



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **January 11, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Betsy Stevenson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Catey Ritchie, Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple
 - MRC Members Absent: Kevin Anderson, Diane Hennebert
- **Others in Attendance:** Jonn Lunsford (City of Anacortes), Erin Merklein (SSS Volunteer Coordinator/Padilla Bay NERR); Caitlyne Blair (NWSC); Cynthia Nielson (volunteer); Jenn E. Johnson (SCPW)

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

Approval of Minutes: December 14, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: None

Fidalgo Bay Trestle Project Update- Jonn Lunsford

- City of Anacortes partners: DNR and Samish Indian Nation.
- RFQ- 5 firms submitted bids. Hanson Inc. selected. Currently negotiating scope. Contract not signed yet.
- Phase I Scope Task List to determine current site conditions to get to 15% completion drawings for removing the causeway and replacing the trestle):
 - Site Investigation and Baseline Assessment
 - Topographic & Bathymetric surveys- 30ft off trail and causeway
 - Structural inspections(flammable/creosote) - (Probably off the table for now)
 - Geotechnical inspections (causeway borings & sediment sampling)
 - Hazardous material sampling (will the removal & transport of sediment cause problems in the bay? If contaminated soil, will it cause problems to the surrounding area?). Costs could be more expensive if additional samples need to be taken. Could be subject to a lengthy study.
 - Data Analysis and Design
 - Geotech design analysis
 - Hydrodynamic modeling and Sediment Transport Evaluation
 - Wave modeling (not quite there yet)
 - Structural analysis & conceptual design
 - Alternatives Analysis Report and Conceptual Design Renderings
 - Will be looking at potential impacts to recreation component and overall health of the bay if we do this project.
 - Public Involvement and Outreach
 - Partner and Public meetings
 - Community Engagement Plan
- Army corps wants to be a partner on project team which would be a huge win.

Project Status & Discussion Continued...

- **Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:**
 - There are 4 kelp bed sites surveyed in Skagit County between June and September each year by experienced kayak volunteer leads.
 - All data from 2023 kelp surveys have been submitted and reviewed by NWSC and will be added to DNR's floating kelp indicator map.

- The kelp indicator [interactive map](#) data runs about one year behind. 2023 kayak kelp survey data will be added next year.
- MRC Kelp Kayak Monitoring 2023 Data Review Meeting via Zoom, January 17th.
- Lynne and Jeff Whitty will be interviewed this morning by Emma with the Skagit Valley Herald for an article on kelp.
- Bowman Bay Restoration– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Skagit MRC funds and supports plant maintenance at the Bowman Bay restoration site in partnership with NWSF and Parks.
 - Ellen from NWSF provided the 2023 Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance annual report.
 - The restoration plantings have struggled to survive at the site in past years with hot dry summers. This year Lisa Kaufman led efforts to use the Parks excess fire hydrant water truck (250 gallons) for weekly watering during the spring and summer months. Lots of weeds and grass but plants doing well.
 - Difficult to get enough volunteers to consistently help with plant maintenance on a weekly basis. Need to do a better job of communicating and recruiting volunteers to help.
 - The NWSF will perform beach seining out there in 2024 and 2025 with support and funding from Skagit MRC and SFEG. SFEG is interested in the beach seining data for a potential restoration project out there.
- Shoreline Needs Assessment – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - This project leverages all the studies since 2005 such as Skagit Bay’s blueprint document that surveyed shoreline for restoration and conservation opportunities.
 - Several projects have been completed since then. Lynne assembled a technical advisory team to identify what’s been done, consolidate the information, and update the list as part of phase I. Advisory team members include: Lynne, Tracy, Paul, Pete, Cynthia, Lisa Kaufman, Rick Haley, and Audrea McBride.
 - Lynne drafted an RFP that is being reviewed by the Advisory Team. The Advisory Team will be involved in the consultant interviews and selection process.
 - The consultant will utilize the updated list and apply new data (kelp, forage fish, sea levels, etc.) to create a new project ready list that the MRC could focus on with available funding.
- Salish Sea Stewards – Erin Merklein and Pete Haase:
 - Training will be held Tuesdays from 1-5pm starting Feb 6-April 30 at Padilla Bay. Max of 25 people, 24 spots filled. Registration is open through January 31st.
 - MRC members are invited to attend the training.
 - Training is being widely promoted. Recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#)
 - Sara Brostrom is developing and coordinating the training curriculum. Training schedule close to being finalized. Just waiting on two speakers. Erin Merklein will facilitate the classes this year.
 - Sara is coordinating the SSS training schedule with the Deception Pass State Park Naturalists training program and other similar programs to make sure the classes don’t conflict so that volunteers can attend both training programs interested.
 - Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meets monthly with the Volunteer Coordinator and Padilla Bay NERR education staff to plan the upcoming training. Next meeting will be held January 19th.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Tracy Alker:
 - Date has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - This will be the 20th anniversary of FBD! Looking for ideas to help celebrate.
 - Need help planning this year’s event and leading some of the tasks. Currently only have 3 people on the planning committee. Next meeting will be held in February.
 - Looking for a volunteer to coordinate chowder samples.
 - Reserved the Shannon Point touch tanks.
 - Beach seining demo will be led by Matt and Jason around 2pm.
 - Will be reaching out to organizations with education booths in February.
 - No current lead, only a committee of 3 sharing the responsibility. Need more help with event planning.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - Will start ramping up planning in March.
 - 3 schools participating in the spring program:
 - April 15- April 19: Concrete 9th-12th grade with 20 students participating.
 - April 29- May 2: Evergreen Elementary 4th grade with, 100 students participating.

