSS key deliverables including the Mentoring Plan, Volunteer Recognition Plan, and Social Media Plan.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
 - Surveys take around 1.5 -2 hours to complete.
 - February 2025 forage fish survey schedule:
 - Feb 14- Bowman Bay at 10am
 - Feb 14- Clayton Beach?
 - Feb 15- Fidalgo Bay East at noon
 - Feb 15- Fidalgo Bay West at noon
 - Feb 26- Guemes Channel at 10am
 - Feb 26- Similk Bay at 10am
 - Lots of good participation from volunteers helping forage fish surveys.
 - Sometimes receive calls from someone from consulting firms needing FF monitoring hours to keep their certification active or someone interested in seeing what its like to do a FF survey.
 - Will be moving to the WDFW online i-form system to input field data on an i-pad tablet while in the field. NWSC has barcode tags for this. Change can be hard for some of the volunteers that are used to doing it a certain way.
 - Sub-Award Agreement with The Salish Sea School for professional forage fish monitoring coordination and administration has been drafted and will be fully executed in the next couple of months.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - 2025 KOTB program is at full capacity with five schools and 325 students signed up. Will need volunteers to help with field days:
 - **April 23:** Padilla Bay Field Day with 45 students from Concrete High School -10th and 11th grades from two classes.
 - **May 6-8:** Field Days with 86 students from Sedro Woolley Evergreen Middle School - 3 classes of 6th graders.
 - **May 21:** Padilla Bay Field Day with 42 students from Allen Elementary 4th & 5th grades (English is a second language for majority of students- engaged interpreters).

- Fall program is currently being developed: Concrete and Mount Vernon High Schools signed up to participate.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda via email update:
 - The La Conner School Rain Garden is looking great!
 - Westar, a sign company in La Conner is donating the sign but cannot create a custom illustration or install the sign. Elizabeth shared the draft design with the MRC for feedback.
 - MRC comments on the sign design:
 - Does Westar want to include their logo?
 - Could the text for all of the sign match the blue of the top text?
 - Could the images chosen be "sharper" or use "punchier" colors (to show up in gray rainy weather better)?
 - Could there be a QR code (perhaps on a different sign)? Need to determine target audience and landing site for this idea.
 - Could the images include more native plants and wildlife?
 - Smaller plant identification labels will also be created to identify native plants and culturally significant plants with consultation from the Swinomish.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Tracy Alker:
 - 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Pete distributed 30 Save the Date cards at the Storming the Sound Conference. North Cascades Institute reached out about participating
 - Anna Thompson, the Education and Outreach Specialist for the Public Works Natural Resources Division created online registration forms for volunteers and for organizations to sign up to participate. Hoping it will help reduce some of the work. Will be contacting volunteers and organizations soon.
 - The County will be interviewing interns next week. The new intern will help support FBD. We will schedule a planning meeting as soon as the new intern is on board.
 - Depending on the number of volunteers that sign up, we might need to scale back the event (e.g. no chowders, popcorn, multiple craft activities, etc. It's been difficult to get volunteers to sign up to help with those activities.
 - Suggestions from MRC members:
 - Darla plans to provide information to recruit volunteers from new 2025 SSS class during training.
 - Recommend doing a hard recruit for volunteers towards the end of the Salish Sea Stewards training.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel update:
 - Paul reviewed WDFW's Draft 5-year status report for Pinto Abalone.
 - Recommendation is to keep Pinto abalone on the Endangered Species list.
 - Total number of abalone at index sites increased from 12 abalone in 2017 to 13 abalone in 2024. For the first time in decades, abalone numbers have increased instead of decreased!
 - Encouraging signs of some reproduction/juvenile recruitment occurring in the wild!
 - Hatchery work continues as usual to produce the next batch of juvenile abalone for out planting this winter/spring
 - Dive season began this week, with loads of enthusiasm and collaboration. Three boats and at least 13 divers on the water doing abalone surveys.
 - Eileen and Josh with PSRF on board with the Samish team picking up where we left off last year in getting their divers trained in finding existing outplant sites, setting them up for survey and conducting the monitoring.
 - Surveyed sites at Burrows, Sinclair and Orcas with excellent, moderate and poor survival respectively. We also scouted with Samish and set up a new site on Burrows which they will seed for the first time later this spring.

- Josh reported excellent collaboration with the Samish as they seem energized by the abalone restoration work, and they have a good dive team and boat crew to get the work done effectively. MRC member Matt Castle went out with the crew to help get the work done.
 - They hope to find another spot on Burrows and an additional spot on Allan for new outplant sites. This could mean that Samish has as many as 5 outplant sites of their own in Skagit that PSRF will help seed and monitor moving forward.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration– Paul Dinnel update:
 - The next native oyster recruitment bag sampling will take place in May 2025.
 - The next bay-wide population survey is slated for 2028.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and new “Lone Tree Point” (Steven Olsen – Lead). Kelp monitoring will start up again in June.
 - The MRC Kelp Kayak-Based Monitoring Data Review - meeting held January 30. A recording of the session is [available online](#).
 - The Spring 2025 Kelp Kayaking Monitoring Workgroup is currently being organized by NWSC – Skagit will send representatives.
 - Skagit Kelp Kayak Team Leads (Lynne Wenberg-Davidson and Steve Olson and Brad) are scheduled to present to the upcoming 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training on April 1 to recruit new experienced kayakers as possible.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**
 - Monthly beach seining will continue at Bowman Bay through December 2025.
 - Jason Morgan has provided the upcoming seining schedule for January – June so far.
 - The last beach seining was held January 15. Caught 9 fish: stary flounder, staghorn sculpin, English sole, bay pipefish, sharpnose sculpin. 9 volunteers contributed 15.25 volunteer hours.
 - No more seining planned for 2026. Not needed for another 5 years.
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**
 - Nothing happening right now.
 - Funding is in place for NWSF to continue in the 2025 growing season (approx. May – October)
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
Background: A Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment was funded for Jan 2024-Dec 2024 to leverage previous shoreline restoration and protection studies, projects and research and update with new and emerging research to produce: Skagit Geodatabase with interactive web-based tools compatible with SoundIQ (a new SoundIQ is in the works); Skagit Nearshore Inventory Resource List; List of Prioritized Skagit Focus Areas and a Top Priority List of Skagit MRC Projects and recommended action plans.

Updates: Skagit Co has extended the contract with Confluence Environmental through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K) to:

- Make improvements for simplified user functionality to the Nearshore Assessment and Prioritization tool while protecting sensitive landowner data.
- Improve MRC useability and access to parcel-level data within the tool. There is a lot of data. Lynne would like to demonstrate the tool at a future MRC meeting to get feedback on what info would be good for public use and how to make it more user-friendly
- Build out details of high potential restoration projects proposed for the MRC.
- Conduct training and tutorials for improved user experience in using the tool.
- Provide editorial edits to text, photos and links to the two previously completed Story Maps as directed by MRC.

- Once Confluence modifications are complete, Lynne will work with Suzanne Shull to pull the NEAP Tool with interactive functionality into SoundIQ for public education and awareness.

Working with Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger

Don presented the Northwest Straits Foundation's new **Project Funding Request** document and how to use it, and opportunities for working with the Foundation.

The Foundation serves two roles:

- Nonprofit fundraising partner that MRCs contact with a project funding request to help raise funds for project. It will take 6-12 months to secure funding for most projects. Some have taken 203 years to find funders.
- Nonprofit participating organization that MRCs contact with a collaboration opportunity to participate in an event, project, or activity.
- Core NWSF Programs:
 - Nearshore Restoration and Stewardship
 - Derelict Gear Removal
 - Shore Friendly Landowner Outreach
 - Citizen Science Monitoring
 - Scholarships

To discuss general project ideas or funding requests, contact Don Hunger: don@nwstraitsfoundation.org, 360-739-9909

2025-2027 Project Wish List: Tracy /All

- The MRC's draft list of projects proposed for the next two-year funding cycle is now due!
- March 14th- Request for Proposals issued for three funding sources with different timelines. MRC Project Leads responsible for preparing proposals and cost estimates:
 - EPA/PSP and WA (\$124k/yr) – funding not secured
 - Year 1= October 1, 2025 – September 31, 2026.
 - Year 2= October 1, 2026 – September 31, 2027
 - NOAA (\$67,500/yr)- funding secured
 - Year 1= January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026.
 - Year 2= January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2027
- February 13th- The MRC voted by consensus to approve the following list of proposed projects:
 - Ongoing projects:
 - Fidalgo Bay Day (***Project Lead TBD***)
 - Kids on the Beach (***Project Lead TBD***)
 - Pinto Abalone Restoration (*Paul Dinnel*)
 - Salish Sea Stewards (*Darla Gay Smith*)
 - Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance (*Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*)
 - Forage Fish Monitoring (*Pete Haase*)
 - School Rain Gardens (*Elizabeth Drozda*)
 - Potential new projects:
 - European Green Crab Outreach (*Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*)
 - Collaborative Derelict Crab Pot Survey/Removal in Skagit Bay with Island and Jefferson MRCs. (*Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*)
 - Gibraltar/Campbell Lake Creek Mouth -Confluence project recommendation (*Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*)
 - Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Intertidal Monitoring (*Pete Haase*)
 - Clayton Beach Interpretive Signage (***Project Lead TBD***)
 - Bowman Bay Interpretive Signage Relocation (***Project Lead TBD***)
 - March Point Beach Nourishment (*Pete Haase*)
- March 6- MRC Project Leads will provide cost estimates to Tracy before the next MRC meeting.
- March-April- Project Proposal Consultations with NWSC

- May 29- Grant Applications Due
- Oct 1- EPA/PSP/WA Funding starts

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy for Puget Sound: Whatcom, San Juan, Snohomish, and Island LIOs and their respective MRCs have scheduled a lunch hour meeting to work on developing the Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy for Puget Sound. The leads are interested in building on existing kelp and eelgrass plans and what data or information the different geographies may be able to provide as they develop the implementation strategy for Puget Sound. Since Skagit doesn't have an LIO, they've invited Skagit MRC and others in Skagit to participate in this meeting. The meeting will be virtual and will be held April 2, 11:30-1:00pm.
- Shore Friendly Contractor Workshop: March 21, 2025, at the WECU Education Center in Bellingham, hosted by the Northwest Straits Foundation in partnership with Skagit and Whatcom MRCs. This workshop is designed specifically for contractors that work on marine shorelines; arborists, landscape professionals, excavation services etc. John Bornsworth of Peninsula Environmental Group as our lead presenter.
- A Showcase of Graduate Research: Salish Sea Conservation & Stewardship: March 29, 1:00-3:30pm, Padilla Bay Research Center. The Northwest Straits Foundation invites you to an exciting showcase of graduate research supporting Salish Sea conservation and stewardship. **More Information** Event is free and open to the public; **Register Here**.
- Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Stakeholder Meeting: January 29th at the Fidalgo Bay Resort (1-3pm). Birdie Davenport, DNR is retiring. Meeting well attended. Provided an update on the management of the Aquatic Reserve. Shared aquatic reserve monitoring results and upcoming projects including European Green Crab monitoring. Jonn Lunsford gave a presentation on the Tommy Thompson Trestle Removal and Replacement project. Final Report will be presented to the City Council soon.

*The meeting adjourned at 11:15am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams, **March 13, 2025.***



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **March 13, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Matt Castle, Tracy Alker, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Elizabeth Drozda, Darla Gay Smith, Carolyn Moulton, Catey Ritchie
 - *MRC Members Absent:* Kevin Anderson
- **Others in Attendance:** Sasha Horst (NWSC), Jeff Whitey (NWSC), Jenn Johnson (SCPW), Rebecca Brown (DNR), Bree Turner (DNR), Caitlyn Blair (NWSC), Jay Lind (Citizen- former MRC member), Dana Oster (NWSC)

Call to Order and Introductions: Lynne called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: February 13, 2025, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: NA

Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy: Bree Turner, HSIL/DNR

The Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead's (HSIL) [Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy](#) is co-managed by WDFW and DNR and combines the kelp and eelgrass recovery plans to help strengthen and accelerate the recovery efforts. It will also be used to help inform the [update to the Puget Sound Action Agenda](#) topic focused on kelp and eelgrass. The Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy is currently under development and is being presented to all the MRCs for feedback to ensure that local kelp and eelgrass priorities are being reflected.

- Draft Strategy Themes:
 1. Research and Monitoring
 - 3 focus areas: stressor response, distribution trends, information sharing
 2. Protection
 - Policy/regulatory levers, expand protected areas
 3. Restoration
 - Nearshore habitat connectivity/ holistic approach, community resilience
 4. Education and Outreach
 - Boater awareness, recreational crabber outreach, recreational kelp harvesting, fostering stewardship
- Discussion Questions:
 1. What are major opportunities and challenges to kelp and eelgrass conservation/recovery in Skagit County. What can DNR do to help or direct funding towards?
 2. What are ways that we can align the Implementation Strategy with Skagit MRC kelp and eelgrass conservation and recovery priorities?
 - MRC Comments:
 - Bull kelp can be monitored at the surface by volunteer with kayaks. How is the understory kelp growing below the surface being monitored, if at all? In some areas it can be observed at low tide, but not always easy to get to.
 - DNR monitors eelgrass with towed-underwater videography.
 - UW uses SCUBA to monitor kelp.
 - REEF Check- volunteer divers monitor a variety of marine species and habitats.
 - Are there concerns about harvesting kelp since it is an annual?

- Important to educate the recreational kelp harvesters about where the reproductive components of the fronds are located to make sure they don't remove that part of the kelp out of the system. Overharvesting could cause kelp populations to lose genetic resilience.
- PBNERR is looking into potentially harvesting eelgrass seeds to donate for eelgrass restoration work across the region. Also looking into what it might mean in terms of the larger genetic pool impacts.
 - HSIL has funding to pilot different restoration techniques including PBNERR's work.
- Could there be an opportunity to do joint outreach messaging to recreational crabbers and boaters to address concerns about potential impacts of crab pots and anchors on eelgrass beds? Combine with volunteer no anchor zones messaging? Derelict crab pot messaging? Derelict Vessels?
 - HSIL can help with messaging
 - Could put eelgrass bed locations on nautical charts?
 - Or create an app to show eelgrass bed locations?
- Timeline: Content Development Phase now through June 2025. Review, Revise, and Finalize Phase - July-December 2025.
- Get Involved:
 1. April 2 – North Sound LIO-MRC meeting (virtual)- focused on kelp and eelgrass recovery strategies (MRC welcome to attend)
 2. April 25 – Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy Workshop (MRC welcome to attend)
 3. [Sign up for the email list](#)
 4. [Submit Comments](#)
 5. Contact Bree Turner: Bree.Turner@dnr.wa.gov, (360) 870-7158.

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

Last NWSC meeting occurred **February 28, 2025**, 10am-12pm, held virtually via Zoom. Highlights shared with MRC via email.

- [Knowledge Base](#): NWSC's diversity, equity and inclusion resources for building engagement and community partnerships for MRCs. If you have/find resources you think would be beneficial to add, or have questions please contact Allie Simpson (simpson@nwstraits.org) or Caitlyn Blair (blair@nwstraits.org).
- [Ediz Hook Revegetation Planting Event \(March 6th\)](#): hosted by the Clallam MRC in partnership with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Clallam Conservation District and with the help of approximately 50 local elementary students.
- [ROV Crab Pot Removal Demo \(March 11\)](#): with Oceanbotics ROV (<https://oceanbotics.com/>) at Cornet Bay hosted by the Skagit MRC in collaboration with Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Island MRC, Jefferson MRC and NWSF as they explore a potential derelict crab pot removal project in Skagit Bay. Found 5 derelict crab pots within 20 feet of the dock during the demonstration.
- [NWSF Rose Foundation Mitigation Funds](#): for three shovel ready projects (\$40k/project) in Skagit County
- [NWSC Retreat \(April 3-4\)](#): at Padilla Bay. Commissioners, Commission staff, and MRC Staff are invited.
- [The Great Islands Cleanup \(April 12 and April 26\)](#): on Lopez Island and on Orcas, San Juan, and Shaw islands. For more information, please see the Plastic Free Salish Sea website.
- [Puget Sound Day on the Hill \(April 29-May 2, 2025\)](#): NWSI reauthorization will remain one of the key priorities. More information as the event is planned can be found at <https://psdoth.org/>.
- [Next NWSC meeting \(April 25\)](#): 10am-12pm. Held virtually via Zoom.

Project Status & Discussion

- [Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith](#):

- The 2025 Training Program commenced on February 18 and will continue through April 29, 2025. Classes held Tuesdays 1-5pm at the Padilla Bay Reserve.
- [2025 Training schedule](#) and curriculum posted on the SMRC website.
- 24 registered participants.
- March topics included: Deception Pass State Park- tide pools/beach naturalists, stormwater and water quality monitoring, European Green Crabs, and marine birds and mammals.
- The Stewards Advisory Committee met on February 20, 2025. Discussed future training topics and presenters, and ideas to engage non-active Salish Sea Steward volunteers. The next AC meeting will take place March 20th.
- Darla will be stepping down as the MRC Project Lead starting July 1, 2025.
- Formed an MRC SSS subcommittee (MRC members participating on the SSS AC) to develop the 2025-2027 project proposal until a new Project Lead is appointed.
- The Volunteer Coordination tasks will not likely be included in the 2025-2027 project proposal.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
 - Surveys take around 1.5 -2 hours to complete.
 - March 2025 forage fish survey schedule:
 - March 14- Fidalgo Bay East at 10:30am
 - March 14- Fidalgo Bay West at 10:30am
 - March 21- Bowman Bay at 10am
 - March 29- Guemes Channel at 10am
 - March 29- Similk Bay at 10am
 - It is a quiet time for forage fish spawning in this area. But the survival rate is also higher this time of year with the cooler weather.
 - It is anticipated the Sub-Award Agreement with The Salish Sea School Forage Fish Monitoring Coordination will be fully executed soon.
 - QAPP Addendum with Skagit Sites has been signed.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - April 22-23: Field Days with 45 students from Concrete High School -10th and 11th grades from two classes will be held at Bay View State Park and Padilla Bay Interpretive Center from 9am-1:30pm. A call for volunteers has been sent out. County Commissioners will be invited to attend. MRC members (Pete Haase, Darla Gay Smith, and Carolyn Moulton) will brief the Commissioners at the event and lead them through the process.
 - May 6-8: Field Days with 86 students from Sedro Woolley Evergreen Middle School - 3 classes of 6th graders.
 - May 21: Padilla Bay Field Day with 42 students from Allen Elementary 4th & 5th grades (English is a second language for majority of students- engaged interpreters).
 - Fall program is currently being developed: Concrete and Mount Vernon High Schools signed up to participate.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda:
 - The La Conner School Rain Garden is looking great!
 - Drafted the School Rain Garden curriculum for the 4th & 5th grade science class that includes learning objectives, lessons and a set of hands-on activities and resources as a starting point. The curriculum is currently being reviewed by the science teacher.
 - Looking into the possibility of purchasing a contoured watershed model as an educational tool for classroom rain garden curriculum.
 - Shared MRC comments about the rain garden interpretive sign with Westar. Found some images that could potentially work. Waiting for feedback from Westar. Hope to install before the end of the school year.
 - Elizabeth reached out to Don Hunger with the NWSF about getting some intern help with rain garden stewardship. NWSF is currently in the process of applying for grant funding for shoreline stewardship

and seasonal field techs and will add La Conner and Mt. Erie School Rain Gardens to their work plans if successful. In the meantime, NWSF staff will help with weeding, pruning, mulching this spring if able.

- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Created online registration forms for volunteers and for organizations and started reaching out to past participating volunteers and organizations about participating in this year’s event.
 - Matt confirmed he will coordinate the beach seining demo.
 - Paul confirmed he will coordinate shellfish tasting.
 - The NW Straits Foundation will help coordinate the chowders.
 - Organizational outreach booth space is limited, so it will be first come first serve to register. We reached full capacity last year.
 - The Friends of the Salish Sea cannot support more than 35 Passport Stations. Outreach booths will be encouraged to share a passport station.
 - The County just hired a new intern starting March 17 who will be helping with Fidalgo Bay Day. Haley Seston has a lot of great experience with the Peace Corps including some outreach.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Paul reviewed WDFW’s Draft 5-year status report for Pinto Abalone.
 - Recommendation is to keep Pinto abalone on the Endangered Species list.
 - Total number of abalone at WDFW index sites (not seeded sites) across the region increased from 12 abalone in 2017 to 13 abalone in 2024. For the first time in decades, abalone numbers have increased instead of decreased!
 - Encouraging signs of some reproduction/juvenile recruitment occurring in the wild!
 - Field work continues with Puget Sound Restoration Fund and the Samish Indian Nation including monitoring and seeding restoration plots.
 - In Skagit County there are around 11 sites that have been seeded and monitored.
 - 3 new sites are being explored for seeding additional juvenile abalone in April.
 - The Samish Indian will be responsible for 3 pinto abalone restoration sites in Skagit County waters.
 - The [2024 Pinto Abalone Report](#) will be made available on the MRC website after the meeting.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration– Paul Dinnel via email update:
 - The next native oyster recruitment bag sampling will take place in May 2025.
 - The next bay-wide population survey is slated for 2028.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:

Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and new “Lone Tree Point” (Steven Olsen – Lead).

 - Kelp monitoring will start up again in June.
 - The 2025 kelp kayak survey season will start around April.
 - Skagit Kelp Kayak Team Leads Steven, Brad and Lynne are scheduled to present at the upcoming 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training on April 1 to share information about the Bull Kelp Surveys and hopefully recruit new experienced kayakers as possible.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
 - Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:
 - Monthly beach seining will continue at Bowman Bay through December 2025.
 - This is the last beach seining effort for the foreseeable future at any of the Skagit MRC shoreline restoration sites.
 - Jason Morgan has provided the upcoming seining schedule for January – June so far.
 - Beach seining statistics were provided for February 14. Caught 27 fish total: stary flounder (1), staghorn sculpin (6), English sole (16), sharpnose sculpin (3), and juvenile flatfish (1). 7 volunteers contributed 12.5 volunteer hours.
 - Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:

- Nothing happening right now.
- Funding is in place for NWSF to continue in the 2025 growing season (approx. May – October)
- Miscellaneous Bowman Bay Updates (non-MRC projects):
 - Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group has been collecting beach seining data from the NWSF for the Bowman Bay Wetland Reconnection Feasibility study. They recently issued a [Request for Proposals](#) for the study on their website. They will be invited to provide an update at a future MRC meeting.
 - The Parks Department plans to remove the failing fishing pier as soon as they can get enough funds to do so.
 - The Parks Department plans to remove the boat launch that has also been eroding away and is becoming unsafe and replace it with a gravel access to the water for kayaks.
 - The shoreline around the interpretive signage is also eroding away. The sign will eventually need to be removed or moved to a different location which would require a cultural study.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
 The contract with Confluence Environmental has been through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K) to:
 - Make improvements for simplified user functionality to the Nearshore Assessment and Prioritization tool while protecting sensitive landowner data.
 - Improve MRC useability and access to parcel-level data within the tool.
 - Build out details of high potential restoration projects proposed for the MRC.
 - Conduct training and tutorials for improved user experience in using the tool.
 - Provide editorial edits to text, photos and links to the two previously completed Story Maps as directed by MRC.
- A meeting with Confluence is scheduled for March 18 to kick off these tasks.
- Once Confluence modifications are complete, Lynne will work with Suzanne Shull to pull the NEAP Tool with interactive functionality into SoundIQ for public education and awareness.

MRC Member Functions & Responsibilities – Proposed Updates: Tracy

- MRC Member Functions & Responsibilities Document- originally adopted by Skagit MRC- January 8, 2004
 - Proposed Updates:
 - **Project Lead:** Provides a broad overview of project lead responsibilities. Additional bullets and language were proposed at the last NWSC/MRC Staff meeting for additional clarification.
 - MRC members shared lots of questions and concerns about some of the project lead responsibilities listed since they might not pertain to all projects.
 - MRC members suggested creating a checklist format in addition to the broad overview to help narrow down project lead responsibilities related to different types of projects.
 - **Action Item: Vote tabled for future MRC meeting pending recommended changes.**
 - **Executive Committee (*Proposed New Addition):**
 - MRC Coordinator, Chair, and Vice Chair (others as needed or desired)
 - Identifies administrative tasks needing support and improvement
 - Proposes recommendations to the MRC for review and approval
 - Coordinates implementation of tasks approved by the MRC
 - Ensures adherence to stated NWSC, County and MRC guidelines
 - **Action Item: Tabled for future MRC Meeting.**

2025-2027 MRC Grant Project Proposals: Tracy (info shared in the pre-meeting packet)

- **Request for Proposals:** The NWSC recently issued the Request for Proposals (RFP) which was included in the Pre-meeting packet shared with the MRC. A few changes have been made from previous years. Please pay close attention to the following:
 - RFP Funding Criteria (pg 3-5)
 - Conflict of Interest Policy (See attached RFP, page 9).

- Funding Sources/Timelines:
 - EPA/PSP and Washington State (\$126k/yr): Year 1= October 1, 2025 – September 31, 2026. Year 2= October 1, 2026 – September 31, 2027. This funding source is not secured yet!
 - NOAA \$75k=for Year 1 (January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026). \$71k= Year 2 (January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2027). Only Year 1 of NOAA funding is secured.
- Project Spreadsheet with Cost Estimates: MRC Project Leads and subcommittees shared project cost estimates for the next 2-year funding cycle included in the spreadsheet. It is anticipated we will be over budget which means we will either have to modify projects to cut costs or go through the prioritization process to determine which projects go forward or find other sources of funding. It would be a good idea to have a backup plan for projects in case this funding falls through.
- Next Steps:
 - **Draft Project Proposals- Due April 2:** MRC Project Leads or MRC Subcommittees will be responsible for preparing the project proposals, estimated budgets, deliverables and timeline. We have a great team available to help develop project proposals and support MRC Project Leads.
 - **Project Proposal Review- April 3- April 10:** Project Proposals shared in pre-meeting packet for MRC members to review prior to April 10th MRC meeting.
 - **Project Proposal Discussion- April 10th MRC meeting:** This will be a good opportunity to ask questions and better refine proposals for ranking.
 - **Project Proposal Ranking and Prioritization- April 10 – May 1:**
 - **MRC Votes on Final Project Proposals and Budget for the Grant Application- May 8th MRC meeting**
 - **Final Grant Applications Due- May 29!**

Topics Tabled for Future MRC Meeting:

1. Skagit MRC's proposed Tribal Land Acknowledgment
2. MRC Member Functions & Responsibilities Document Revisions
3. 2025-2027 MRC Grant Project Proposals/Budget and Prioritization Process
4. MRC Membership Recruitment- Proposed 2-Pronged approach
5. MRC Project Consultations with NWSA Science Advisory Committee- If Skagit MRC wants to participate, we will need to collectively identify one project before **April 23rd**

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: (Shared in Pre-Meeting Packet)

- **Skagit MRC 2025 Annual Work Plan (see attached)**- Skagit MRC's 2025 Annual Work Plan has been updated (Thank you Project Leads!). Please review and let me know if I need to make any changes or additions. Please keep in mind, this is a working document and will likely need to be updated again as needed.
- **Call for Annual NWSI Conference Planning Committee Members:** The conference will be held **Nov 7-8** at Maple Hall in La Conner this year. It is important that Skagit MRC is involved in the planning process since we will be the host county. There will be 4-5 virtual meetings March-Oct with meetings held every other month. Each meeting would be about 1-1.5 hours. If you are working on a session, you may meet 1-2 times with your subcommittee. Members of the planning committee will be responsible for assisting with ideas for speaker, session flow, and crafting the agenda. Please let me know if you are interested!
- **Molt Search – Early Detection of Invasive European Green Crab - Train the Trainers Workshop (April 18)** at the Village Green Community Center in Kingston, 10am-3:30pm. For more information: [One-Page Molt Search Engagement Details 2025-01-06.pdf](#) or wsg.washington.edu/crabteam/moltsearch/
- **Move to designate bull kelp as Washington's 'State Marine Forest'** – Representative Greg Nance (23rd District) has introduced **House Bill 1631**, to recognize the importance of bull kelp.
- **Shore Friendly Contractor Workshop (March 21, 2025)**: at the WECU Education Center in Bellingham, hosted by the Northwest Straits Foundation in partnership with Skagit and Whatcom MRCs. John Bornsworth of Peninsula Environmental Group as our lead presenter.
- **Graduate Research Presentations: Salish Sea Conservation & Stewardship (March 29)**: 1:00-3:30pm, Padilla Bay Research Center, hosted by the NWSF. **More Information** Event is free and open to the public; **Register Here**

- **Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy for Puget Sound Meeting (April 2):** Whatcom, San Juan, Snohomish, and Island LIOs and MRCs (including Skagit MRC) meeting virtually from 11:30-1:00pm to develop the Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy for Puget Sound by building on existing kelp and eelgrass plans in the different geographies

*The meeting adjourned at 11:25am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams, **April 10, 2025.***



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **April 10, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Matt Castle, Tracy Alker, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Elizabeth Drozda, Darla Gay Smith, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate), Kevin Anderson
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Carolyn Moulton, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Sasha Horst (NWSC), Jenn Johnson (SCPW), Dale Fournier (MRC Applicant); Don Hunger (NWSF); Allison Work (Swinomish), Holli Watne (Skagit Watershed Council); Jay Lind (former MRC member); Jessica Owens (NWSC)

Call to Order and Introductions: Lynne called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: March 13, 2025, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments:

- Allison Work - the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's Environmental Protection Department is applying for a grant to implement the Swinomish Shorelines and Sensitive Areas Code and identify priority areas around the Reservation for protection and restoration as well as a research and monitoring tool for field staff. Asked for a letter of endorsement from the MRC. Grant application is Due -Monday, **April 14**.
 - **Action Item:** Elizabeth and Pete made a motion and MRC members voted unanimously by consensus to provide a letter of endorsement for the Swinomish to include in the grant application.
- Pete Haase- Thompson Trail Trestle Project Presentation by Hanson Professional Services- Monday, April 7 at 6pm at the City of Anacortes Council meeting. You can watch it at this link: [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com). The project and presentation were well received. The City Council did not take any action but plans to go forward to look for financing to continue the project.

Tribal Land Acknowledgement : Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- At the January 9, 2025 MRC meeting, the Committee decided to modify the NWSC's Land Acknowledgement to be more specific and authentic to Skagit by only listing Skagit MRC's tribal partners, the Samish Indian Nation and the Swinomish Indian Community. Tracy, Lynne, and Pete drafted the following statement that was shared and approved by Skagit MRC's tribal partners:
 - *"We acknowledge the lands we're on today are the ancestral and current homelands of Indigenous Nations who have stewarded them since time immemorial. We respect their sovereignty, support their Treaty rights, their right to self-determination, and we honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. The Samish Indian Nation, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, and other Coast Salish Tribes are invaluable partners in the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems."*
- Jude and Kevin- suggested adding another sentence to make it more substantive and reaffirm a pragmatic commitment to the tribal partners to give it more meaning.
 - **Action Item:** Jude will draft the addition to the Land Acknowledgment statement for MRC and tribal partner approval.

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

No NWSC meeting in March. No written highlights available.

- NWSC Retreat – (April 3-4) at Padilla Bay. Focused on updating the NWSI Strategic Plan facilitated by a consultant. First time putting this plan together in the new Initiative structure without the Northwest Straits Foundation. The Strategic Planning Committee hopes to wrap it up and roll it out soon.
- NWSI Annual Conference –(Nov 7-8) at Maple Hall in La Conner.
- Next NWSC meeting- (April 25): 10am-12pm. Held virtually via Zoom.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - The 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program commenced February 18, 2025 & runs 10 weeks through April 29, 2025, at Padilla Bay National Estuarian Research Reserve’s main training room.
 - The 24 Steward Trainees have 2 sessions remaining: Restoration & Monitoring and Communication & Graduation.
 - MRC members are invited to the 2025 Salish Sea Steward Graduation on Tuesday, April 29th at 4:00pm at PBNERR.
 - The 2025 Steward Trainee Class has been an exceptionally talented one, Skagit County may look forward to their volunteer input in over 60 different environmental organizations.
 - Thanks to Padilla Bay NERR for their vital role in the successful SSS Training over the last seven years.
 - After six years as the SSS Project Lead, Darla confirmed she will be stepping down from that role the end of June 2025, when the 2023-2025 SSS Training funding for that project ends so she can move on to other MRC projects.
 - SSS Advisory Committee member, Dale Fournier, has applied to become a new MRC member. If appointed, Dale will become the new MRC Project Lead for the 2025-2027 SSS Training Project as of July 2025.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - The Sub-Award Agreement with The Salish Sea School Forage Fish Monitoring Coordination has been fully executed. The Salish Sea School hired Catherine Houck to coordinate the forage fish surveys for the Skagit MRC.
 - After 13 years of leading the forage fish surveys, Pete officially handed the baton over to Catherine Houck. Pete will continue to be the MRC Project Lead for forage fish. The MRC Thanked Pete for taking the lead in forage fish conservation and presented him with a virtual Thank You card.



13 years and countless hours;
braving crazy weather conditions;
carrying carloads of equipment;
training numerous volunteers; educating
school groups and looky-loos; and all while
keeping a smile and sense of humor! We will
be forever grateful to Pete Haase, our very
own Surf Smelt Superhero!

Thank You!

Skagit Marine Resources Committee



- Pete gave a talk and demo on forage fish surveys for the Salish Sea Stewards class. Will likely get a few new volunteers from the 2025 Salish Sea Stewards class to help with forage fish surveys.

- Forage fish survey volunteer and Salish Sea Steward (class of 2025), Victor Garcia, was recently appointed by the Governor to represent one of the western Washington positions on the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission for a six-year term. The Commission oversees the fish and wildlife rules and regulations.
- Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue. Haven't seen too many live eggs in the samples but will likely pick up in May and June.
- Surveys take around 1.5 -2 hours to complete.
- April 2025 forage fish survey schedule:
 - April 16- Guemes Channel at 11am
 - April 16- Similk Bay at 10am
 - April 21- Bowman Bay at 9:30am
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - **April 22-23:** Field Days with 45 students from Concrete High School -10th and 11th grades from two classes will be held at Bay View State Park and Padilla Bay Interpretive Center from 9am-1:30pm. A call for volunteers has been sent out.
 - Commissioner Browning will be attending April 23 from 10:30-11:30am.
 - Tracy, Elizabeth, Carolyn, and Jude will brief the Commissioner at the event.
 - **Action Item:** Tracy will reach out to Annie England for help formulate a few talking points.
 - **Action Item:** Tracy will reach out to Anna Thompson (county outreach staff) to create a handout for Commissioner Browning.
 - **Action Item:** Jessica Owens shared handouts from Congressman Larsen's visit to Fidalgo Bay (including a Kids on the Beach demo) last year, and Senator Murray's visit for the NWSI Reauthorization.
 - **May 6-8:** Field Days with 86 students from Sedro Woolley Evergreen Middle School - 3 classes of 6th graders.
 - **May 21:** Padilla Bay Field Day with 42 students from Allen Elementary 4th & 5th grades (English is a second language for majority of students- engaged interpreters).
 - Fall program is currently being developed: Concrete and Mount Vernon High Schools signed up to participate.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda:
 - The La Conner School Rain Garden is looking great! The red currant and Camas are starting to bloom.
 - Drafted the School Rain Garden curriculum for the 4th & 5th grade science class that includes learning objectives, lessons and a set of hands-on activities and resources as a starting point. Elizabeth is working with the teacher to schedule a day rain garden activities before the school year ends.
 - With feedback and photos of native plants from the MRC, the interpretive sign design has been revised by Westar. It looks great!! Just a few minor typo edits before its ready for fabrication. Hope to get installed before the end of the school year. MRC members suggested including a QR code directed to a rain garden project page on the MRC website.
 - **Action Item:** Tracy will create a rain garden project page on the MRC website for the QR code.
 - Elizabeth reached out to Don Hunger with the NWSF about getting some intern help with rain garden stewardship. NWSF is currently in the process of applying for grant funding for shoreline stewardship and seasonal field techs and will add La Conner and Mt. Erie School Rain Gardens to their work plans if successful. In the meantime, NWSF staff will help with weeding, pruning, mulching this spring if able.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Save the Date cards and links to the online registration form has been shared with past participating organizations and volunteers.
 - 20 organizations have already registered to participate. We have space for 35.
 - 5 volunteers have signed up so far including one new Salish Sea Stewards volunteer.

