



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.



- 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 Dinnel:
 - 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 Dinnel:
 - 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-Sources 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**.*