- April 29- May 2: Allen Elementary 4th grade with 100 students participating.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase & Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - 4 Index sites (monthly samples): Guemes Channel, E. Similk Bay (Swinomish Reservation), Samish Island, and west of marina towards Skyline.
 - 3 Restoration Sites (monthly samples): Bowman Bay, W. Similk Bay (private property), and Clayton Beach.
 - Surveys in Fidalgo Bay are on behalf of DNR as a State Aquatic Reserve. Pete stepping down as lead for this site. New lead FF volunteers from Citizen Aquatic Reserve Committed: Tom Flanagan, Catherine Houck. Annual FF report produced by DNR will be shared with MRC.
 - There is a quarterly Zoom meeting for all those involved in forage fish surveying work on January 16.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert:
 - No update.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneel:
 - QAPP Addendum has been updated and under review by Ecology.
 - Mostly hatchery work going on right now to raise abalone for outplanting and planning for the upcoming field season.
 - Looking to start abalone field work in February when algae has died back and there is better visibility to count abalone.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel:
 - The Olympia Oyster Restoration in Fidalgo Bay Day Report (Year 21) with 2023 bay-wide population data has been finalized and was shared with the MRC as well as volunteers and partners involved in the project.
 - Annual monitoring of Olympia oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay will start up again this spring to continue monitoring the annual variabilities of oyster densities and post larval settlement.
 - Pete- Mike Sato's newsletter "Haikai" had an article on Olympia oysters making a comeback on the west coast from CA to WA "[How to Love an Oyster](#)".

Northwest Straits Commission Report: *No Report*

- Last NWSC meeting occurred December 8th via Zoom, from 10am-12pm. Highlights were already shared with the MRC at the December 14th MRC meeting. No new updates.
- MRC/NWSC staff meeting will be held January 18th.
- Next NWSC meeting will occur virtually on Zoom, January 26th from 10am-12pm. All are welcome to join.