- Darla Gay Smith and Erin Merkle both shared Fidalgo Bay Day volunteer opportunities with the new Salish Sea Steward class which seemed to spark some interest.
- A Puget Sound Corps Member with DNR offered to help with planning the 2025 FBD event even though she won't be able to attend the actual event. We've tasked her with reaching out to local high school environmental clubs or key clubs to see if their members would help with our kids craft tables, face painting, popcorn, or refreshments or other things at the event.
- Will be reaching out to the Master Composters for help with Zero Waste at the event. Our county intern will be tasked with coordinating the Zero Waste effort.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinne!
 - Field work continues through mid-May with Puget Sound Restoration Fund and the Samish Indian Nation including monitoring and seeding restoration plots with juvenile abalone.
 - Annual partners meeting is scheduled for early December 2025. Paul plans to attend.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration– Paul Dinne!
 - Paul will start collecting next native oyster recruitment bags in late April or early May 2025 to monitor the annual 2024 recruitment status as well as the locations of oyster larvae settlement.
 - Paul will be putting up shell strings (shells on a stick) in Weaverling Spit and at the trestle in Fidalgo Bay, sampling tools used by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to monitor oyster recruitment throughout Puget Sound.
 - Paul gave a presentation to the Salish Sea Stewards on the Olympia Oyster Restoration project.
 - The Native Oyster Restoration Story Map has been finalized and is now accessible on the Skagit MRC website homepage: [click here](#). A huge shoutout to Lynne for taking the lead and working with Paul and Confluence to create it.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and new "Lone Tree Point" (Steven Olsen – Lead).
 - Presented at the April 1 SSS Training session and got interest from possibly 3 kayakers who are interested in joining the effort.
 - The three Kayak Team leads have published their survey schedules for the 4 Skagit Survey Sites for June – September and the schedule has been posted for volunteer sign-ups.
 - Upcoming events:
 - May 2 – NWSC Kelp Kickoff workshop at PB
 - May 30 – Skagit Kayak Team BBQ and revisit kelp plans
 - June 6 – Skagit Kayak Team Shakedown Cruise
 - June survey dates: June 8 (Biz Point), June 9 (Coffin Rocks), June 10 (Lone Tree), June 17 (Shannon Point)
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**
 - Beach seining is now occurring twice a month at Bowman Bay - funding is in place for NWSF to continue January – December 2025.
 - Jason Morgan has provided the upcoming seining schedule for January – June so far.
 - Beach seining statistics for **March 7**: Caught 72 fish total: staghorn sculpin (5), English sole (5), sharpnose sculpin (4), and Chum salmon (58). 8 volunteers contributed 13.5 volunteer hours.
 - Beach seining statistics for **March 21**: Caught 39 fish total: stary flounder (3), staghorn sculpin (3), shiner perch (1), Dungeness crab (2), Chum salmon (30). 6 volunteers contributed 15.5 volunteer hours.
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**
 - Nothing happening right now.
 - Funding is in place for NWSF to continue in the 2025 growing season

- June 4 is currently in the works for the kickoff of plant maintenance activities with volunteers. NWSF, SFEG, and MRC are working to have beach seining and forage fish teams there as well. More details to come.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
The contract with Confluence Environmental has been through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K) to:
 - Make improvements for simplified user functionality to the Nearshore Assessment and Prioritization tool while protecting sensitive landowner data.
 - Improve MRC useability and access to parcel-level data within the tool.
 - Build out details of high potential restoration projects proposed for the MRC.
 - Conduct training and tutorials for improved user experience in using the tool.
 - Provide editorial edits to text, photos and links to the two previously completed Story Maps as directed by MRC.
- Meetings with Confluence & Suzanne Shull (GIS) -March 18 to kick off these tasks and ensure the final product is compatible with the new SoundIQ.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration Story Map now available on the Skagit MRC website homepage: [click here](#)
- The NEAP Tool is in the process of being updated for improved public access and simplified user interface.
- The NEAP Tool Story Map is in process of revision to also be a “tutorial” to help explain how it can be explored and better understood.

2025-2027 MRC Grant Project Proposals: All

- The proposals were shared with MRC members to review prior to the meeting in the pre-meeting packet.
- Lynne reminded MRC members to recuse themselves from any discussions or vote regarding the specific project if they have a real or potential conflict of interest relating to the project. Referred to the Conflict-of-Interest policy in the 2025-2027 NWSC RFP packet and the Skagit MRC Bylaws.
- We were able to balance the budget for all RFPs within the two buckets of grant funding. If approved, all Skagit MRC’s proposed projects could potentially get funded for the next two years.
- Project Leads briefly presented their draft project proposals followed by Q&A including:
 1. MRC Operations and project Admin/Management - Tracy Alker: \$61k (yr1), \$62.2 (yr2) *Budget under this task covers county staff time, meetings, refreshments, supplies, MRC display updates, travel/lodging for MRC members for 2027 NWSI Annual Conference, mailings, printing, advertising, outreach materials, etc.*
 - *Budget also includes funding to cover mailing expenses for European Green Crab outreach letters to Samish and Padilla Bays shoreline property owners in Year 2 instead of it being a stand-alone project with deliverables.*
 2. Fidalgo Bay Day- No Project Lead. RFP prepared by Tracy Alker: \$8,532/yr. MRC’s signature annual educational event since 2004. Over 30 participating organizations with the help of at least 25 volunteers. *Budget to cover expenses for Event Coordinator, food supplies, craft supplies, advertisement, food permits, etc.*
 - Can work with whatever budget given. Might have to eliminate food and/or craft supplies.
 - Need to find a Project Lead before our May 9 MRC meeting or we will have to drop this project. If no lead, could consider re-allocating FBD budget to the MRC Operations budget that could later be used for FBD if we are able to get a new Project Lead in the future (would require grant amendment).
 3. Kids on the Beach -No Project Lead. RFP prepared by Pete Haase: \$26,862/yr. Continue the ongoing Kids on the Beach project with PBNERR and local schools including elementary, middle and high school students. *Budget to cover busing, PBNERR staff time, and class materials.*

- Pete has been reaching out to potential leads to take this on including MRC member Carolyn Moulton and Ron Haywood (recently retired science teacher from Conway Middle School). But neither of them can take this project on right now.
- 4. Salish Sea Stewards Training – No Project Lead for 2025-2027 SSS Training RFP. MRC’s ongoing annual volunteer training program since 2014. RFP prepared by Subcommittee (Lynne, Pete, Tracy, Elizabeth, Dale): \$32,606/yr. *Budget to cover PBNERR staff time, MailChimp for the SSS electronic newsletter The WAVE, refreshments, uniforms, name badges, supplies, etc. Does not include SSS Volunteer Coordination which was canceled in 2024 to return some of those tasks back to the SSS AC volunteers to help them become more engaged and involved in the process.*
 - In the absence of an MRC Project Lead to develop the 2025-2027 SSS Training Project RFP, a subcommittee was formed until a new Project Lead is appointed (this was also shared at the March 13 MRC meeting). The Subcommittee consists of MRC members who are also on the SSS Advisory Committee including: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Elizabeth Drozda, and Tracy Alker. Dale Fournier was also invited to join the subcommittee to provide input since she has applied to become an MRC member and if appointed would become the new SSS Project Lead.
 - Jude expressed concern over a non-MRC member serving on the subcommittee in a decision-making capacity in developing the RFP. He suggested the MRC establish a plan and procedure on how to fill in that role during the absence and transition of a new Project Lead and to clarify who has the authority to make those decisions.
- 5. Pinto Abalone Restoration-Paul Dinnel: \$23k/yr. Project would continue the ongoing abalone recovery effort in Skagit County waters including monitoring and seeding. *Budget is primarily for PSRF staff time and travel for field work.*
- 6. School Rain Garden Maintenance- Elizabeth Drozda: \$1k/yr. No RFP yet. If RFP added later, would need to amend the grant with approval of the MRC and NWSC. *Budget for ongoing maintenance including additional plants, mulch, compost etc. for maintaining existing rain gardens as well as adding new plant signage.*
 - Lynne suggested getting an agreement in place with the schools to take over future maintenance. Maybe with the caveat that the MRC will check in every so often to add more plants to show our ongoing commitment to the rain gardens.
- 7. Forage Fish Monitoring - Pete Haase: \$10,300/yr. *Budget for The Salish Sea School Staff time (Catherine Houck) to oversee and manage the forage fish monitoring at restoration sites and index sites as well as \$300/yr for supplies.*
- 8. Derelict Crab Pot Removal - Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: \$30k(yr1) and \$20k (yr2). *Year 1 budget to contract for side-scan sonar to locate and prioritize six high density derelict crab pot removal areas in Skagit Bay and where there is a high level of recreational crabbing, in addition to recommendations from the Swinomish Fisheries Commission. Year 2 budget for predictive modeling for determining where derelict crab pots might be that could potentially be a cost saving method over side-scan sonar and could also be used to predict ecological impacts. Will be seeking NWSC Science Advisory Committee consultation for this project.*
 - Partner with WDFW, NWSF, Swinomish Fishing Commission, Island MRC, and Jefferson MRC. Could establish an advisory committee for this collaborative project for consensus building, sharing resources strategies and target area prioritization for a greater collective impact.
 - NWSF has funding from various sources (\$150k) to invest in this collaborative project. Their funding will be used for crab pot removal with divers in Skagit Bay including testing ROV crab pot removal operations in target areas where it’s too difficult for divers to go.
 - Looking into the possibility of doing sweeps with volunteers to find lost pots
- 9. Crabber Outreach - Darla Gay Smith: \$4,500/yr. *Budget for two workshops/yr in April and June including speakers, facility, refreshments, training/outreach materials, and advertisement. Will distribute outreach materials at local businesses that sell crabbing gear and licenses. Won’t be doing outreach at boat launches during crabbing season- not effective.*

- Partner with NWSF and WDFW.
 - Crabber outreach would be combined with Derelict Crab Pot Removal as one project in the final grant agreement.
10. FBAR Intertidal Monitoring- Pete Haase: \$3,000(yr1). No funding needed for year 2. *Budget to contract with someone to oversee and coordinate the intertidal monitoring data collection at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve for one year. Overtime, data collected could be used as an inventory in case of a disaster and to detect trends and initiate further research or restoration action.*
- Re-Resources managed the intertidal monitoring at the FBAR for nearly 10 years with funding from DNR. DNR no longer has funding o continue to support FBAR intertidal monitoring. Anticipated that DNR will get funding to continue in intertidal monitoring in the future. MRC funding/involvement would just be a placeholder to avoid a gap in the data collection.

2025-2027 MRC Grant Project Evaluation Process Lynne

- Question- Is proposal evaluation and prioritization necessary if the RFP costs fit within the funding amount that's available? Yes- good to do just in case we don't get the full amount of funding.
- The 2025-2027 MRC Grant Project Evaluation and Prioritization Form has been simplified to rank projects as High, Medium, or Low rather than providing a numerical value.
 - **Action Item:** All MRC members will fill out the form to evaluate and rank proposals by May 1, prior to the May 8th MRC meeting. MRC members and Project Leads with COI will abstain from ranking those specific projects.
- RFP Consultations with NWSC Staff-April 16th, via Teams (1pm-2pm). MRC Project Leads encouraged to attend.
- Finalize 2025-2027 Grant App- (May 8): The full MRC will vote to approve prioritized projects and budget to include in the final grant application.
- Final Grant Applications Due- May 29

MRC Project Proposal Consultations with SAC: All

- Members of the [Science Advisory Committee](#) (SAC) can help each MRC with one MRC project during project development that need refinement and scientific guidance on how measures can help to distinguish success of a project. Submittals Due- April 23rd.
- Lynne asked the MRC to consider submitting the Derelict Crab Pot project for consultation. No other projects were brought forward for consideration.
 - **Action Item:** The MRC voted by consensus to select the Derelict Crab Pot project for consultation with SAC.

MRC Membership Application: Dale Fournier

Dale shared her background in Environmental Education and is a volunteer actively involved in kayak kelp surveys, forage fish surveys, Fidalgo Bay Day, and the Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee. This was Dale's first MRC meeting and wasn't sure what to expect but found it very interesting to learn about all the different projects and the valuable input from MRC members and is already thinking about the different ways she could contribute with her background as a retired teacher. If appointed, Dale would be the Skagit MRC's new Salish Sea Stewards Project Lead for the 2025-2027 Salish Sea Stewards Training program starting July 1, 2025.

- **Action Item:** The MRC voted unanimously by consensus to approve Dale's MRC membership and make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Dale to the MRC.

Agenda Items Tabled for Future MRC Meeting

- MRC Membership Recruitment Strategy- Pete
- MRC Member Functions & Responsibilities Updates- Lynne

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- NWSI 2024 Impact Report now available- [here](#)

- Washington Coastal Zone Management Program (CZMP) – Currently developing its 2026-2030 Program Enhancement Assessment and Strategy. Public comment period on revised Draft Assessment and Strategy: March 17-April 18. Draft can be found on the [CZM Program Enhancement Webpage](#).
- MRC Grant Quarterly Progress Reports/Volunteer Hours Due- April 15th!
- NWSF Annual Spring Celebration at Larrabee State Park- May 17- 11:00am-3:00pm. Includes a service project on the trail to Clayton Beach, a picnic, and information booths. MRC invited table at the event to help increase community awareness of our work.

*The meeting adjourned at 11:14am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams, **May 8, 2025**.*



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **May 8, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Pete Haase, Matt Castle, Tracy Alker, Chandler Colahan (Jude's Alternate), Paul Dinnel, Darla Gay Smith, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate), Dale Fournier
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Carolyn Moulton, Elizabeth Drozda, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Jeff Whitey (NWSC); Audrea McBride (Skagit Watershed Council); Jay Lind (former MRC member); Yuki Reiss (SFEG)

Call to Order and Introductions: Lynne called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: April 10, 2025, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments:

- No comments

Skagit Watershed Council Membership: *Aundrea McBride*

- Background:
 - The Skagit Watershed Council is a non-profit community partnership for salmon recovery since 1997.
 - Currently 46 members. Only organizations involved in salmon restoration work can join. Individual citizens cannot join, but they are welcome to attend the meetings.
 - 4 council member meetings held per year. Usually have science talks. Meetings are hybrid held at WSU Ext. Next meeting is June 4th- will be voting on revised By-Laws. Annual lunch meeting at Hillcrest-present annual report.
 - Funded 230 projects in the watershed since established. Includes nearshore and delta projects. 3 nearshore projects funded in 2024. All have salmon focus.
 - 9 projects proposed for funding this year.
 - Six subcommittees under the SWC (Technical Work Group, Protection Subcommittee, Monitoring & Adaptive Management Subcommittee, Technical Review Committee, Lead Entity Citizen Committee, and Community Engagement Committee)
 - The Lead Entity Citizens Committee prioritizes salmon recovery projects and makes recommendations to the state for state funding. This process occurs every year starting in February through August. The last two days includes site visits to the final list of proposed project sites.
 - Technical Committee established to test viability of projects.
 - Community Engagement Committee- Pete Haase frequently attends the Community Engagement Committee meetings facilitated by Holli Watne.
- Skagit MRC invited to become a member of the Skagit Watershed Council to build a stronger ecological recovery community and build some synergy around that work.
 - SWC Membership requirements- must have one designated MRC representative and an alternate for voting. Must attend at least one meeting per year to maintain membership. Representative can be changed at any time prior to the vote.
 - **Question:** How can Skagit MRC rep vote on behalf of the entire MRC when MRC members represent tribes and other organizations that are also members of the Skagit Watershed Council? **Answer:** Representatives for each of those organizations will cast their own vote.

Skagit MRC rep would ask MRC how to vote, if no consensus Skagit MRC rep could recuse themselves from voting. It would need to be determined on a case-by-case basis. Another option would be to apply to become a non-voting member.

- **Question:** Are members required to report on anything at the meetings: **Answer:** No, not unless there is something they would like to share.
- **Question:** Any homework required of members? **Answer:** No homework except for occasional documents to review prior to voting.

➤ **Action Item:** Skagit MRC members voted unanimously by consensus to apply for membership with the Skagit Watershed Council with Darla Gay Smith as the Skagit MRC Rep and Pete Haase as the alternate MRC rep.

Tribal Land Acknowledgement: Lynne

Proposed Tribal Land Acknowledgment including additional language recommended by Jude Apple to help reaffirm a realistic and achievable commitment. The tribes do not have a formal process for reviewing and vetting this type of thing on behalf of the entire tribe, so the additional language was reviewed and modified internally by the Swinomish staff representatives on the Skagit MRC and tribal members they work with. The proposed revised Tribal Land Acknowledgement is as follows:

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

➤ **Action Item:** Skagit MRC members voted unanimously by consensus to adopt the proposed Tribal Land Acknowledgement statement

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

April 25 NWSC meeting highlights shared with MRC in pre-meeting packet.

- New NWSC Chair (Alan Clark) and Vice-Chair (Jamie Stephens) appointments.
- The NWS [reauthorization bill passed out of the Senate Commerce Committee](#). There is still a long way to go for the bill to reach a vote in Congress, but this is a positive step forward.
- [2024 Annual Reports](#) from the NWSC and Snohomish MRC is available on the NWSC website.
- **Next NWSC meeting (May 30):** 10am-3pm. Held in-person Clallam County.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - The 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program, which commenced on February 18, 2025 & ran for 10 weeks, was completed on April 29, 2025.
 - Twenty-four (24) new Stewards for 2025 had a festive graduation *at PBNERR*. The SSS Advisory Committee gave a hearty welcome to the new volunteers joining the larger group of 365 SSS Alumni.
 - This trainee class has been an exceptionally talented one and we look forward to their future involvement in over 60 different environmental organizations.
 - *Of note:* Victor Garcia, a member of the graduating 2025 SSS Class, has been appointed by Governor Ferguson to fill a Western Washington seat on the WA State Fish & Wildlife Commission.

- The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee finalized their membership recruitment procedures, and a New AC Member Packet is in the works. The AC attempts to add two members from each graduating class to the Advisory Committee with fresh eyes on the Program.
- Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting held May 15th via Teams. In June we will have an in-person meeting to review Training Schedule Topics & Speakers for the 2026 Stewards Program.
- SSS Social Event planned for June 18th at Padilla Bay with a presentation from Wolf Hollow.
- Darla is stepping down as the MRC Project Lead at the end of June 2025. Dale Fournier, a newly appointed MRC member, will become the new SSS Project Lead starting July 1, 2025.
- The SMRC again thanks *Padilla Bay NERR* for their vital role in the successful SSS Training.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Skagit MRC contracted with the Salish Sea School’s Catherine Houck to coordinate the forage fish surveys in Skagit.
 - Catherine will be invited to the July MRC meeting to introduce herself and give a report.
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue. Spawning activity is starting to pick up.
 - Surveys take around 1.5 -2 hours to complete.
 - Started using the i-Form automated system to collect data and photos on smart phones and send to WDFW. There are a few glitches with the automated systems and a few survey sites where volunteers are unable to get phone coverage to use the system so they are still using the paper form.
 - May 2025 forage fish survey schedule:
 - May 7- Bowman Bay at noon
 - May 12- Guemes Channel at 9am
 - May 12- Similk Bay at 9am
- Kids on the Beach – Chandler Colohan:
 - **April-** 90 Concrete High School students participated.
 - **May 6-8:** Padilla Bay Field Days with 86 students from Sedro Woolley Evergreen Middle School - 3 classes of 6th graders. Collected biodiversity data along transects on the mudflat.
 - **May 21:** Padilla Bay Field Day with 42 students from Allen Elementary 4th & 5th grades (English is a second language for majority of students- engaged interpreters). Recent article in the Skagit Valley Herald.
 - Over 200 students participated in the spring 2025 KOTB program from three schools- 10 classes.
 - Volunteers assisted with field days, including some of the new SSS volunteers from the 2025 class. This year was a little more difficult getting help from volunteers compared to previous years. More PBNERR staff had to help this year.
 - 1 school, 3 classes scheduled for the fall 2025 KOTB program.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Paul went out in the field with the PSRF abalone crew this month and visited three different sites (one in Skagit).
 - Collected one female spawner from Lopez Island that they took back to the lab for hatchery broodstock to produce abalone for outplants. Several aggregates of abalone were also observed- in close proximity to one another, and as such, were left alone. Per protocols only singleton abalone can be collected.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration– Paul Dinnel:
 - Paul collected native oyster recruitment bags that were set out last year in Fidalgo Bay to monitor the annual 2024 recruitment status. The number of oyster larvae tallied indicated a very good spawn last year. The bags collected around the trestle had around 50% more recruitment than what we’ve seen in the past. The other sites around the Bay didn’t follow that trend, but they still had very strong recruitment.
 - Paul put new oyster recruitment bags out for monitoring this year’s spawning and recruitment.