MRC Operations & 2024 Work Plan: *Tracy Alker*

- EPA/PSP Grant Deliverables Due: including the 2024 Annual Work Plan, Quarterly Progress Reports, and volunteer hours.
- MRC's 2024 Annual Work Plan: intended to be a useful tool to help make sure we stay on track with our key tasks, timelines, and deliverables, and reaching in our goals.
 - The Annual Work Plan includes MRC Operations and all our projects that are currently funded under 3 different grants with different timelines. It also includes projects that aren't currently funded such as: Forage Fish Surveys, Kelp Surveys, Crabber Outreach, Derelict Vessel Work Group, and Voluntary No Anchor Zone/Eelgrass Protection.
 - The Annual Work Plan will be sent to project leads for input. The final will be shared with the entire Committee. It is a working document that will need to be updated.
- One Time Grant Program- OTGP-2023 NOAA: grant deadline has been extended through December 31, 2024, for the School Rain Garden project and Trestle Project that got delayed.
- One Time Grant Program -OTG-2024 NOAA: grant just got signed. Funding is available January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2025, for the following projects:
 - Skagit Shorelines Needs Assessment (2024)
 - Bowman Bay Beach Seining (2024-2025)
 - Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance (2024-2025)

- School Rain Garden (2025)
- Under this grant, we will have some funding available in 2025 for another project (\$31,500).
- Drafted Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs)- for grant funding directed to Northwest Straits Foundation:
 - Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance
 - Bowman Bay Beach Seining
 - Skagit Shorelines Needs Assessment Tech Support.
 - Will also draft MOUs for MRC grant funding directed to Padilla Bay NERR for Salish Sea Stewards and Kids on the Beach.
- Presentation to the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC): Jason Morgan will be giving a presentation on the Derelict Gear Removal Project to the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) on February 26 at 2pm.
 - What other MRC or NWSI projects would be good to present to BoCC?
- In-Person MRC Meetings: The Committee liked the idea of hold in-person meetings on a quarterly basis. Catey- it might be a little more difficult to attend in-person meetings. Melissa will try to attend when Catey can't. Darla requested in-person meetings have a start time of 9:30am rather than 9:00am to better align with ferry schedules. Jude- in-person meetings are valuable and should be purpose driven. What are we going to when we meet in-person that we can't do when meeting virtually? There should be more of a strategic plan when we schedule in-person meetings.
 - Tracy, Betsy, and Lynne will try to come up with a strategic plan for our in-person meeting schedule. Should align with presentations and field trips, etc.
 - MRC members were asked to share guest speaker or field trip ideas for future MRC meetings.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Mount Vernon High School Science Night - Thursday, April 18th 5-8pm. Forage Fish Survey volunteers will host a booth for the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Stewardship Committee. Good opportunity for MRC to host a booth for education and outreach. Betsy said she would put it on her calendar.
- Storming the Sound- Thursday, January 25th in La Conner. Annual conference for environmental educators in the north Puget Sound Region. Susan Wood has been heavily involved in planning the annual Storming the Sound each year for the last 25 years. Susan recently retired in December after 35 years of service as the Education Program Coordinator for Padilla Bay, but still plans on attending the event this year. Be sure to stop by and say "hi".
- Salish Sea School Partnership Opportunities- Pete, Tracy, and Sasha will be meeting with the Salish Sea School in early February to discuss potential partnership opportunities that would benefit the meet our funding criteria that could benefit the MRC.
- Samish Area Conservation Project - Padilla Bay NERR's project in partnership with Skagit Land Trust. Submitted a Letter of Intent to apply for a very large-scale restoration assessment project. Invited to submit a full proposal this week. It's a \$500k project to complete an alternatives analysis and modeling to look at all kinds of different scenarios and how to maintain county infrastructure, dikes, and access to the island, and restoring the areas to accommodate Sea Level Rise.
- Padilla Bay NERR's Upland Prairie Restoration Project- PBNERR submitted a proposal for an upland prairie restoration project and will be partnering with the Swinomish and Samish on restoration of native plants and improving access to culturally valuable plants..

The meeting adjourned at 10:23am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams on February 8th.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **February 8, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Betsy Stevenson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate), Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple, Diane Hennebert
 - MRC Members Absent: Catey Ritchie, Kevin Anderson
- **Others in Attendance:** Holli Watne (Skagit Watershed Council); Cynthia Nielson (volunteer); Jenn E. Johnson (SCPW); Jessica Owens (NWSC); Caitlyn Blair (NWSC)

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

Approval of Minutes: January 11, 2024, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: None

Northwest Straits Commission Report: Diane Hennebert

Last NWSC meeting occurred January 26th via Zoom, from 10am-12pm. Highlights were shared with the MRC in the meeting packet.