- Paul set out shell strings (shells on a stick) at two different locations at Weaverling Spit and at the trestle in Fidalgo Bay, for the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to monitor oyster recruitment throughout Puget Sound.
 - PBNERR crew will be collecting native oyster recruitment bags from Crandall Spit that they put out last year and transferred over to Padilla Bay for oyster restoration. Swinomish Tribal Community also has oyster recruitment bags there that they collect for oyster restoration in Skagit Bay.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda:
 - The rain garden sign design has been finalized and will hopefully be printed soon.
 - Elizabeth will be teaching the 5-6 grade students a class on rain gardens with hands on learning activities on May 13.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Tracy Alker:
 - 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Save the Date cards and links to the online registration form has been shared with past participating organizations and volunteers.
 - 20 organizations have registered to participate. We have space for 35.
 - 6 volunteers have signed up so far.
 - Beach seining, shellfish samples, and no-host salmon BBQ have been confirmed.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**
 - Beach seining is now occurring twice a month at Bowman Bay - funding is in place for NWSF to continue January – December 2025.
 - Beach seining statistics for **April 7:** 913 fish total: staghorn sculpin (15), English sole (32), starry flounder (4), juvenile sculpin (31) and Chum salmon (831). 8 volunteers contributed 14.5 volunteer hours.
 - Beach seining statistics for **April 21:** 122 fish total: stary flounder (1), staghorn sculpin (8), shiner perch (1), three spine stickleback (2), Chum salmon (102). English sole (5), juvenile flatfish (1), and juvenile sculpin (2). 6 volunteers contributed 15.5 volunteer hours.
 - The story of the month is Chum! 933 just for April 2025! This breaks all the records for chum found to date at Bowman Bay. Checkout the NWSF Facebook post: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1AY64Yk4vq/>.
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**
 - June 4 is currently in the works for the kickoff of plant maintenance activities with volunteers. NWSF, SFEG, and MRC are working to have beach seining and forage fish teams there as well. More details to come. Looking for volunteer help that day!
 - **Bowman Bay Pocket Beach Restoration Feasibility Study- SFEG project:**
 - Yuki Reiss (SFEG) reported that an abundance of native amphibians was recently discovered at the Bowman Bay wetland site where they were studying the feasibility of opening it up to tidal flow, re-creating a pocket estuary to support salmon rearing. This new finding indicates this project might not be feasible. Could redirect focus to enhancing existing habitat: e.g. remove riprap berm and do some planting along the wetland.
 - **Question:** Are there any historical photos of the site before everything was changed when they put the hatchery in? **Answer:** Have not seen any historical photos of the actual wetland area, just the historical maps or T-sheets.
 - **Question:** Could opening the wetland be a futile effort if the high energy storms that tend to come into Bowman Bay end up causing it to close back up again? **Answer:** The feasibility study and modeling would help answer those questions and determine if this project is feasible. But there will be no need for all of that extra analyses if we end up changing direction of the project.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and new "Lone Tree Point" (Steven Olsen – Lead).

- 2025 season is swinging into gear. The three Kayak Team leads have published their survey schedules for the 4 Skagit Survey Sites for June – September and the schedule has been posted for volunteer sign-ups.
- A notice will be placed in the next WAVE Newsletter soliciting new kayaker volunteers. Caitlyn, NWSC fame and an experienced kayaker, has agreed to join the Skagit kelp surveys as her schedule allows – yay!

Upcoming events:

- May 2 – NWSC Kelp Kickoff workshop at Padilla Bay
- May 30 – Skagit Kayak Team BBQ and revisit kelp plans
- June 6 – Skagit Kayak Team Shakedown Cruise
- June survey dates: June 8 (Biz Point), June 9 (Coffin Rocks), June 10 (Lone Tree), June 17 (Shannon Point)

- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:

The contract with Confluence Environmental has been extended through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K) to:

- Make improvements for simplified user functionality to the Nearshore Assessment and Prioritization tool while protecting sensitive landowner data.
- Improve MRC useability and access to parcel-level data within the tool.
- Build out details of high potential restoration projects proposed for the MRC.
- Conduct training and tutorials for improved user experience in using the tool.
- Provide editorial edits to text, photos and links to the two previously completed Story Maps as directed by MRC.
- The Olympia Oyster Story Map was updated by Confluence and is now LIVE on the Skagit MRC website as of April 3, 2025 [click here](#)
- The NEAP Tool is in the process of being updated for improved public access and simplified user interface – ECD June 2025.
- The NEAP Tool Story Map is in process of finalization and a “how-to video” will be made as a tutorial for NEAP functionality.
- The NEAP Tool, Story Map, How-to Video as well as back up materials will be posted onto SoundIQ – ECD June 2025.

Derelict Crab Pot Project Consultation with SAC: Lynne

- No updates. Consultation won't take place until June. Results will be shared at June MRC meeting.

2025-2027 Project Proposal Prioritization: Tracy

- No budget updates. The NWSC plans to schedule a budget meeting with MRC staff in June.
- Project Proposal Evaluation and Prioritization Results:
 - MRC members with a real or potential conflict of interest regarding a project (e.g. Project Lead, serve on project committee, benefit financially, etc.) were recused from ranking those specific projects.
 - Only 5 out of 11 MRC members completed the evaluation forms. We cannot accurately rank and prioritize projects until a majority of MRC members complete the forms.
 - The Fidalgo Bay Day project proposal will be dropped from the grant application because without a Project Lead it does not meet the NWSC funding criteria. The funding request for this project will get allocated to the general MRC Operations budget that can be used for special events.
 - Pete Haase volunteered to be the Project Lead for the Kids on the Beach project until he can find a replacement.
- Final Grant Proposals/Application **Due- May 29**

MRC Membership Recruitment Strategy: Pete

Proposed two-prong approach for recruiting new MRC members:

1. Address immediate need for project leads for signature MRC projects- FBD and KOTB. Focus on recruiting new MRC members willing to take the lead on projects.
 2. Develop an ongoing recruitment plan that addresses gaps in stakeholder representation as well diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, right now we don't have any MRC members representing industry or businesses.
 - **Comment:** Darla recommended meeting with volunteers or other community members face to face to get them excited about joining the MRC. Face time is more effective than placing an ad or sending an email.
 - **Comment:** Melissa suggested social media posts to raise awareness of the MRC and to get involved in local efforts to spark interest and recruit new members.
- **Action Item:** MRC members asked to help recruit new members and bring forward ideas of who we could contact that could bring expertise, experience, and knowledge and potentially bring new projects and/or support the work and mission of the MRC.

MRC Member Functions & Responsibilities Updates: Lynne

- The MRC Member Functions & Responsibilities document originally adopted January 8, 2024.
 - Originally proposed updates in April to clarify the role and responsibilities of a Project Lead and to better align with the new NWSC project proposal criteria.
 - Additional changes have been made to the Project Lead description based on feedback received at the April MRC meeting. The proposed updates were provided to the MRC members to review prior to the May 8th MRC meeting including:
 - Simplified and reformatted Project Lead bulleted list of responsibilities into the following categories: Proposal Planning, Project Management, and Other Considerations.
 - A Project Lead checklist was also created as an additional tool for understanding the responsibilities.
 - Note: MRC Staff provides guidance and administrative support to the Project Leads to help ensure success.
- **Action Item:** The MRC voted by consensus to adopt the updates as proposed.

MRC Membership Application: Aundrea McBride

Aundrea McBride applied for Skagit MRC membership and gave a brief introduction with some background information about herself and the Skagit Watershed Council at the beginning of the meeting. If appointed, Aundrea would be the Skagit Watershed Council representative on the Skagit MRC and Holli Watne would be the Aundrea's Alternate. They would both serve on the Fidalgo Bay Day event planning subcommittee.

- **Action Item:** The MRC voted unanimously by consensus to approve Aundrea's MRC membership and make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Aundrea to the MRC.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- NWSF Annual Spring Celebration at Larrabee State Park- May 17- 11:00am-3:00pm. Includes a service project on the trail to Clayton Beach, a picnic, and information booths. Skagit and Whatcom MRC's invited to table at the event. Nobody from Skagit MRC will be available to attend.
- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Event- June 4th- hosted by the NWSF 10am-noon. Will be combined with beach seining starting at noon and forage fish surveys.
- Boldt at 50 Years: Tribal Sovereignty, Resources Management, & the Boldt Decision's Continuing Influence- free lecture presented by NWSC member Cecilia Gobin, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Conservation Policy Analyst - May 10, 2pm at Padilla Bay Stevens Center. Seating is limited, register at

www.padillabayfoundation.org. This lecture is co-sponsored by the Lance Christopher Smith and the Benjamin Fisher Aguero Memorial Fund and the Padilla Bay Foundation

- Tides to Trees Tour May 24th- Skagit MRC members have been invited to attend the **Tides to Trees Tour** event hosted by Hampton Lumber and Skagit Genuine Valley. The event will take place **Saturday, May 24th** 9am-3pm. The topic is around water quality within the three industries: forestry, farming, and aquaculture including visits to Swinomish Shellfish Farm, Hedlin's Family Farm, and Hampton Tree Farm. **RSVP by May 9**. No MRC members were able to attend.

*The meeting adjourned at 11:03am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams, **June 12, 2025**.*



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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

Attendees:

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

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

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

Public Comments:

- No comments

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

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

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

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

Project Status & Discussion

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

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

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

- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:

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

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

- **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**

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

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

Beach seining schedule for rest of the year:

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

- **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**

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

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

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

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

2025-2027 Project Proposal Prioritization: Tracy

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

Grant #1: Shorelands Northwest Straits 2023 (SEANWS2025)

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

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

Grant #2: One-Time Grant Program 2026

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

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

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

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

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

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



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **July 10, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Pete Haase, Tracy Alker, Jude Apple, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate), Dale Fournier, Holli Watne (Aundrea McBride's Alternate), Paul Dinnel, Carolyn Moulton, Darla Gay Smith
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie, Audrea McBride, Matt Castle, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson
- **Others in Attendance:** Nathan Ivy (WSU); Dana Oster (NWSC); Jay Lind (Former SMRC Member); Ryan Mielke (FBAR Citizen Stewardship Committee); Catherine Houck (Forage Fish Monitoring Coordinator); Shannon Stewart (Swinomish Water Quality Analyst)

Call to Order and Introductions: Pete called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions and Tribal Land Acknowledgment.

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

Approval of Minutes: June 12, 2025, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

Public Comments:

- Holli Watne shared the unfortunate news that she is getting laid off. Holli is the Community Engagement Coordinator for the Skagit Watershed Council and is Aundrea McBride's Alternate on the Skagit MRC. With the layoff, Holli will no longer be able to serve on the Skagit MRC as Aundrea's alternate or on the Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Committee. Holli has been an extraordinary Community Engagement Coordinator and will be greatly missed.

Urban Stormwater Runoff Impacts on Salmonids: *Nathan Ivy, WSU*

- Nathan Ivy is a master's student studying aquatic toxicology at WSU's School of the Environment and is currently researching the real-time impacts of spring rainstorms carrying contaminants into the salmon-bearing creek.
- During the wet fall months, more than half of the coho salmon that return to Puget Sound's urban streams die before they can spawn. In some streams they all die. Researchers discovered the culprit to be a toxic chemical contained in vehicle tires known as 6PPD. 6PPD helps keep the rubber from cracking.
- When 6PPD reacts with ozone in the air, it forms 6PPD-quinone which is particularly toxic to coho salmon and is lethal even at extremely small doses. Salmonids all have varied sensitivities to 6PPD. Cutthroat and Chinook are less sensitive to the chemical than Coho.

- It's a complex issue—with no easy fix. Green stormwater infrastructure (like bioswales and bioretention gardens) could be used to help filter 6PPD-quinone out. To remove the chemical from tires is more complex. Research is ongoing to understand its environmental impact and develop safer alternatives for 6PPDs in tire production. The state has been testing five different alternatives to 6PPD/6PPD-quinone to determine whether they are less toxic to juvenile coho. There are other chemicals less toxic to coho, but it's unclear what the effects are on other fish.

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

June 27, NWSC meeting highlights shared with MRC in pre-meeting packet. Meeting held virtually, via Teams

- NWSC Science Advisory Committee- Reviewing a total of 5 MRC projects. Have already reviewed three including Skagit MRC's Derelict Gear Prevention and Removal Project. Two more will take place in July including an Intertidal Monitoring project, much like Skagit MRC's proposal.
- NWSC Draft Strategic Plan – Approved at the June 27 at NWSC meeting.
- Speed Date with a Scientist - Fiona Beaty with the Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative, presented her work on a First Nations community mapping project from Howe Sound "Centering Community Values in Marine Planning" including ecological, cultural, economic, and social values in different areas in the community and how the different categories interact with each other positively or negatively. Used a tool called Maps OnAir.
- Whatcom Vessel Turn-in Recycling Event- Applications are being accepted until July 15 (deadline extended!). A lot of boats have already signed up.
- MRC Reports- Jeff Taylor from Jefferson MRC reported on derelict crab pot retrievals with a ROV (Skagit MRC might want to follow-up with Jeff on this project).
- Next NWSC meeting (July 25) 10am-3pm, held in person at the Whatcom County Civic Building in Bellingham.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Dale Fournier:
 - On June 14th we had the first Social Event at Padilla Bay for the 2025 Salish Sea Stewards class and alumni including a catered lunch and presentation by Hadley Beahan of Wolf Hollow Wildlife Rehabilitation Center.
 - On June 18th we had our final Advisory Committee meeting before the summer break.
 - Salish Sea Stewards Training Program Survey Results:
 - All participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the course content was relevant to them as volunteers.
 - All participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they feel confident describing environmental issues facing the Salish Sea.
 - 83.33% of participants said they plan to continue volunteering after their 40 hours are completed.
 - SSS Advisory Committee meetings scheduled for the first Thursday of each month starting October to June from 2:30 - 4:30pm.
 - We welcomed two new members to the Advisory Committee - Maureen Jones who volunteers with forage fish sampling and Joe Fletcher who completed the SSS training in 2025.
 - Dale met with Jude to discuss options for the Salish Sea Stewards program to fit within a reduced budget if EPA funding is delayed or doesn't come through.

➤ Pete Haase presented Darla Gay Smith with a very special recognition on behalf of the Skagit MRC for her strong leadership and invaluable contributions as the Salish Sea Stewards Project Lead for the last five years. We are extremely grateful. Thank you, Darla!!!

- Forage Fish Surveys – *Pete Haase/ Catherine Houck*:

- Skagit MRC contracted with the Salish Sea School's Catherine Houck to coordinate the forage fish surveys in Skagit with NOAA grant funding through December 2025.
- Since stepping into the Forage Fish survey Coordinator role earlier this year, Catherine has gained a greater appreciation for the work Pete has done over the years in that role. The logistical coordination of volunteers is a lot of work, and Pete did a phenomenal job!
- Forage fish monitoring looks at status and trends in forage fish populations and the effectiveness of our habitat restoration projects.
- Monthly forage fish surveys at 7 Skagit MRC restoration and index sites continue.
- Sites include Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Index and Assessment sites: Guemes Channel Index, Lovrics Assessment, Samish Index, Similk Bay Index, and Restoration Sites: Bowman Bay, Clayton Beach, and Similk Bay.
- Surveys take around 1.5 -2 hours to complete.
- During Quarter 2 (April, May, June) 18 volunteers collectively contributed 97 volunteer hours collecting and processing forage fish samples.
- Data is collected on smartphones using an i-Form app to send data and photos of the beach sediment and current conditions to WDFW in real time. The tool is being used at all but one of the Skagit sites. Only have 3 accounts/passwords for Skagit FF volunteers to use the i-Forms for WDFW. DNR uses Survey 123 for collecting FF data at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve which goes to their GIS system.
- WDFW data reports do not currently include Fidalgo Bay forage fish data. Working on getting that data added.
- Fidalgo Bay has been very productive with forage fish spawning activity early in the season. Matt Castle pointed out that the Fidalgo Bay forage fish survey sites are also restoration sites. A presentation on the before and after restoration data analyses would be of interest to the MRC.
- July 2025 forage fish survey schedule:
 - July 11- Fidalgo Bay East at 9am (WA DNR site)
 - July 11- Fidalgo Bay West at 9:30am (WA DNR site)
 - July 14- Guemes Channel at 10am
 - July 14- Similk Bay at 10am
 - July 18- Bowman Bay at noon
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - The 2025 Spring KOTB program wrapped up in May. Over 200 students participated from three schools- 10 classes. More than 16 volunteers contributed over 87 volunteer hours this spring in support of the KOTB program. PBNERR staff contributed a combined 80 hours of in-kind support for the implementation of KOTB this spring.
 - 1 school, 3 classes scheduled for the fall 2025 KOTB program depending on availability of funding.
 - Jude, Pete, and PBNERR education staff are looking into options for scaling down the Kids on the Beach program to fit within a reduced budget if EPA funding is delayed or doesn't come through.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund wrapped up the field work in early May.
 - Nothing new since last month's report which summarized the field work and hatchery work that has been done.
 - Currently focused on hatchery production and maintenance for producing juvenile abalone to outplant next year. Also working on data entry and analysis.
 - Paul will be working with PSRF on the 2025 Year- End Report due in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Nothing new to report since last month.

- The native oyster recruitment bags and shells on a stick have been distributed in Fidalgo Bay for monitoring the 2025 Olympia oyster larvae settlement.
 - Spawning should be taking place now through the rest of the summer. Hoping to have another good settlement year like last year.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Tracy Alker:
 - Elizabeth recently stepped down as the Skagit MRC Project Lead for the School Rain Gardens. We currently have no Project Lead to see this project through completion.
 - Northwest Straits Foundation Interns will be maintaining the rain garden through September 2025. Elizabeth met them out at the rain garden in June to get them started.
 - We need to try to come up with a maintenance plan with the school to make sure it is maintained at least for the first two years to help the new plantings become well established.
 - Interpretive signage panel has been designed and donated by Westar Solutions. Submitted an order to purchase the pedestal base and frame. The sign will be installed by the school’s facilities staff, hopefully before school starts back up again in the fall.
 - Funding for this project is currently in place through the end of this year. The Skagit MRC needs to decide what to do with the remaining funds. We could potentially use some to purchase additional plants and mulch in the fall if needed, but someone would need to take the lead to determine what to purchase and recruit volunteers to do the planting. If there is no need for the remaining funds, the Northwest Straits Commission can probably find a good use for them.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - 23 organizations have registered to participate. We have space for 35.
 - 11 volunteers have signed up so far. Would like to have at least 20.
 - Jenn Dumas, a Salish Sea Steward AC member, volunteered to coordinate Fidalgo Bay Day this year as part of her Skagit Valley College class requirement and college credit and hit the ground running after our kickoff meeting on June 24th.
 - Jenn started reaching out to some of the key volunteers to make sure we stay on task and is busy trying to recruit new volunteers to fill some of the gaps.
 - The Honor Society from Anacortes High School might be interested in volunteering. Hope to get a confirmation by August.
 - Jenn has also been reaching out to local businesses to get door prizes for the volunteers that are helping with this event.
 - Erika De La Rosa with NWSF reached out to several restaurants this month. Five restaurants expressed interest in participating but have not officially confirmed or signed up. Two of the past participating restaurants are now permanently closed, Secret Cove and Bob’s Chowder.
 - Rosie Cayou James is still interested in participating with the traditional Coast Salish No-Host Salmon BBQ.
 - Paul is working to secure shellfish samples from Taylor Shellfish for the event.
 - We reserved the Salish Sea School’s popcorn machine and have made arrangements to pick it up.
 - The next FBD Planning Meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 14th 9am-10am via Teams.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Beach seining continues at Bowman Bay - funding is in place for NWSF to continue January – December 2025. Seining schedule through end of year.

7/18	12:00 PM
8/14	9:00 AM
9/12	10:00 AM
10/10	12:00 PM
11/19	10:00 AM
12/12	11:00 AM

- Beach seining is now occurring month through the end of the year.
- June 19 seining results: It was a fun outing with 7 volunteers contributing 20 hours of service. They finally found 2 Chinook, which have been evasive this year. They also caught chum, surf smelt, and a big striped surfperch. They've only caught a couple of those ever!

Chinook	2
Chum	1
Surf smelt	29
English sole	203
Staghorn sculpin	102
Shiner perch	75
Striped surfperch	1
Threespine stickleback	6
Penpoint gunnel	1

- The NWSF's contract close-out report for SFEG included a list of all species captured and total counts from January 2024 – June 2025: a total of 3,935 fish representing 23 unique species
- NWSF conducted a beach profile, wrack, logs, sediment and insect fallout survey at Bowman Bay on July 8th.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - MRC funding is in place for NWSF to continue plant maintenance at the restoration site through the 2025 growing season (May-October). Funding ends December 31, 2025.
 - June 4 was the kickoff Bowman Bay Stewardship Day (reported last month). The next event will be Friday, July 11 at 10 am – 12 pm.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Brad Smith - Lead) and new "Lone Tree Point" (Steven Olsen – Lead).
 - 2025 Season has begun. One new kayaker has joined the team!
 - July surveys scheduled:
 - July 7 (Biz Point) – John Freeto (Lead) + 2 kayaker volunteers
 - July 9 (Coffin Rocks) – Steven Olsen (Lead) + 3 kayaker volunteers
 - July 10 (Lone Tree) – Steven Olsen (Lead) + 3 kayaker volunteers
 - July 17 (Shannon Point) – Brad Smith (Lead) + 3 kayaker volunteers
 - The NWSC Summer Kelp Monitoring Work Group is in the planning stages with dates being coordinated. Steven Olsen is Skagit's representative.
 - **The new [Washington Kelp Project Inventory](#) is up and running!** This is a collaborative tool and a shared resource for all, to add, update, and explore WA kelp related "projects" (project, program, initiative, etc.).
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
The contract with Confluence Environmental has been extended through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K). Updates this month:
 - The Nearshore Assessment and Priorities (NEAP) Tool and NEAP Story Map are now completed as of June 11, 2025.
 - Skagit NEAP Tool and its accessory products including the NEAP Story Map, Data Dictionary, and "How To Tutorial Video" are now housed in the new SoundIQ2 and will be the first "Featured Project".
 - The "Featured Project" will be a rotating highlight of the variety of projects on which MRCs work.
 - They are currently doing a 'soft-release' to NW Straits staff and will soon send out to key MRC members to get their feedback.
 - The 5 high priority restoration projects identified in 2024 are in process of further development – ECD August 2025.

- Created a new project page on the Skagit MRC website. It will include links to the Story Maps, and NEAP Tool, and How To Video on SoundIQ2 as soon as they are available.

2025-2027 MRC Grant Project Proposal Prioritization and Budget Contingency Planning: Tracy

- MRC Project Proposals have been reviewed by the NWSC staff and Science Advisory Committee. They've provided comments and questions that require a response from the MRC by July 28th. Project Leads have been asked to help prepare the MRC response and revise the project proposals if needed.
- Expected funding from Grant #1 EPA= \$61k (Year 1) and Grant #2 NOAA FY24=\$6k (Year 1) is currently delayed. The approval process and timeline for these sources is unknown.
- If federal funding is available before the September deadline, those sources will be added back to MRC grants. If federal funding becomes available after the grant start dates, grant amendments will be conducted accordingly.
- After the last MRC meeting in June, MRC Project Leads were asked to determine if and how their project/s could be scaled back to fit within the reduced budget under the funding source that best fits their project timeline.
- To work within the WA State General Fund appropriations without eliminating any projects, all projects and MRC Operations under that funding source and timeline (Oct 1, 2025-Sept 30, 2026) would need to reduce their budgets equally by 48%.
- To work within the NOAA FY23 appropriations without eliminating any projects, all projects and MRC Administration under that funding source and timeline (Jan 1, 2026-Dec 31, 2026) would need to reduce their budgets equally by 8%.
- Jude- questioned if reducing all projects evenly across the board was fair especially since it appears the projects funded under Grant #1 would have bigger budget cuts than the projects funded under Grant #2. Requested MRC investigate other ways to address the budget shortfall and focus on prioritizing and ranking projects and allocating the budget accordingly.
- **Action Item 1**- Tracy will work with the MRC Project Leads to determine if and how their project/s could be scaled back to fit within the reduced budget, what the implications might be, and what the go no-go budget is for each project.
- **Action Item 2** - Tracy will work with MRC Project Leads to brainstorm other options to see if there might be a better way to fairly divide funds other than just doing an even split or if some projects could be moved under a different funding source and timeline.
- **Action Item 3**- Tracy will work with MRC Project Leads to review the project funding and prioritization criteria and options for ranking projects and dividing the budget accordingly.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Dept of Ecology's Puget Sound Nutrient Forum- Public Workshop- Wednesday, July 30 from 1pm to 4pm at the Mt Vernon Library. Meeting starts with an open house format, followed by a presentation on the [draft Puget Sound Nutrient Reduction Plan](#) and time for questions and answers.

*The meeting adjourned at 10:58am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams, **August 14, 2025.***



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **August 14, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Pete Haase, Tracy Alker, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Darla Gay Smith, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Catey Ritchie
 - *MRC Members Absent:* Kevin Anderson, Audrea McBride, Matt Castle, Dale Fournier, Carolyn Moulton
- **Others in Attendance:** Caitlyn Blair (NWSC); Jay Lind (Former SMRC Member), Jenn Johnson (SCPW NRD)

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

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

Approval of Minutes: July 10, 2025, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

Public Comments: None

Northwest Straits Initiative Annual Conference Update: *Caitlyn Blair*

- Conference will be held Nov 7-8 at Maple Hall in La Conner.
- Conference theme is "Collaboration Across Water & Community".
- Registration for the MRC Conference is now open to NWSC staff, MRC members and MRC staff.
- Check out the [2025 Conference Website](#) for up-to-date information!
- The conference is by invite only. However, MRC members and staff are allowed to invite one guest to the dinner and keynote speaker Friday night for a small fee of \$31.
- Keynote Speaker: Josie Iselin "An Artist's Journey into the Science of Seaweed and the Stories of the Kelp Forest". The power of art and storytelling in scientific communications.
- Breakfast will not be served at the conference.

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

July 25, NWSC meeting highlights shared with MRC in pre-meeting packet. Meeting held in person at the Whatcom County Civic Building in Bellingham.

- Whatcom MRC presentation on Eelgrass protection efforts at Wildcat Cove including a site visit to the very popular boat launch area. NWSF interns occasionally help with outreach to boaters with cones protecting eelgrass area.
- Ginny Broadhurst has stepped down from her position with the NW Straits Commission.
- A "Norms Agreement" to be followed for NWSC meetings. Might be something for MRCs to consider adopting.

- The Northwest Straits Commission **2025-2030 Strategic Plan** poster available on their [website](#).
- [Blue Schools Initiative](#) Letter of Support approved by the NWSC for the Washington State budget.
- New [Sound IQ website- soft launch](#) presentation to test functionality, gather feedback, and fix issues. Full launch will include video tutorials. Hoping to get Skagit’s forage fish data included in Sound IQ.
- **Next NWSC meeting (Aug 29)** 10am-noon, held virtually.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Dale Fournier (via email):
 - Nothing new to report.
 - Many of the new SSS have been busy volunteering.
 - June 18th was the last Advisory Committee meeting before the summer break. Monthly meetings will start back up again in October and will be held the first Thursday of each month from October 2 to June, 2:30 - 4:30pm.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Nothing new to report.
 - Skagit MRC has a subaward agreement with the Salish Sea School’s Catherine Houck to coordinate the forage fish through December 2025.
 - Monthly forage fish surveys continue at 7 Skagit MRC restoration and index sites
 - Aug & Sept 2025 forage fish survey schedule:

Day	Date	Time	Location
Monday	Aug. 11	9:30 am	FIDALGO BAY EAST
Wednesday	Sept. 10	10:30 am	
Monday	Aug. 11	10:00 am	FIDALGO BAY WEST
Wednesday	Sept. 10	11:00 am	
Thursday	Aug. 14	9:00 am	BOWMAN BAY
Friday	Sept. 12	10:00 am	
Monday	Aug. 18	10:00 am	GUEMES CHANNEL
Monday	Sept. 15	9:00 am	
Monday	Aug. 18	9:00* am	SIMILK BAY
Monday	Sept. 15	*Explore to south 9:00 am	

- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - Not much happening now. Schools are on summer break.
 - 1 school, 3 classes scheduled for the fall 2025 KOTB program.
 - Working on wrapping up the final report that’s due September 30th.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Currently focused on routine hatchery production and maintenance for producing juvenile abalone to outplant next year.
 - Paul will be working with PSRF on the 2025 Year- End Report due in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration– Paul Dinnel:
 - Two recent articles about native oyster restoration including interviews with Skagit MRC member Paul Dinnel. One focused on impacts of environmental stressors “[A Living Shoreline, Built One Oyster at a Time – KneeDeep Times](#)”. The other one focused on oyster restoration work in Skagit County by the tribes and other organizations like the MRC “[A decades-long quest to restore Washington’s only native oyster sees success](#)”.
 - Paul is working with the University of Washington students to measure the diversity of marine critters in native oyster restoration areas compared to areas with no oysters at various locations in Puget Sound including Fidalgo Bay.
 - Next week Paul will be collecting the shell strings at two locations in Fidalgo Bay at the trestle and Weaverling Spit for the Puget Sound Restoration Fund for their standardized monitoring of oyster settlement throughout Puget Sound.

- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Tracy Alker:
 - Northwest Straits Foundation Interns are maintaining the rain garden through September 2025. Currently waiting for status update.
 - The interpretive sign frame and base has been ordered. It takes 5 weeks to ship. Hoping to have it delivered and installed before school starts back up again this fall.
 - Need to determine what to do with the remaining funds allocated for this project through December 31, 2025.
 - Paul- Would any of the tribes be interested in a rain garden?
 - Catey- Swinomish has one rain garden on the reservation but maintenance has been a challenge. Catey will check to see if the Swinomish might be interested in another rain garden. The long-term maintenance of a new rain garden could be an issue without the capacity to maintain it.
 - Paul- We could have regular volunteer work parties coordinated by an intern to help with maintenance.
 - Lynne- Noticed some school volunteers cleaning up the Mt. Erie School rain garden.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Tracy Alker:
 - 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Event highlights include beach seining demo at 1pm, Shannon Point Marine Center touch tank, educational booths and passport stations, complimentary samples of seafood, kids craft activities, and Corra the Selkie.
 - Jenn Dumas, a Salish Sea Steward AC member, is the lead event coordinator for Fidalgo Bay Day this year as part of her Skagit Valley College class requirement and college credit.
 - Our last FBD Planning Meeting was held Aug 13.
 - 32 organizations have registered to participate.
 - Only 12 organizations have submitted questions for the passport activity. Deadline for that was this week but will have to extend one more week.
 - 150 fliers have been distributed. Fliers include a QR code linked to the Skagit website event page. Reached out to all the free online promo contacts. We will have an ad in the Skagit Kid Insider. Working on a press release.
 - Jenn did a great job recruiting volunteers. Now all the slots are filled!
 - Carolyn Moulton will help kick off the event with a warm welcome and introduction to the Samish Indian Nation hosts. Waiting on a confirmation on who will be providing the Samish welcome.
 - Kids craft activities: Face painting. Button making (marine critter templates to color), crab and orca hats, and fish prints on canvas bags.
 - Jenn was able to line up three restaurants to participate with chowder samples: Adrift, Island Café, and Gere-A-Deli. Food permit applications have been filled out and will be submitted to the Health Department next week.
 - NWSF staff (Erika and Dylan) are really helping us out by getting their food handler cards to serve chowders for Island Café and Gere-A-Deli. Adrift has their own server.
 - Thanks to Paul, Taylor Shellfish confirmed they will be providing shellfish samples.
 - Rosie Cayou James will be participating with the traditional Coast Salish No-Host Salmon BBQ.
 - We reserved the Salish Sea School's popcorn machine and have two volunteers who will oversee the popcorn station.
 - Jenn reached out to Skagit Food Co-op about getting refreshments for the volunteers. She is still waiting on a confirmation.
 - Jenn also lined up several door prizes for volunteers donated by local businesses. Volunteers will be given a certain number of tickets according to the number of volunteer hours contributed to Fidalgo Bay Day.

- Last Stewardship Day of the year was held August 13 with 5 volunteers and 2 NWSF staff. We pulled invasives from the south trail along the wetland area – 8 large leaf bags full!
 - Deception Pass State Park plans to remove the concrete boat launch out and riprap and leave a gravel pathway for launching kayaks. Part of the concrete boat launch is buried deep under sediment and will not be removed. The NWSF will work with the State Park to plant native plants along the shoreline to fill in the areas after the boat launch and riprap are removed. Will likely recruit volunteers to help.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Brad Smith - Lead) and new “Lone Tree Point” (Steven Olsen – Lead).
 - NWSC Kelp Monitoring Workshop with all MRCs providing status reports. Island MRC using YSI meter to collect additional salinity data at different depths to measure salinity as a potential stressor.
 - Fish and Wildlife presentation on [kelp and eelgrass risk assessments](#) along with a technical report was recently released.
 - 2025 Season is underway. One new kayaker, Bob Carey, has joined the team!
 - August surveys:
 - August 6 (Biz Point) – John Freeto (Lead) *healthy kelp bed*
 - August 7 (Coffin Rocks) – Steven Olsen (Lead), Elizabeth Drozda, Hal Lee
 - *Kelp bed significantly denser and larger in diameter/perimeter from July 2025. Southeast quadrant of kelp bed between WP 128 and 129 very dense and extending southeast-ward. three black oyster catchers on rocks and flying around during survey. Noted an immature bald eagle heading south directly over rocks. Kelp bed and individual samples all very healthy appearing and thriving. Many overwintered specimens observed in dense area on east side of rocks by WP128 and WP 132. No bryozoans observed on blades of kelp this survey.*
 - August 8 (Lone Tree) – Steven Olsen (Lead), Hal Lee, Elizabeth Drozda, Lynne Wenberg
 - *Overall kelp density moderate to very light in area along perimeter. But several areas of denser kelp close to reef. Kelp bed and individual specimens very healthy. Spores noted on blades. A great variety of birds observed: a flock of black oyster catchers, a great blue heron, king fisher, several bald eagles (mature and immature), several species of gulls. Bulbs in near shore kelp bed eelgrass observed at depths of 1-3 ft.*
 - August 12 (Shannon Point) – Lynne Wenberg / Brad Smith (co-lead), Elizabeth Drozda.
 - *Difficult tide and current combo, plus wind and boat traffic – we found the kelp bed at West but it was under 1-2 feet of water so we couldn’t track it. East bed – no bull kelp observed, but heavy sargassum close to shore. We plan to try another survey with minus tides next Thursday.*
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
The contract with Confluence Environmental has been extended through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K). Updates this month:
 - The Nearshore Assessment and Priorities ([NEAP Tool](#) and [NEAP Story Map](#)) are now completed as of June 11, 2025.
 - The NEAP Tool, Story Map, [Data Dictionary](#) and [Prioritization Criteria](#) are all loaded up on SoundIQ2 as a “soft roll out” and also are available on the Skagit MRC website <https://www.skagitmrc.org/projects/skagit-shoreline-needs-assessment/>

- A “how-to video” will be made as a tutorial for general public NEAP functionality is in the works – ECD August 2025
- The buildout of the 5 high priority restoration projects identified in 2024 are in process of further development – ECD September 2025.
- Lynne briefly walked through the NEAP Story Map and demonstrated how the NEAP Tool works and what it can do and how the assessment was designed. It’s still in beta form so there are a few kinks that need to be worked out.
- We need to think about what groups might be interested in this tool and how they might use it (e.g could it be used as a resource in case of an oil spills to help assess the damage and impact on the resources present in the area based on data in the NEAP tool?)