- 2024 NW Straits Initiative Conference- November 15-16.
 - Location TBD. Hoped to have it in La Conner at Maple Hall, but it didn't pan out. Looking at venues near Everett. Jude recommended the Bellingham cruise Terminal.
 - **Seeking MRC members to participate on the 2024 NW Straits Initiative Conference Planning Committee.** Attend 5-7 meetings, each around 1-1.5hrs. Last meeting in August. Committee reviews Agenda topics, speaker recommendations and invitations, etc. Contact Caitlyn Blair to sign up or for more information (blair@nwstraits.org).
- [Puget Sound Recovery Acceleration Funding Tool](#) now available. This tool makes it easier to find and apply for funding and helps to align funding opportunities with funding needs.
- [Puget Sound Partnership Nearshore Conservation Credit Program](#) – MRC's in need of funding for nearshore conservation projects are encouraged to submit proposals.
- NWSI Retreat: originally planned for March, but will hold regular meeting via Zoom instead. New retreat date TBD.
- MRC Kelp Data Sharing Meeting Stats: Kelp monitoring -over 343 acres of kelp forests monitored and over 250 miles paddled in 2023.
- European Green Crab Committee: Seeking reps from each MRC to participate.
- NWSC Alternate Representative: Diane is seeking an alternate Skagit MRC representative to attend NWSC meetings when she is unable to.
- Next NWSC meeting: February 23, 10am-3pm at the Whatcom Civic Building. Presentation by Braeden Van Denze, Natural Resource Economist at WDFW.

CREST Project Update: Pete Haase

- "Culturally Responsive Elementary Science Teaching - CREST" is the WWU/Pacific Education Institute project grant recently awarded by the National Science Foundation.

- A 3-year research project to study the effect of teachers utilizing the 'Explore the Salish Sea' curriculum which takes elementary school kids (primarily 5th grade) out to the beach and incorporates indigenous knowledge and thinking and culturally responsive instruction.
- Skagit MRC signed a letter of collaboration. Pete agreed to be Skagit MRC's representative and provide support as needed.
- The first Introductory Zoom meeting was held January 22 with several representatives from supporting organizations.
- Will host summer workshops next year to introduce the 'Explore the Salish Sea' teaching curriculum to 30 5th grade teachers, mostly from the Bellingham School District.
- Representatives from the collaborative community-based organizations, including Skagit MRC, will participate in the teacher workshops to share information about our organization and opportunities for teachers to bring classes to participate in some kind of field activity or research project outside of the classroom. There is funding available to bring the classrooms on field trips as well as stipends for teachers.
- A final report will be produced.
 - Jude- This collaboration provides an opportunity to further incorporate indigenous practices and knowledge and science into our own educational programs like Kids on the Beach.
 - Holli- this is the first-time hearing about this project. It would be really cool if Pete could share this with the Skagit Watershed Council.

The Salish Sea School/Skagit MRC Collaboration Meeting Update: Pete Haase

Pete and Tracy (Skagit MRC) along with Sasha Horst (NWSC) met with Amy Eberling and Elizabeth Drozda (The Salish Sea School) to brainstorm ideas for a collaborative project with school kids that would meet the funding criteria of the NWSC. It cannot be a project that The Salish Sea School is already doing because that would be considered pass through funding to another organization and not a Skagit MRC project. It would have to be a new project that the Skagit MRC came up with in collaboration with The Salish Sea School. Although we didn't walk away with any new project ideas that we could help fund, there are some possible ways The Salish Sea School could participate in some of the work the Skagit MRC is already doing such as:

- Stormwater monitoring
- Fidalgo Bay Day craft table
- Recreational crabber outreach
- Bowman Bay plant maintenance (*The Salish Sea School will be meeting with NWSF about their summer camp visits to Bowman Bay and how they might involve students while they are there*)
- Rain Garden plant maintenance