2025-2027 MRC Grant Update: Tracy

- MRC Project Proposals have been reviewed by the NWSC staff and Science Advisory Committee. MRC Project Leads responded to the comments and questions received.
- MRC Project Leads met last month to discuss their if their projects could be scaled down or if the project timelines could be flexible in case of delayed funding or a budget shortfall.
 - All the projects are scalable except for the Salish Sea Stewards which would be more difficult to scale down.
 - Pinto abalone restoration and forage fish monitoring are the only projects that could potentially be shifted to either the Grant #1 (WA/EPA) or Grant#2 (NOAA) funding timelines if needed to help balance the budget.
- The good news is, the EPA and NOAA FY24 funding came through and the MRC projects will get fully funded for 2025-2027!! However, there might be a little bit of a delay with the actual start date for the EPA funding which will likely be mid to late October instead of October 1st. Waiting to see if Ecology will allow us to backdate so that we can still do the work before the grant gets full executed, if needed.

New Final Report Template for MRCs: Lynne

- Per the recommendation of the Scientific Advisory Committee, the NWSC drafted a standard Final Report template for all MRCs to use for project grant deliverables.
- The intent of the template is to help NWSC staff better synthesize and communicate all the results and impacts of MRC projects into a bigger message and help clarify the MRC’s involvement in the project, especially if the work is primarily being done by a service provider.
- MRC’s are encouraged to, but are not required to use the Final Report template this year. However, it will likely be a requirement in future years.
- The template has several sections that are from the perspective of the MRC and is not something a contractor could fill out. This means it will be a bit more work for the MRC Project Leads and MRC Staff.
- Lynne plans to take the first crack at filling in the information in the Final Report template for her projects and will ask the service provider to fill in the rest. She will provide feedback to the NWSC on what was learned from the process and how to improve the template.
- Jude- it would be better to have the template at the very beginning of the project to help frame the goals, outcomes, and deliverables in the contract agreement so that they align with the information the NWSC is looking for in the Final Report.
- Paul- can the Puget Sound Restoration Fund still provide the scientific report format they’ve always used in the past in addition to and cited in the new Final Report Template instead of filling out those sections?

➤ **Action Item:** Lynne will follow-up with Sasha for some additional clarification

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Melissa Ciesielski, Catey's Alternate on the MRC, accepted a new position with the Puget Sound Partnership as the Strategic Funding Coordinator and will no longer be able to participate on the MRC. Melissa's background in science communication has been a huge asset to the Swinomish and MRC, she will be missed and difficult to replace.
- Pete Haase shared an update on Western Washington University's (WWU's) Culturally Responsive Elementary Science Teaching (CREST) research project to gather data on the different approaches teachers are using to adapt their curriculum to be culturally responsive to the students in their classroom. Organizations like the MRCs and the Salish Sea School and Padilla Bay NERR help support teachers in accomplishing this in their curriculums throughout the school year in Whatcom and Skagit Counties. The teachers are using programs like the MRC's Kids on the Beach to help accomplish this goal.
- The Northwest Straits Foundation asked if there is any interest from Skagit MRC in co-hosting a Shore Friendly Landowner Workshop and if so, how would the MRC like to be involved and what topics does the MRC want it to cover? No MRC members expressed interest in taking the lead at this time. We can circle back to this topic next spring to see if there is any interest.
- **Puget Sound Water Quality Workshop Series:**
 - Modeled and historical monitoring insights on water quality differences throughout Puget Sound 02.12.25 [Slides](#) | [Recording](#) | [Summary](#)
 - Explore Early Pilot Study Results on Temperature, Oxygen and Marine Life in Puget Sound- **Aug 15 (11am-1pm):** registration required
<https://washington.zoom.us/meeting/register/gzao1HMnRp2odsNySYSYrw#/registration>
- **Shoreline Management Act Rulemaking Virtual Open House (6pm-7pm):** [Register for the open houses.](#)
 - August 19
 - September 16
 - October 21
 - November 18
 - December 16
- **Help Save Oregon Ash Trees From Being Wiped Out - Seed Collection Assistance Needed:** US Forest Service is looking for assistance with seed collections of Oregon Ash trees. If interested, contact Mariel King (mariel.king@usda.gov) or Richard Sniezko (richard.sniezko@usda.gov). There will be a workshop on **Thursday, Aug, 14, noon to 1pm.** A recent OPB video on Oregon ash and EAB <https://www.opb.org/article/2025/05/02/invasive-emerald-ash-borer-beetle-killing-oregon-ash-trees/>

*The meeting adjourned at 10:53am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams, **September 11, 2025.***



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **September 11, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Pete Haase, Tracy Alker, Darla Gay Smith, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Catey Ritchie, Carolyn Moulton
 - *MRC Members Absent:* Kevin Anderson, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Audrea McBride, Matt Castle, Dale Fournier
- **Others in Attendance:** Caitlyn Blair (NWSC); Jay Lind (Former SMRC Member); Jenn Johnson (SCPW/NRD)

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

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

Approval of Minutes: August 14, 2025, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

Public Comments: None

Northwest Straits Initiative Annual Conference Update: *Caitlyn Blair*

- 2025 NWSI Annual Conference will be held November 7-8 at Maple Hall in La Conner.
- Registration for the 2025 MRC Conference is now open until **October 7** by invitation only. Don't forget to register!
- Conference attendees are allowed to register one guest to attend the keynote dinner on November 7.
- Skagit MRC members that have registered for the conference so far: Tracy Alker, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Catey Ritchie, Pete Haase, and Jenn Johnson.
- Partner invites will be sent next week.
- Keynote Speaker: Josie Iseline "An Artists Journey Into the Science of Seaweed and the Stories of the Kelp Forest".
- Draft agenda available on the conference website [here](#).
- Sent out a call to MRCs for artists, to showcase original marine-themed artwork reflecting the Northwest Straits region in the digital art show at the conference. Don't have to attend the conference to submit artwork. Individuals can submit up to three different pieces by filling out a submission form for each. Artwork can include paintings, photos, sculptures, drawings, jewelry, poetry, songs, digital art, etc. Deadline for submitting is **October 7**.

Conference- MRC Collaborative Networking Activity: *Tracy Alker /Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*

MRCs have been asked to select one project to feature at a collaborative round robin networking station at the 2025 MRC Conference, but it's not a requirement. The goal of this activity is to provide opportunities for MRCs and conference attendees to learn what work is happening in other counties, identify potential collaboration opportunities, and provide informal feedback to each other.

MRC Collaborative Networking Activity will include:

1. Lighting Round Presentation (New this year) – 5-minute or less presentations on each MRC's featured project. Power Point Slides encouraged with a 5-slide maximum.
 2. A round robin of tabling with talking points/prompt questions.
 3. Printed materials encouraged at each station:
 - Feature Project one-pager (**complete template by Sept 19**)
 - Full list of Current MRC projects with key contact names
 - Table tent of prompt questions
 - Post-it pads on easels to capture broad "Collaboration Ideas" Feedback cards
- **Action Item:** By consensus, the Committee selected the MRC's Nearshore Assessment and Priorities Tool as the Skagit MRC project to feature at the conference. Lynne will complete the template by September 19th and will work on the 5-minute presentation. Confluence will host the NEAP Tool Networking Activity if they are able to attend the conference. Tracy will work on other materials for the Skagit MRC's station.

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

Aug 29, NWSC meeting highlights shared with MRC in pre-meeting packet. Meeting held virtually.

- NWSI Annual Conference, Nov 7-8 at Maple Hall in La Conner: There will be a conference session "Reaching your MRC's Full Potential" where MRCs will share successful strategies and identify barriers and opportunities in reaching MRC's full potential with the following discussion prompts: Rebuilding/sustaining MRC membership capacity, balancing member/staff roles and responsibilities, project selection /prioritization, and engaging with contractors/consultants. It will be an informal activity structured similarly to the MRC Collaborative Networking Activity with discussion prompts facilitated by NWSC staff at each table.
 - **Action Item:** This topic will be discussed at the October 9th MRC meeting to help prepare MRC members for the interactive session at the Conference.
- Whatcom Vessel Turn-in Event: A collaboration of multiple partners to prevent derelict or abandoned boats and protect marine habitats. 29 vessels were turned in, 22 were deconstructed and recycled. The remaining boats are awaiting testing to deconstruct.
- Kelp and Eelgrass Outreach event- Sept 10: Outreach event hosted by Snohomish MRC focused on kelp and eelgrass of Mukilteo and Hat Island.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Dale Fournier:

Since our final Advisory Committee meeting in June there has not been much change in the Salish Sea Stewards Program. We are all relieved that the program has been fully funded for the next two years.

 - The first Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting of the 2025-2026 Program year is scheduled for Thursday October 2 at 2:30. This will be an in-person meeting held in the Stevens' Center at the Padilla Bay Reserve.
 - Over the past few weeks several committee members have been looking at the organization of the class presentations to see where changes need to be made.
 - We have talked about starting the Trainibg Program a bit later than last year so there is more time for planning and discussion.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:

- Skagit MRC has a subaward agreement with the Salish Sea School for Catherine Houck to coordinate the monthly forage fish monitoring at 7 Skagit MRC restoration and index sites.
- Monthly surveys continue. Great participation from volunteers. Still quite a bit of spawning going on and viable eggs and hatchlings being observed in the samples collected.
- Sept 2025 forage fish survey schedule:

Day	Date	Time	Location
Wednesday	Sept.10	10:30 am	FIDALGO BAY EAST
Wednesday	Sept.10	11:00 am	FIDALGO BAY WEST
Friday	Sept. 12	10:00 am	BOWMAN BAY
Monday	Sept. 15	9:00 am	GUEMES CHANNEL
Monday	Sept. 15	9:00 am	SIMILK BAY

- Considering adding one of the beaches located on the Swinomish Reservation on the east side of Similk Bay as a new Index Site to sample in collaboration with the Swinomish Tribal Community staff. Lots of eggs have been observed on the beach! At this point it is still very exploratory, no decisions have been made. WDFW has a process to follow for adding new Index Sites.
- Kate Olson and Phill Dionne with WDFW will be leading an all-day forage fish survey training for MRC forage fish volunteers on Wednesday, October 8th in Skagit County. The training will be from 9am to 4pm and includes a classroom portion at Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, a field portion for sample collection at a Skagit County beach, and a lab and egg identification section. The training can be a refresher and is great for any new volunteers.
- Kids on the Beach – Pete Haase:
 - 1 school, 2 classes scheduled for the fall 2025 KOTB program. The field day is scheduled for October 23 with Conway Middle School at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. The Samish Indian Nation Natural Resources staff will help with the beach seining activity. Volunteers will be recruited to help students with forage fish surveys.
 - Working on wrapping up the final report that’s due September 30th.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel (via email):
 - Currently focused on routine hatchery production and maintenance for producing juvenile abalone to outplant next year.
 - Paul is working with Josh Bouman of Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) on the 2025 Year-End Report.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration– Paul Dinnel (via email):
 - Paul picked up the PSRF recruitment shell strings from two locations and met up with a UW crew to help facilitate their oyster habitat studies.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Tracy Alker/Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Northwest Straits Foundation Interns are maintaining the rain garden through September 2025.
 - The interpretive sign frame has been ordered and should arrive later this later this month.
 - Tracy and Lynne have a meeting scheduled with the new school principal at the La Conner Elementary School on September 19th to discuss the next steps including installing the interpretive sign, planting additional native plants/mulch, plant ID signs, and determining the rain garden maintenance plan.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - Fidalgo Bay Day is happening this Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Setup this Friday from noon-4pm.
 - 50 volunteers signed up to help!
 - 33 participating outreach booths

- 28 Discovery passport stations and prizes sponsored by the Friends of the Salish Sea.
- Pete, Dale, and other volunteers hoisted the Fidalgo Bay Day sign on R Ave in Anacortes on Sept 2.
- Carolyn Moulton will help kick off the event with a warm welcome and introduction to Rosie Cayou James.
- Matt Castle’s beach seining crew will do a beach seining demonstration at 1pm.
- Skagit Food Coop, Skagit Gleaners, and Skagit MRC are providing refreshments for volunteers.
- Volunteers will have a chance to win door prizes donated by local businesses (Anthony’s, The Wishing Rock, Anacortes Oil & Vinegar, and the Watermark Book Company). The drawing will be at 2:45pm.
- Complimentary chowders by Island Café, Adrift, and Gere-A-Deli.
- Complimentary shellfish samples by Taylor Shellfish.
- Traditional Coast Salish Salmon Lunch and Indian Tacos- Rosie’s Coast Salish Seafood
- Complimentary popcorn.
- Kids craft activities: Face painting. Button making (marine critter templates to color), crab and orca hats, and fish prints on canvas bags.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Beach seining continues at Bowman Bay - funding is in place for NWSF to continue January – December 2025. Seining schedule through end of year.

7/18	12:00 PM
8/14	9:00 AM
9/12	10:00 AM
10/10	12:00 PM
11/19	10:00 AM
12/12	11:00 AM

- Beach seining is now occurring monthly through the end of the year.
- July 18 seining results: 581 Shiner perch! Large numbers of shiner perch are typical in Bowman Bay during spawning season.

Date	Species	Count	Date	#Volunteers	Total Volunteer Hours
7/18/2025	staghorn sculpin	36	7/18/2025	4	10
7/18/2025	english sole	8			
7/18/2025	Chinook salmon (natural)	3			
7/18/2025	Shake prickieback	2			
7/18/2025	Saddleback gunnel	1			
7/18/2025	Sand sole	2			
7/18/2025	Shiner perch	581			
7/18/2025	threespine stickleback	11			
7/18/2025	Total Fish:	644			

- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - MRC funding is in place for NWSF to continue plant maintenance at the restoration site through the 2025 growing season (May-October). Funding ends December 31, 2025.
 - The last Stewardship Day of the summer was August 13 with 5 volunteers and 2 NWSF staff. We pulled invasives from the south trail along the wetland area – 8 large leaf bags full!
 - A planting party is planned for October as part of Orca Recovery Week and will be the last Stewardship Day of the year at Bowman Bay.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Brad Smith - Lead) and new “Lone Tree Point” (Steven Olsen – Lead).
 - **September 5 (Coffin Rocks) – Steven Olsen (Lead), Elizabeth Drozda, Hal Lee:**
 Kelp bed very dense in perimeter with kelp extending out of denser areas. One volunteer observed bryozoans on kelp blades.

- **September 6 (Lone Tree)** – *Steven Olsen (Lead), Hal Lee, Elizabeth Drozda, Lynne Wenberg:* Kelp bed density less than August 2025 but more extended outward creating a jagged perimeter track. One volunteer described it as "patches and ribbons of kelp" creating a bed of overall low density. Eelgrass tangled in kelp with rafts of exfoliated eelgrass in south eddies of Lone Tree reef. Cluster of kelp observed in August 2025 not apparent this survey. However, another significant cluster observed SW of primary bed in mainstream current and identified by WP 148 (see photograph labeled 148). Kelp of very low density strung out and observed southward from reef to WP 149 (shoreline segment) at launch site. Paddled to lagoon outflow north of Lone Tree Point. No kelp in area but eelgrass thick with possible mottled sea stars of light blue to lavender color on bottom.
- **September 6 (Biz Point)** – *John Freeto (Lead):* Slight breeze from the south, and a bit of flood current, throughout the survey; overcast skies, and fog offshore. Abundant kelp both north of the two survey areas and also visible kelp south of the survey beds. Kelp in the north bed was healthy and dense; in the south bed the kelp was also healthy but more sparsely spaced within the kayak perimeter.
- **September 17 (Shannon Point)** – *Brad Smith (Lead), Hal Lee, Elizabeth Drozda, Lynne Wenberg* – Survey results, TBD
- **Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment** – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:*
The contract with Confluence Environmental has been extended through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K). Updates this month:
 - The Nearshore Assessment and Priorities ([NEAP Tool](#) and [NEAP Story Map](#)) are now completed as of June 11, 2025.
 - The NEAP Tool, Story Map, [Data Dictionary](#) and [Prioritization Criteria](#) are all loaded up on the new SoundIQ as a “soft roll out” and also are available on the Skagit MRC website <https://www.skagitmrc.org/projects/skagit-shoreline-needs-assessment/>
 - A “[how-to video](#)” has been made as a tutorial for general public NEAP functionality. The video has been posted to a host site so it can be shared from the MRC Website and SoundIQ.
 - The buildout of the 5 high priority restoration projects identified in 2024 are in process of further development – ECD October 2025.

MRC Administration: *Tracy Alker*

- [2024 Skagit MRC Annual Report](#) is now available on the MRC website and will be shared with the County Commissioners.
- Our current EPA/PSP/WA grant is coming to an end on September 30, 2025. All Deliverables and Invoices are due at the end of this month including: Quarterly Reports, Final Reports, and volunteer hours, and the Close-Out Report.
- The new 2025-2027 MRC Grant with EPA/PSP/ WA funding is now ready to be routed through the County review and signature process. The grant start date is October 1, 2025.
- Will be working with the Project Leads to draft the contract agreements with service providers in October. Contracts must be fully executed by November 30th as part of our grant deliverable requirements.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: *All*

- [Festival of Family Farms](#)- October 4 & 5- at Taylor Shellfish Farm in Bow from 10:00am – 4:00pm each day. Bill Dewey invited Skagit MRC to participate and host an outreach booth. Lynne will set up the booth Saturday morning and will take it down Sunday evening but is looking for help to staff the booth each day. The MRC outreach booth would focus on shellfish with some kind of fun activity like a shell matching game, or shell tracing and we could create posters or handouts about our Olympia oyster and Pinto abalone restoration projects as well as a flyer for the 2026 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program. The Northwest Straits Commission will likely be there

with their European Green Crab outreach booth, and the Skagit County Clean Water program will have a booth as well.

- Salmon Runs– Jay Lind reported that the Port of Hood Canal is currently considering delisting the Summer Chum Run in Hood Canal. Jay reached out to diver/videographer Laura James about getting some underwater video footage of the fall salmon run. Will keep us posted.
- Linda Mapes – Pete Haase attended an impressive presentation by Linda Mapes at the Bellingham Ferry Terminal hosted by Mike Sato’s nonprofit Salish Current online news resource for Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit Counties. The presentation focused on the Salish Sea and the news stories covering it over the last 30 years. Major takeaways for a healthy Salish Sea: 1. Uphold the Treaty Rights. 2. Listen to the experts! They know what needs to be done and how to do it if there is funding. 3. Don’t give up, speak up and get involved! Linda was the Seattle Times Environmental Reporter for many years until she recently retired.

*The meeting adjourned at 10:38am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams, **October 9, 2025.***



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **October 9, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Pete Haase, Tracy Alker, Darla Gay Smith, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Dale Fournier, Paul Dinnel, Jude Apple
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Kevin Anderson, Audrea McBride, Catey Ritchie, Carolyn Moulton, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Jeff Whitty (NWSC); Jay Lind (Former SMRC Member); Lisa Kaufman (NWSF)

Call to Order and Introductions: Lynne called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions and Tribal Land Acknowledgment.

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

Approval of Minutes: September 11, 2025, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written.