Right now, The Salish Sea School is focusing on developing school partnerships (especially with schools from Sedro, MV, Burlington). This involves going into schools to teach about the impacts of stormwater and/or local marine life and then bringing students to the beaches, islands, and/or waterways- ultimately connecting where they live with the sea, while discussing how they can help aid in its conservation/preservation. If/when Skagit MRC is interested in funding and collaborating on a school field trip, community partnership trip (Children of the Valley/Kulshan Creek/Glacier Peak Institute) or a community event (wildflower plantings, luminaria event, orca recovery day, etc.) The Salish Sea School would be happy to come in and talk about the project to the MRC. In the meantime, we will continue discussing potential new project ideas that we could collaborate on and fund in the future.

- Darla- how are they currently getting funding for their programs. Pete- mainly through a variety of grants and private donations.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting on January 14th to finalize planning for the 2024 Salish Sea Stewards (SSS) training.
 - Full class with 27 attendees!
 - Classes started Tuesday, Feb 6 from 1-5pm at Padilla Bay with Sara Brostrom facilitating the training. Erin Merklein will be taking over the training facilitation for Sara soon. Erin is also the Volunteer Coordinator. Classes run through April 30th.

- There was an uptick in younger participants and a nice mix of demographics. Most were from Anacortes and Bellingham.
- They were a lively bunch with lots of good questions. One group bonded so well at the table exercise they dubbed themselves the Environmental Data Nerds!
- The class participated in several ice breaker activities. They were also asked to share one thing about themselves with the rest of the class on a Google spreadsheet. It's a great way to get to know the cohorts.
- Jude presented welcoming remarks and an overview of Padilla Bay NERR programs and Ecosystem services. Lynne and Pete presented a brief history and overview of the Salish Sea Stewards and MRC. Todd Woodard of Samish Indian Nation presented a thought-provoking talk on cultural resources and the Cultural Value of the Salish Sea.
- The SSS Advisory Committee members greeted the class with coffee, treats, and displayed our new Salish Sea Stewards banner.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - 4 Index sites (monthly samples): Guemes Channel, E. Similk Bay (Swinomish Reservation), Samish Island, and west of marina towards Skyline.
 - 3 Restoration Sites (monthly samples): Bowman Bay, W. Similk Bay (private property), and Clayton Beach. Skagit volunteers alternate monthly sampling at Clayton Beach with Whatcom County. This is Skagit's month to sample Clayton Beach.
 - January sampling at Bowman Bay was canceled due to a big snowstorm event. Bowman Bay gate was shut so no public access to the beach. Plan to sample at Bowman Bay along in coordination with the Northwest Straits Foundation beach seining activity in February.
 - Fidalgo Bay surveys are for DNR. New lead FF volunteers from Citizen Aquatic Reserve Committed: Tom Flanagan, Catherine Houck.
 - It's a quiet time for surf smelt. Not much happening right now.
 - Outreach: Volunteers will be tabling at Mount Vernon Science night with forage fish eggs and microscopes and educational information. Forage fish volunteers will also assist with Kids on the Beach program in the spring. Pete will be one of the presenters at one of the Salish Sea Stewards classes this spring on conducting forage fish survey in the field.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - 3 schools participating in the spring program with classroom and field data collecting and analysis components: mudflats, forage fish, and beach seining. Many students have never been to beach before:
 - April 15 - April 19: **Concrete 9th-12th grade**, 20 high school students.
 - May 6 - May 10: **Evergreen Elementary in Sedro Woolley 4th grade**, 75 students.
 - May 20 - May 24: **Allen Elementary in Mount Vernon 4th and 5th grade**, 84-100 students (English 2nd language for many of the students).
 - 4th graders will get field experience participating in the mudflat safari and 5th grade students will get field experience in beach seining. The idea is to create a different field experience for each grade level.
 - Jude hopes to improve student language accessibility by inviting Latino college students involved in the Latinos in Science Leadership program at Skagit Valley College to participate in the Kids on the Beach program and work with students and language barriers.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert:
 - Looking for additional help to keep this project moving forward.
 - Need to find a new point of contact with the La Conner School District.
 - Melissa and Catey- know some potential some contacts in La Conner that could help.
 - The location has high visibility, is significantly smaller in size compared to other rain gardens and is an existing rain garden so in theory it should be easier to install and maintain. It would also roll in nicely with the Swinomish "Between two Worlds" program curriculum.
 - Planting is targeted for the fall of 2024 since that is the best time for planting rain gardens. The hard part will be to come up with the rain garden design/planting and plant maintenance plan, recruiting volunteers to maintain it, and interpretive signage content and installation.

- Funding would be used to purchase plants, mulch, and interpretive signage. Funding expires December 31, 2024.
- Need to recruit volunteers to help get the plants in the ground and with ongoing maintenance.
 - Lynne- Rain Gardens are currently on the Salish Sea Stewards project list in Volgistics. We can post something in TheWave to recruit volunteers.
 - Diane- will be at one of the Salish Sea Stewards training sessions to talk about the Mt. Erie Rain Garden which might be a great opportunity to recruit volunteers to help with the La Conner Rain Garden as well.
 - Tracy- The new County Intern has experience in habitat restoration planting and can help and take on a lead role as well.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith/Tracy Alker:
 - Date has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - This will be the 20th anniversary of FBD! Looking for ideas to help celebrate.
 - Need help planning this year's event and leading some of the tasks. Currently only have 3 people on the planning committee. Next meeting will be held February 12 at 2:30pm.
 - Reserved the Shannon Point touch tanks.
 - Beach seining demo will be led by Matt and Jason around 2pm.
 - Planning documents including task lists and timelines are being updated.
 - Created 2024 Fidalgo Bay Day Flyer and Save the Date cards.
 - Will be reaching out to past participating organizations and volunteers with Save the Date cards in February/March.
 - Holli- looking for a new home for a collapsible interactive photobooth. It could be a great activity for Fidalgo Bay Day.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - QAPP Addendum has been approved and signed by Ecology.
 - Mostly hatchery work going on right now to raise abalone for outplanting and planning for the upcoming field season.
 - Will start abalone field work soon including monitoring outplant sites and outplanting additional juvenile abalone at some outplant sites.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Annual monitoring of Olympia oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay will start up again this spring to continue monitoring the annual variabilities of oyster densities and post larval settlement and setting out new shell bags for monitoring larval settlement next year.
 - Paul will be presenting the Olympia oyster restoration work to the Salish Sea Stewards class in March.
 - In April, Puget Sound Restoration Fund is going to schedule a field trip to Fidalgo Bay with one of their partners to deliver oysters.
 - Jude- Padilla Bay NERR staff can present their Olympia oyster restoration work in Padilla Bay at a future MRC meeting if the Committee is interested. They will likely be putting a presentation together for the upcoming Pacific Estuarine Research Society meeting in B.C. in April. Jude will reach out to Sylva to see if the May or June MRC meeting would work.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Tracy Alker:
 - The City of Anacortes selected Hanson Professional Services for the Fidalgo Bay trestle project. They are currently waiting for contract approval.
 - Skagit MRC's Grant Funding from NOAA (\$58k) for: Alternatives Analysis Report and Conceptual Design and Public Involvement and Outreach.
 - Skagit MRC reps will be involved in reviewing and commenting on the Alternative Analysis Report and Conceptual design and participating in stakeholder meetings and provide input in the development and implementation of the Community Outreach Plan.
 - Looking for MRC members interested in getting involved in this project. Lynne, Cynthia, Betsy, Jude, and Pete expressed interest in getting involved in some capacity.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