Public Comments: None

Action Items:

- MRC voted by consensus to cancel the November 13th MRC meeting due to the Annual MRC Conference held in La Conner on November 7th and 8th.
- The MRC voted for the December 11th MRC meeting to be held in person (location TBD).
- Pete Haase will confirm with the Salish Sea School about taking on the Intertidal Monitoring project for the MRC in 2026 and draft a statement of work.
- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson will reach out to Jason Morgan with NWSF to draft a statement of work for the Derelict Crab Pot Removal project contract agreement.

Important Dates:

- **Oct 15-** Orca Recovery Day Planting Event at Bowman Bay, 10am - noon
- **Oct 23-** Kids on the Beach with Conway Middle School at Fidalgo Bay Resort.
- **Oct 31-** MRC Monthly Reports due to the NWSC
- **Nov 7th & 8th-** Annual MRC Conference at Maple Hall in La Conner
- **Nov 28-** MRC Monthly Reports Due to the NWSC
- **Nov 30-** New contract agreements Due with PBNERR (for KOTB and SSS) and PSRF (for Pinto Abalone)

Clayton Beach Project Update: Lisa Kaufman, NWSF

- Written update emailed to MRC in September. It's a complex project with lots of moving parts.

- Completed sediment sampling with DNR around eelgrass beds and dredge hole to determine sediment composition requirements for top layers of hole to support eelgrass restoration. Lisa is currently reviewing results. Generally, the sediment is mostly sand with some other materials. Critical to get correct sediment composition for eelgrass to successfully grow and be transplanted there.
- Completed sediment testing upland of beach to determine what we need to do in terms of disposing the sediment which originally came from the bottom of the dredge hole. Testing for contaminants. Still waiting on full results. So far it's looking like it's pretty clean.
- Completed core sampling of the cedar pilings. Waiting on results. Initial observations didn't detect any creosote.
- DNR completed the eelgrass transplanting plan based on the sediment. Lisa is currently reviewing.
- Thinking through design concepts with Herrera and order of operations that the construction would happen. Filling the dredge hole is critical and a high priority to reduce the erosion impacts from wave action and for a quicker recovery of the eelgrass beds.
- Lisa will work with the dredge materials office to try to accelerate permitting and use dredge materials from other projects to fill the hole. Might take several rounds of filling to account for sediment settling.
- Awaiting word on congressional request through Senator Cantwell's office for direct appropriation. Dependent on federal budget process. Lisa encourages letters and phone calls to Senator Cantwell's office to help elevate support of the project.
- Waiting on State Parks on Right of Entry for vegetation management. It is currently in their signature phase.
- Hoping to have a work party in November to start removing blackberries. Can do more archeology once blackberries are removed.
- Planting planned for the spring of 2026.

Other NWSF Project Updates in Skagit:

Shore Friendly

- 2 New Videos- Shoreline BMPs & Home Relocation.
- Recently completed a study assessing bluff recession rates along with setbacks in several counties, including Skagit.
- Will be developing a smaller scaled targeted outreach strategy for bluff properties that have potential feasibility of moving their homes out of the hazard zones. Also includes lower lying properties at risk of flooding. Looking for best opportunities to move homes back, avoiding need for armor and applying appropriate drainage and vegetation to reduce risks of highly erosive events.
- Will continue to do regular shoreline landowner workshops as well. Looking for ideas on topics of interest to determine the best information to share with landowners.
- Will be developing a curriculum for planners and land managers to make sure they are aware of coastal processes and impacts of shoreline armor and Shore Friendly practices for workshops next fall.

Bowman Bay

- Shoreline planting is looking great! Thanks to all who helped!
- Boat ramp removal project is stuck in a federal permit holding pattern.
- Pier might be coming out in a similar timeline as boat ramp.
- NWSF plans to assist with shoreline vegetation restoration and management work after boat ramp and pier are removed.

Van Tour of Projects with Planners: The NWSF has funding to host van tours of restoration projects with planners and land managers. Let Lisa know of any projects in Skagit that might be good for a van tour.

Remote Operating Vehicle: Applied for a grant to purchase an ROV to be used for derelict fishing gear surveys and removal, eelgrass surveys, fish surveys, etc.

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

September 26, NWSC meeting highlights shared with MRC in pre-meeting packet. Meeting held in-person on San Juan Island

- Annual MRC Conference- Nov 7-8 at Maple Hall in La Conner. Registration and artwork submittal closed on October 7th.
- San Juan MRC Creosote Piling Removal – site visit to the restoration project, a former gravel operation led by Dr. Frances Robertson and Sam Whitridge.
- San Juan MRC Eelgrass monitoring– presented by Dr. Frances Robertson. Eelgrass monitored by aerial surveys of areas that have high boater density in the San Juan Islands.
- 2025 Kayak Kelp Surveys Complete- NW Straits Commission preparing MRC kelp survey data for partners to include in the WA Floating Kelp Indicator and other research.
- NW Straits Commission’s 2025-2030 Strategic Plan - posted on the website.
- Fundraising Activity Engagement Document- The NW Straits Commission created a guidance document for MRCs to consider if they want to engage in fundraising activities.

Reaching Your MRC’s Full Potential: *All*

This will be an informal session at the 2025 Annual MRC Conference in La Conner Nov 7-8. Participants will be split into groups. MRCs from all seven counties will discuss challenges, lessons learned, and different approaches for reaching our full potential. NWSC staff will lead the discussions at each table with prompts and take notes.

The Skagit MRC members identified and briefly discussed the following challenges and approaches we’ve taken to try to reach our full potential:

- Recruiting, rebuilding/sustaining MRC Membership capacity and diversity
- Clearly understanding and balancing the roles and responsibilities of MRC members, project leads, & staff
- Project selection, prioritization, and ranking process for allocating limited or reduced funding
- Engaging with elected officials

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Dale Fournier:
 - On October 2nd the Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee had the first meeting of the 2025 - 2026 Training Season. The meeting was in-person in the Steven’s Center at Padilla Bay NERR.
 - Welcomed two new members to the Advisory Committee - Maureen Jones and Joe Fletcher.
 - Meetings will be on the first Thursday of the month at 2:30.
 - Looked at a Venn Diagram that Lynne Wenberg created that shows the different roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee, the Skagit MRC and the Padilla Bay Staff.
 - Discussed some of the new tasks/responsibilities of the Advisory Committee. These are mostly things that the AC used to do and now they are taking on those tasks once more.
 - Going to restart the Communications Committee to handle tasks like social media.
 - 2026 Salish Sea Stewards Training starts February 10th and ends on April 14th.
 - Reviewed and discussed training schedule, topics, and speakers. Provided feedback to Erin and Sara so they can incorporate changes.
 - The second social event for the Salish Sea Stewards is scheduled for Thursday October 16th at 10 am at the Northern State Recreation Area in Sedro Woolley. Lucy DeGrace with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group will speak about the history of the park and the importance of

Hansen Creek for our local wildlife. Salmon are sometimes spotted in the river in the Fall - We'll be on the lookout!

- Completed the [2025 Salish Sea Stewards Report](#) available on the MRC website.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Skagit MRC has a subaward agreement with the Salish Sea School for Catherine Houck to coordinate the monthly forage fish monitoring at 7 Skagit MRC restoration and index sites.
 - WDFW Index Sites: Guemes Channel Index, Lovrics Assessment, Samish Index, Similk Bay Index.
 - Restoration Sites: Bowman Bay, Clayton Beach, and Similk Restore
 - Oct 2025 forage fish survey schedule:

Day	Date	Time	Location
Friday	Oct. 10	12:00 noon	BOWMAN BAY
Thursday	Oct. 30	9:00 am	GUEMES CHANNEL
Thursday	Oct. 30	9:00 am	SIMILK BAY

- Kate Olson and Phill Dionne with WDFW hosted an all-day forage fish survey training for MRC forage fish volunteers on Wednesday, October 8th at Padilla Bay. Several volunteers from Skagit participated.
 - Questions about how much sediment to collect with samples. It depends on the sample, if it's mostly sand then less is needed. Still looking into the answer.
 - Forge Fish Survey Volunteers helped with Kids on the Beach at Fidalgo Bay on Oct 23.
 - Looking into the possibility of continuing the forage fish surveys at the Bowman Bay restoration site next year even though the Bowman Bay beach seining for nearshore fish use will end this year. Permitting and authorization would be needed to continue the forage fish surveys.
 - All spawning activity is starting to slow down now with the exception of Fidalgo Bay.
- Kids on the Beach – Pete Haase:
 - Fall 2025 KOTB program will take place **Oct 23** at the Fidalgo Bay resort. 43 eighth grade students from Conway Middle School will participate in beach seining and forage fish surveys with the help of Samish DNR staff and volunteers. We can't do it without volunteers and staff support. We need a few more helpers, so please sign up to help if available!
 - Annie England set aside some time at Padilla Bay to train volunteers on how to work with kids a few days prior to the event.
 - Working on getting schools lined up for the spring 2026 KOTB program. Allen Elementary is closing so teachers and students will be shifting to other schools.
 - The [2025 Kids on the Beach Report](#) has been completed and is now available on the MRC website.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Completed the [2025 Pinto Abalone Report](#) available on the MRC website.
 - 2025 project highlights: 6,596 juvenile abalone outplanted to 9 recovery sites in Skagit County waters, established 4 new outplant sites (totaling 15 sites in Skagit), induced 2 successful spawns producing 25 genetically unique families, and expanded partnerships in the abalone recover effort: Samish Indian Nation, Shannon Point Marine Center, Clallam/Jefferson MRCs, WDFW, Port Townsend Marine Center, and Seattle Aquarium.
 - Samish Indian Nation established several of their own sites that they will monitor, and maintain with additional abalone outplants
 - Shannon Point Marine Center's Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Program outplanted abalone at a couple of sites that they are now monitoring.
 - Clallam and Jefferson MRCs have joined in the effort doing some surveys and outplanting in their areas.

- WDFW continues to provide support with their boats and divers.
 - Seattle Aquarium and Port Townsend Marine Center are using their space for a pinto abalone grow out center to expand capacity for outplanting more abalone.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration— Paul Dinnel:
 - Paul met with Betsy Peabody of Puget Sound Restoration Fund and others interested in the Fidalgo Bay native oyster restoration work and possibly expanding native oyster restoration work to the coast in the future. Josie Iselin, an artist and author whose work primarily focuses on kelp, was part of that group. She was on her way up to Friday Harbor to set up a kelp exhibit at the museum. Josie will also be the Keynote Speaker at the annual 2025 MRC Conference in November.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Tracy Alker/Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Tracy delivered the Interpretive Sign to the school for installation
 - Lynne drafted a detailed plan for the rain garden and shared it with the school including adding 25 native plants, installing a temporary summer irrigation system, plant identification tags with Lushootseed names from the Swinomish, and developing a School Rain Garden Walking Tour Guide for classrooms – awaiting approval and confirmation from the School Principal before proceeding.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - Fidalgo Bay Day took place Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Thank You cards sent to participating businesses, volunteers, and outreach booths.
 - Follow-up survey sent to participating organizations.
 - Completed the [2025 Fidalgo Bay Day Report](#) available on the MRC website.
 - FBD will not take place in 2026 unless we find a new MRC Project Lead and Event Coordinator or find another organization or volunteers that are willing to take it on.
 - Next Steps: Schedule a debrief meeting with Event Coordinator and Planning Committee, review outreach booth survey results, and discuss options for a 2026 FBD event.
 - Suggestions: reach out to Skagit Valley College to see if there are any students looking for event planning experience and would like to take the lead in coordinating the event to gain experience and/or college credit.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Background:** Beach seining at Bowman Bay is funded by the SMRC for 2024-2025 with Jason Morgan as the NWSF Lead Scientist. SFEG has an adjacent potential restoration project in the works and is providing 50% of the necessary beach seining funds -Yuki Reiss, SFEG Restoration Ecologist leads this effort for SFEG.
 - **Updates:** Beach seining continues monthly at Bowman Bay with NWSF.
 - September 12 seining results: 127 total fish caught. 47 staghorn sculpin, 10 English sole, and 70 Shiner perch. 6 volunteers contributed a total of 13.5 volunteer hours.
- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - MRC funding is in place for NWSF to continue plant maintenance at the restoration site through the 2025 growing season (May-October). Funding ends December 31, 2025.
 - The last Stewardship Day of the summer was August 13.
 - A planting party is planned for October 15 at 10 am as part of Orca Recovery Week. Social Media posts have been made to solicit volunteers.
 - A Final Report will be provided by the end of the year.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year and include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Brad Smith - Lead) and new “Lone Tree Point” (Steven Olsen – Lead).

- Last survey unreported survey of the year: September 17 (Shannon Point) – Brad Smith (Land-side Lead), Hal Lee, Dale Fournier, Elizabeth Drozda, Lynne Wenberg (on-water Lead)
 - *WEST BED: Waves and drift from wind prevented depth measurements on edge furthest from shore. Two separate beds in August survey have now grown together into one large bed, although not very dense, and expanded further off shore. Kelp fronds look healthy but some stipes show parasitic growth and deterioration (typical late season?). Several common birds for here observed: belted kingfisher, great blue herons, cormorants.*
 - *EAST BED: No bed in East (again). Sargassum kelp greatly diminished compared to earlier in summer, and several clusters of healthy kelp but not a continuous bed. Six clumps/clusters of 2-6 kelp measured, but depth determination hampered by drift from wind and current. Fronds of kelp looked healthy, although some stipes show corrosion by parasitic organisms (typical of late season?). One belted kingfisher, several great blue herons, and one flock of cormorants in transit.*
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 The contract with Confluence Environmental has been extended through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K). Updates this month:
 - The Nearshore Assessment and Priorities ([NEAP Tool](#)) and [NEAP Story Map](#) are now completed as of June 11, 2025.
 - The NEAP Tool, Story Map, [Data Dictionary](#) and [Prioritization Criteria](#) are all loaded up on the new SoundIQ as a “soft roll out” and also are available on the Skagit MRC website <https://www.skagitmrc.org/projects/skagit-shoreline-needs-assessment/>
 - A “[how-to video](#)” has been made as a tutorial for general public NEAP functionality. The video has been posted to a host site so it can be shared from the MRC Website and SoundIQ.
 - The buildout of the 5 high priority restoration projects identified in 2024 has been drafted and reviewed. The report is anticipated to be finalized by early November.
 - Confluence has agreed to support the NWSC Annual Conference and Collaborative Networking Activity in La Conner on November 8 to showcase Skagit’s NEAP Tool functionality and capabilities.

MRC Grant Updates: Tracy Alker

SEANWS-2023-SkCoPW-00003 (EPA/PSP & WA Funding)

- Grant Agreement has been signed with a grant start date of October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2027.
- Tasks funded under this grant:
 1. MRC Operations
 2. Kids on the Beach
 3. Salish Sea Stewards
 4. Pinto Abalone
- Drafted the Interlocal Agreement with PBNERR for KOTB and SSS- currently going through the county review & signature process.
- Will start working on the Pinto Abalone Sub-Award Agreement next.

OTGP-2026 (NOAA Funding)

- The OTGP-2026 Grant (NOAA Funding) has been drafted and reviewed by MRC Project Leads and MRC staff. The grant start date is January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2027.
- Projects funded under this grant and next steps:
 1. Forage Fish Surveys (Pete Haase, MRC Project Lead):
 - Pete will draft a 2026 -2027 Statement of Work for the contract.
 - Tracy will draft a Sub-Award Agreement with the Salish Sea School with a start date of January 1, 2026.
 2. Intertidal Monitoring (Pete Haase, MRC Project Lead):

- Pete will confirm with the Salish Sea School if they are willing and able to take the lead on managing the Intertidal Monitoring project for the MRC.
- 3. Derelict Crab Pot Prevention and Removal (Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, MRC Project Lead)
 - Lynne will work with Jason Morgan to draft a 2026 -2027 Statement of Work for the contract.
 - Tracy will draft a Sub-Award Agreement with the NWSF with a start date of January 1, 2026.
- 4. Crabber Outreach (Darla Gay Smith, MRC Project Lead)
 - Darla Gay will work with Lynne, Jason, and the Derelict Crab Pot Committee to address crabber outreach.
 - No contract needed.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Festival of Family Farms- Held October 4 & 5- at Taylor Shellfish Farm in Bow from 10:00am – 4:00pm each day. Lynne, Pete, Dale, Paul, Vicky, Tracy and Dean hosted the Skagit MRC hosted outreach booth focused on European Green Crab with a plinko game and crab molt identification and a shellfish identification tracing activity. We also handed out 2026 Salish Sea Stewards training flyers. A lot of interest from the public about green crabs. Many were already somewhat aware of the issue. Several folks from out of state. They had around 1,000 visitors at Taylor Shellfish that weekend.

The meeting adjourned at 11:17am. November 13th MRC meeting cancelled. The next MRC meeting will be held in person, December 11, 2025 (location TBD).



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **December 11, 2025**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting held virtually, via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Pete Haase, Tracy Alker, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Dale Fournier, Paul Dinnel, Jude Apple, Darla Gay Smith, Matt Castle
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Kevin Anderson, Audrea McBride, Catey Ritchie, Carolyn Moulton
- **Others in Attendance:** Birdie Davenport (Friends of the Salish Sea); Annie England (PBNERR); Emma Chuang (PBNERR AmeriCorps); Ryan Miekle (Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Citizen Committee); Jay Lind (Former MRC member)

Call to Order and Introductions: Lynne called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions and Tribal Land Acknowledgment.

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

Approval of Minutes: October 9, 2025, MRC meeting minutes were approved as written. The November 13 MRC meeting was cancelled due to the annual 2025 MRC Conference the week prior.

Public Comments:

- **Rosie Cayou-James In-Memoriam-** MRC members took a moment to share heartfelt condolences for the recent passing of Rosie Cayou James, just one week after her husband Bill Bailey, Master Carver and Artist passed away. Rosie touched many of our lives as she spoke from her heart with beautiful songs, prayers, cultural insights, inspiring words of wisdom, and has always been there to support Fidalgo Bay Day and other community events with delicious food and a warm welcome. Rosie was very special and an important part of our community. She will be greatly missed.

Action Items:

- **Future Speaker Ideas-** Please share speaker ideas for future MRC meetings:
 - Jan 8- Phil Bloch (Confluence)- Skagit Needs Assessment High priority Areas (**CONFIRMED**)
 - Feb 12- Erica Bleke (DNR)- Eelgrass communities in Fidalgo and Padilla Bays (**CONFIRMED**)
- **2026 In Person Meeting Dates-** Dates to be determined and confirmed
 - March? Five-Year Strategic Plan Update- Brainstorming Session. Facilitator ideas?
 - Nov 6 & 7- 2026 MRC Conference (considering cancelling Nov 12 MRC meeting)
 - Dec 10- Location TBD
- **Additional NOAA Funding (Available in 2026)** – Identify any current MRC projects (funded currently under the 2026 NOAA grant) that could benefit from supplemental funding in 2026. Not likely enough funding or time to develop a new project.