- There are 4 kelp bed sites surveyed in Skagit County between June and September each year by experienced kayak volunteer leads.
 - All data from 2023 kelp surveys have been submitted and reviewed by NWSC and will be added to DNR's floating kelp indicator map.
 - The kelp indicator [interactive map](#) data runs about one year behind. 2023 kayak kelp survey data will be added next year.
 - MRC Kelp Kayak Monitoring 2023 Data Review Meeting via Zoom, January 17th. Recording available [here](#). An overview of the Northwest Straits Initiative Floating Kelp Monitoring StoryMap, is [available online](#).
 - Lynne and Jeff Whitty were interviewed last month by Emma with the Skagit Valley Herald for an article on kelp. Article hasn't come out yet.
 - Jeff Whitty with NWSC is looking to establish an MRC kelp kayak monitoring advisory committee and has asked for volunteers. Steve Olsen who leads the Bowman Bay kelp team volunteered to represent Skagit on the kelp committee. Lynne will be the backup.
- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance and Beach Seining– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Skagit MRC funds and supports plant maintenance and beach seining at the Bowman Bay restoration site in partnership with NWSF and Parks. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is also providing some funding to support the beach seining project.
 - Lynne will be working with Lisa Kaufman to come up with a plant maintenance schedule for this spring.
 - We are in the process of getting the MOU for plant maintenance with NWSF finalized.
 - The recent winter storm at Bowman Bay damaged the foot bridge and washed gravel and debris upland burying some of the shoreline plants and caused some erosion to the restoration site. Erosion is also occurring around one of the interpretive signs. The Parks Manager said we could attach the interpretive sign to the new pier when it gets built. The State Park is not planning to replace the damaged foot bridge. Visitors will have to walk down to the beach to get to the trail. Although the debris and gravel washed up from the storm looks bad, this is a natural process that will help to nourish the beach. Without the shoreline plants, the damage to the shoreline would've been worse.
 - Jason Morgan with the NWSF is leading the beach seining effort at Bowman Bay with the help of volunteers including MRC member Paul Dinnel.
 - The first beach seining activity occurred January 26th with 7 volunteers plus Jason. They found 1 juvenile pink salmon, 11 staghorn sculpin, and 10 starry flounder (a surprise for this time of year).
 - Great outreach opportunity when a family with two curious kids stopped by to check out the beach seining.
 - The MOU for beach seining with NWSF has been finalized to outline the work agreement.

Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment: Lynne Wenberg Davidson

- Lynne with the help of the Advisory Team (including MRC members Paul, Pete, Tracy, and Cynthia, and Lisa Kaufman, Rick Haley, and Aundrea McBride) updated and consolidated the project list status from past MRC funded studies (Phase I of this project).
- Lynne drafted the Request for Quotes and Qualifications with input from the Advisory Team. The Advisory Team will also be involved in the consultant interviews and selection process.
 - Aundrea McBride recommended the MRC determine specific project priorities.
 - Lynne proposed (and MRC members supported) using the Northwest Straits Initiative's **Marine Habitat** Benchmark to define our goals and priorities for this project with the following language: Accelerate the rate of shoreline and nearshore habitat protection and restoration with the goal of a net gain of functional habitat, including projects that increase shoreline connectivity and complexity and help mitigate the effects of sea level rise and changing ocean conditions.
- The consultant would be responsible for: designing a new geodatabase (excel spreadsheet), performing literature review, developing a prioritization process, analysis, and identifying geospatial focus areas, and developing a list of proposed shoreline protection and restoration projects.
- Lynne scheduled a meeting with Suzanne Shull about incorporating the data from this project into SoundIQ.

- MRC Administration: Tracy transitioning into a full-time position as Skagit MRC Coordinator.
- County Natural Resources Intern – Kat Hayes: Kat will be working part-time through June and full-time in the summer. She will assist with some Skagit MRC tasks including Fidalgo Bay Day, Forage Fish Surveys, Plant Maintenance, MRC website event calendar posts, etc.
- MRC's 2024 Annual Work Plan:
 - The 2024 Annual Work Plan has been finalized and shared with the entire Committee.
 - A big Thank You to MRC Project Leads for reviewing and provided feedback!
 - It is a working document that will need to be regularly updated.
- One Time Grant Program- OTGP-2023 NOAA: grant deadline has been extended through December 31, 2024, for the School Rain Garden project and Trestle Project that got delayed. The amendment will get signed February 20th.
- MRC/NWSC Staff Meeting Highlights: Jan 18th

Most of these topics were tabled for a later discussion with Skagit MRC.