MRC Grant Deliverables Due (Dec and Jan):

- **Dec 31-** NOAA Grant- Quarterly Progress Reports (Tracy)
- **Dec 31-** School Rain Garden Final Report (Tracy)
- **Dec 31-** NOAA Grant Final Invoices and Close-Out Report (Tracy)
- **Dec 31-** Shoreline Needs Assessment-High Priority Areas Report- **COMPLETE** (Lynne)
- **Dec 31-** 2025 Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Final Report-**COMPLETE** (Lynne)
- **Dec 31-** Forage Fish Monitoring Final Report- (Pete/The Salish Sea School)
- **Jan 9-** 2026 MRC Annual Work Plan due (Tracy)
- **Jan 15-** (EPA/PSP/WA) Grant Quarterly Progress Reports and Volunteer Hours (Tracy)
- **Jan 30-** Pinto Abalone QAPP (Paul/PSRF)
- **Jan 31-** Forage Fish QAPP due (Pete/The Salish Sea School)
- **Jan 31-** Signed Contract with The Salish Sea School- Forage Fish Monitoring/Intertidal Monitoring (Pete, Tracy)

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

No NWSC meeting in November due to the annual MRC Conference on Nov 7-8 in La Conner. Nothing new to report. The next NWSC meeting is scheduled December 12 from 10am-12pm via Teams.

2025 Annual MRC Conference Reflections: *All*

The Committee discussed some of conference highlights and takeaways and shared the [2025 MRC conference link](#) on the NWSC website:

- Commissioner Wesen seemed to have a good understanding of the Northwest Straits Initiative and Skagit MRC's work in his welcoming remarks.
- Swinomish Chairman Steve Edwards shared what the land and sea means to the Coast Salish people and why it's important to work together to protect it. The Swinomish also generously provided and prepared delicious salmon for the MRC conference lunch.
- Building Equitable Partnerships Between MRCs and Tribes. Panel discussion with Catey Ritchie (Swinomish staff), Jennifer Willup (Swinomish Outreach), and Neil Harrington (Jamestown S'Klallam)
 - Meeting face to face to build relationships and trust- is important. Be prepared to just listen and learn what's important to tribes. Don't push your own agenda.
- Reaching your MRC's Full Potential. NWSC facilitated and took notes and will share summary. MRC membership recruitment was a big topic of discussion:
 - Student recruitment (High School students can get credit for participation. Better to recruit juniors instead of seniors to get two years participation)
 - Present at different organization meetings to help recruit new members and increase visibility
 - Other was to engage non-MRC community members: Invite to join subcommittees, write articles/newsletters, send out surveys to seek input from the community, etc.
- Resilient Ecosystems: Linking Land and Sea and MRCs
 - Important for MRCs to communicate land and sea connections.
 - Visuals are a powerful tool for showing the land and sea connections and impacts.
 - Connection examples: 5% freshwater from forests go to marine waters-Salish Sea. 80% of nutrients in forests come from salmon.
- Creating Messages That Drive Behavior Change
 - Know audience concerns. Different approaches for different audiences. Determine the barriers and understand what drives behavior through focus groups, surveys, and interviews. This can be very time consuming and expensive.
 - Tools to drive change: incentives, prompts, convenience, social norms
- MRC Collaborative Networking Session
 - Clallam MRC- Pinto Abalone Monitoring:

- Surveying potential areas for abalone restoration. Underwater video provides a valuable teaching tool.
- Jefferson MRC-Marine Science and Stewardship Presentations at the Wooden Boat Festival. 19 speakers/presentations. Over 1,404 visitors! Takes a lot of time to plan and coordinate this large event. Huge undertaking!
- Island MRC- Shoreline Armoring & Analysis- Lots of new armoring with no permit! Results used to advise Commissioners, educate shoreline owners and permit managers and regulators.
- San Juan MRC- Understanding Vessel Impacts for Marine Ecosystem Protection and Recovery- mooring buoy data. San Juan- #1 boating destination in the US. Potentially having a huge impact on marine environment.
- Whatcom MRC- Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring- Project fills a data gap in HAB monitoring sites in northern Puget Sound. The Skagit Conservation District leads the volunteer training and monitoring effort for this program in partnership with the Health Department Skagit County.
- Skagit MRC- Shoreline Needs Assessment- NEAP Tool Demo- Phil Bloch (Confluence)
- **2025 Environmental Leadership Award**- Congratulations to Dr. Paul Dinnel, recipient of the **2025 Environmental Leadership Award**, whose dedication, scientific rigor, and collaborative spirit have made a lasting impact on the health and resilience of Puget Sound! Paul, we are so proud of you and deeply grateful for all the good work that you do, thank you!!

2026 MRC Goals, 2026 MRC Calendar, and Grant Deliverables: Tracy

- **2026 MRC Operations Goals**
 - MRC Membership Structure and Recruitment Strategy- Develop a strategy for MRC membership structure, recruitment, building and maintaining capacity and diversity, onboarding new members and project leads.
 - MRC Communications & Outreach Plan- Identify target audiences, develop messaging for specific audiences, determine and implement best method for reaching target audience, MRC website updates, project fact sheets, outreach materials, etc.
 - MRC Project Identification, Development, Evaluation, Selection Process- Develop a clear and fair process for project identification and development, evaluation criteria, ranking, and funding allocation.
 - MRC 5-Year Strategic Plan Update: The last update in 2014. First step - plan and facilitate an in-person brainstorming session with MRC members, possibly in March. Need a facilitator. Looking for facilitator ideas.
- **2026 Skagit MRC Look-Ahead Calendar**
 - This is a working document that will be updated and shared in the monthly MRC meeting packets. Includes meetings, events, grant deliverable deadlines, etc.
 - 2026 Annual Work Plan due in January. Will review at the January 8th MRC meeting.
- **Grant Deliverable Deadlines**
 - Lots of grant deliverable deadlines coming up in December and January! Project Leads are responsible for tracking project deliverables and ensuring they are completed.
 - The current 2025 NOAA Grant projects and funding ends December 31, 2025. All final invoices and deliverables must be completed by December 31st! The new NOAA Grant has been drafted and will start January 1, 2026.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Dale Fournier:
 - December 4th- Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee Working Group meeting held virtually via Teams to continue planning the 2025 - 2026 SSS Training Season and curriculum.

- Classes will be held Tuesdays at Padilla Bay from 1pm-5pm starting February 10th through April 14th (unless an 11th session is needed).
- Most of the topics for the curriculum have been set. Erin is working on confirming presenters. Pete is also reaching out to a couple of additional salmon speakers.
- On April 14th, Graduation Day, there is an MRC panel scheduled to help the participants understand the role of the MRC.
- Registration for the 2026 SSS Training Class opened on December 1st and runs through January 31st. Registration forms are available on the MRC website [here](#). 26 spots available. First come first served basis. Please help spread the word (see attached flyer). For more information, go to the Skagit MRC website: <https://www.skagitmrc.org/projects/salish-sea-stewards/>. As of December 9th we have 8 participants registered!
- The AC members have been working on Publicity and Promotion. Flyers have been distributed to local libraries and businesses.
- Our next meeting is January 8th, 2026, at 2:30. This will be another virtual meeting.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Skagit MRC has a subaward agreement with the Salish Sea School for Catherine Houck to coordinate the monthly forage fish monitoring at 7 Skagit MRC restoration and index sites.
 - WDFW Index Sites: Guemes Channel Index, Lovrics Assessment, Samish Index, Similk Bay Index.
 - Restoration Sites: Bowman Bay, Clayton Beach, and Similk Restore
 - December forage fish surveys cancelled due to flooding and safety concerns. Hope to reschedule surveys later in the month.
 - 2026 Community outreach for forage fish.
 - The Salish Sea School would like to do some community forage fish outreach next September, most likely at Fidalgo Bay, TBD.
- Kids on the Beach – Annie England:
 - Allen Elementary is now officially a bilingual school. Some of the teachers who have participated in KOTB in the past aren't bilingual, so they have been shifted to other schools. Because of this shift, Allen Elementary School will not be participating in the 2026 KOTB spring program. Annie hopes they will participate in the future, but it will depend on the teachers and if they want to participate in the program.
 - Spring 2026 KOTB program- Emma Chuang (PBNERR AmeriCorps) will be help with the program in the spring. There will be calls out to volunteers to help with field activities.
 - Edison Elementary: One of the former Allen Elementary School teachers who has been very engaged in the KOTB program is now with Edison Elementary School. 3 classes 5th graders 65 students, April 27-May 1
 - Evergreen Elementary, Sedro-Wolley: 92 6th graders, April 13-17
 - Concrete High School: 90 students, May 18 -22
- Intertidal Monitoring (2026)- Pete Haase:
 - Early in the planning process. Project doesn't officially start until January 1, 2026.
 - Working on modifying DNR's intertidal monitoring QAPP to meet Ecology's requirements with help from Sasha.
 - Intertidal monitoring would take place in the summer of 2026 in Fidalgo Bay. It will be dependent on permits, protocols, availability of experts, etc.
 - Pete is in communication with Whatcom and Jefferson MRCs who are also investigating the possibility of continuing intertidal monitoring in their Aquatic Preserves.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Paul met with staff from Shannon Point Marine Center (SPMC) and PSRF at Shannon Point to discuss the possibility of establishing an abalone grow-out facility at Shannon Point to increase the propagation of juvenile abalone for future outplants. It looks like SPMC is actively seeking funding to accomplish this.

- Paul attended the 2025 Abalone Partner’s Meeting on December 2nd at Fisherman’s Terminal in Seattle. Gave a short presentation on the history and status of Skagit MRC’s abalone restoration project. Others giving presentations represented the following: WDFW, PSRF, Seattle Aquarium, Samish Indian Nation, Clallam MRC, Makah Tribe, SPMC, Lummi Nation, WWU and UW. Breakout sessions looked at many of the factors affecting abalone restoration in the Salish Sea and what the future may hold.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration– Paul Dinneel:
 - Paul provided a summary for the Skagit County Historical Museum (in La Conner) on Skagit MRC’s native oyster restoration efforts and outcomes in Fidalgo Bay. This information will be part of an oyster exhibit being planned for the Museum in the near future. Other groups are also providing information related to their oyster restoration projects and areas of interest.
 - Paul connected with Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) to forward oyster settlement shell strings collected from two sites in Fidalgo Bay in 2025 to monitor recruitment.
 - Jude reported that PBNERR has been doing some outplanting at test plots in Big Indian Slough and Padilla Bay. This is the first year they’ve seen natural recruitment! They now have an estimated 65,000 Olympia oysters in a 110 square meter area thanks to an initial contribution of shell from Skagit MRC several years ago. PBNERR is part of the Native Olympia Oyster Collaborative for the west coast. The Native Olympia Oyster Collaborative recently published the [Olympia Oyster Restoration Story Map](#).
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Tracy Alker/Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - The interpretive sign donated by Westar Solutions has been installed in by the School Facilities Dept.
 - Lynne developed an upgraded rain garden plan to install 25 additional native plants, purchase and install plant identification signs and purchase and install an irrigation system to be used during dry summer months.
 - Halee Sexton, a Skagit Co Intern, purchased the native plants and she, Tracy and Lynne installed the plants on 12/10 in the atmospheric river!
 - A temporary season irrigation kit and native plant ID tags are in the works.
 - The Final Report deliverable is due when the project ends December 31, 2025.



- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - A Fidalgo Bay Day debrief meeting with Jenn Dumas, the 2025 FBD Event Coordinator and Anna Thompson, county outreach staff, is scheduled for December 17, to review lessons learned, outreach booth survey results, and discuss options for a potential 2026 FBD event.
 - Received feedback from 14 participating outreach booths in an online survey. 100% of the respondents thought that Fidalgo Bay Day was worthwhile and was successful in increasing public awareness of the marine environment, fostering stewardship, and nurturing partnerships. Unfortunately, there was no interest in planning or coordinating Fidalgo Bay Day in 2026.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Beach seining at Bowman Bay is funded by the SMRC for 2024-2025 with Jason Morgan as the NWSF Lead Scientist.
 - Beach seining occurs monthly at Bowman Bay with NWSF through December 2025.

- Bowman Bay Restoration Project Monitoring Plan calls for post-restoration monitoring to occur in years 1 – 5 (2016 - 2019 & 2021), and 9 – 10 (2024 – 2025) after restoration has occurred.
- The LAST beach seining event was supposed to take place this Friday, December 12 followed by a Thank You luncheon for Bowman Bay restoration monitoring volunteers (beach seining and forage fish monitoring) hosted by the NWSF. However, the event was cancelled due to ongoing flooding concerns. The event will be rescheduled in January.
- Skagit MRC has provided a “photage” thank you email to same list of volunteers.
- The Bowman Bay Beach Seining Final Report will be completed in March, 2026 after the data collected has been entered and analyzed.
- November 19 seining results: 3,530 total fish caught. 3 staghorn sculpin, 5 English sole, 1 penpoint gunnel, 1 threespine stickleback and a whopping 3,520 Pacific herring!! 9 volunteers contributed a total of 16.5 volunteer hours.



- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - MRC funding is in place for NWSF to continue plant maintenance at the restoration site through the 2025 growing season (May-October). Funding ends December 31, 2025.
 - The final planting party and stewardship event was held October 15 at 10 am as part of Orca Recovery Week.
 - The Northwest Straits Foundation staff are working on the Final Report which is anticipated to be completed by the end of the week.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Skagit surveys include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and new Lone Tree Point (Steven Olsen – Lead).
 - 2025 kelp survey season (June-Sept) has been completed and data uploaded Kobo toolbox.
 - NWSC Skagit MRC Kelp Monitoring Data Review – November 17 (team leads)
 - Bull Kelp resilience and loss in the Salish Sea: results of an HSIL funded project webinar- November 18.
 - Performed a boat-based survey to observe and take photos of Skagit Bay kelp beds in support of possible Puget Sound Restoration Fund research on winter kelp beds.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Project closed December 31, 2025.
 - The NEAP Tool, Story Map, Data Dictionary, Prioritization Criteria and How-to Video are complete and available on the Skagit MRC website and SoundIQ2: <https://www.skagitmrc.org/projects/skagit-shoreline-needs-assessment/>
 - The final Skagit Co Shoreline Needs Assessment - High Priority Area Technical Report was completed December 5th and has been uploaded to EAGL and the Skagit MRC website. It has also been submitted to the Skagit MRC members and our partners for information and future project consideration. Phil Bloch has agreed to attend the January MRC Monthly meeting to provide a summary and Q&A of Confluence’s proposed high potential restoration projects in Skagit.
 - Confluence supported the NWSC Annual Conference and Collaborative Networking Activity in La Conner on November 8 to showcase Skagit’s NEAP Tool functionality and capabilities.
- Derelict Crab Pot Removal (2026) – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

- **Background:** A Derelict Crab Pot Removal project has been funded by Skagit MRC for 2026 to target derelict gear removals in Skagit Bay in collaboration with the Swinomish Tribe, Island MRC and NWSF. NWSF has secured funding from WDFW and The Builders Initiative Fund to support shellfish pot removal, including development of remotely operated vehicles, location-based phone app for reporting lost fishing nets, and a new public access derelict fishing gear database. Skagit MRC has funding for (6) side scan sonar surveys which will be a sole source contract with NWSF to perform the surveys in coordination with removals. Swinomish Tribe has provided a map indicating high priority derelict gear locations. Island MRC will be funding additional side scan sonar surveys and crabber outreach efforts.
- **Updates:** We met with Jason Morgan and Ken Collins and Jeff Wheeler (Island MRC) several times in preparation for developing the 2026 statement of work, including establishing an Advisory Committee to support collaborative decision making. Grant documentation is in process; once funds are received in January a sole source contract will be established with NWSF for Skagit MRC's portion of the project.
- Derelict Crab Pot Outreach (2026) – Darla Gay Smith:
 - Darla is working on the 2026 crabber outreach plan as part of the Derelict Crab Pot Removal and Prevention project. More information to come.

Friends of the Salish Sea Biodiversity Project: Birdie Davenport

- Goal: provide non-profit support to the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) program areas that have limited staffing and funding and need help and support for the management, protection, and restoration of important biologically diverse natural ecosystems throughout the state including:
 - **Natural Areas-** (Ecosystems: old growth forest, native grasslands, native oak woodlands, high alpine and mid-montane habitats, salt marshes, bogs, estuaries and other wetlands. Many connections to marine ecosystems). Two types of Natural Areas: Natural Area Preserves (58 sites) and Natural Resources Conservation Areas. Natural Area Preserves have the highest level of protection. Natural Resources Conservation Areas (39 sites) have limited low-impact public access.
 - **Aquatic Reserves-** (Ecosystems: kelp forests and eelgrass meadows). There are 8 Aquatic Reserves. They don't have permanent protected status. Puget Sound Corps provides some monitoring and outreach support- funded bi-annually.
 - **Natural Heritage Program-** Scientists identify and maintain databases for rare species and upland ecosystems throughout the state including federal land and private land with permission. There is currently no inventory database program like this for intertidal or subtidal aquatic ecosystems, except for eelgrass and floating kelp.
- Biodiversity Projects: volunteer stewardship, restoration, research, monitoring, interpretive signs and displays, outreach, and advocacy.
- What's Next: Build a conservation coalition of partners and members statewide, apply for grants, solicit donations, sponsor events, and expand the Anacortes Lecture Series to Olympia. The Lecture Series has already expanded to Edmonds.
- Contact: biodiversity@friendsofsalishea.org. 360-791-5932

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- **Dec 13-** 1pm-2:30pm at Padilla Bay NERR: Guest speaker Dr. Zachary Randell-ROV Surveys within Kelp Forests. Sign up [here](#) for this free presentation. You can learn more about this work here: https://github.com/Seattle-Aquarium/Coastal_Climate_Resilience. However, it might have to be cancelled due to flooding. Be sure to call ahead.
- **Jan 23-** Storming the Sound at Skagit Valley College.
- [First detection of invasive European green crab in Skagit Bay](#) found by volunteer Shirley Hoh as part of a routine Molt Search! In response, WSG Crab Team, WDFW, and the biologists from the

Swinomish Indian Tribal Community led a trapping effort capturing a total of 12 green crabs across three sites in Skagit Bay. The size of the crabs indicates they've been there for at least a couple of years.

- **Skagit County to Create Climate Impact Advisory Committee** (CIAC) consisting of 15 voting members, all of which must be full-time Skagit County residents. More information on the CIAC proposal can be found on the Commissioner's [website](#).

The meeting adjourned at 11:17am. The next MRC meeting will be held via Teams, January 8, 2026