- Is Skagit MRC interested in taking on more of an Advisory Role?
- How can we improve communications/engagement with our elected officials?
- How can we increase engagement especially with larger projects with consultants?
- MRCs provide content for the NWSI Newsletter through monthly reports. New MRC members are not automatically signed up to receive the newsletter. The option to sign up should be part of the onboarding process for new MRC members.
- Is Skagit MRC interested in creating marine critter coasters or cards with QR code- linked to MRC website info for special events, similar to Clallam MRC's coasters?
- Skagit MRC website slated for an upgrade. Checkout other MRC websites and the NWSC website for design and content ideas. Do we want to include MRC membership photos/bios/contact info?
- NWSC plans to reach out to tribes not currently engaged with MRCs- like Upper Skagit and Sauk Suiattle and are looking for contacts.
- Drafted Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs):
 - Bowman Bay Beach Seining- Signed by NWSF.
 - Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance- Waiting for NWSF review and signature.
 - Skagit Shorelines Needs Assessment Tech Support- Waiting for NWSF review and signature.
 - Salish Sea Stewards – Waiting for Padilla Bay review and signature.
 - Kids on the Beach- Waiting for Padilla Bay review and signature.
- In-Person MRC Meeting Discussion:

Discussed the following possible meeting options and topics. No decisions were made. Tracy will send 2 or 3 in-person meeting dates and topics for MRC approval:

 - Update MRC's 5-Year Strategic Plan (2014-2019)
 - MRC year-end check-in. How are we doing? Are we meeting our goals? How can we do better? What do we want to accomplish? Should we be doing things differently? /
 - MRC project planning/prioritization for 2025-2027.
 - Earth Day Celebration beach cleanup in collaboration with other partner organizations
 - Swinomish Clam Garden- logistics would be difficult. Would need to schedule with tides.
 - School Rain Garden Maintenance work party
 - Bowman Bay Planting/Maintenance work party
 - Padilla Bay NERR- Presentation by Padilla Bay staff on current research/projects. Field trip to upland restoration or to the beach.
 - Fidalgo Bay Resort- Samish DNR presentation or a seabird presentation and guided bird walk
 - Rosario Beach or Washington Park- picnic and tidepool exploration with beach naturalists or students from Salish Sea School.
 - Skagit County- Pollution Identification and Correction /Stormwater Program- presentation-
 - Clayton Beach- Joint MRC meeting with Whatcom and NWSF presentation/field trip.

- Skagit Land Trust- presentation and field trip to one of their conservation sites.
- Port of Anacortes- presentation and field trip to project site.
- Invite other MRCs to present projects they are working on.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Mount Vernon High School Science Night - Thursday, April 18th 5-8pm. Skagit MRC will be co-hosting a European Green Crab Outreach table with the NWSC. The Forage Fish survey volunteers will be hosting a forage fish outreach table with microscopes and surf smelt eggs.
- MRC Derelict Vessel Workgoup Update- In 2023 this group prioritized and removed 13 vessels! You can review and share the highlights in this [2023 Derelict Vessel Accomplishments Report](#). Upcoming in 2024:
 - We are in various phases of planning a few vessel turn in events. The first will be in the San Juans in April. Swinomish in partnership with NWSC, Skagit MRC, Port of Skagit, and DNR are meeting Feb 14th to continue discussing the possibility of co-hosting a turn-in event this spring with NWSC funding.
 - A vessel in Jefferson County was removed earlier this month.
 - Additional vessels in Skagit County in Blanchard and at the Swinomish fish dock are being planned for removals.
 - Our funding has been extended until December 2024. We have a few removals and events being planned and need to carry them out to assess our budget before we can determine if there are additional available funds.
- Skagit and Whatcom County Dog Poop Survey: Take the survey at [this link](#) and be entered to win a 25 visa gift card!

The meeting adjourned at 11:17am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams on March 14, 2024



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **March 14, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Betsy Stevenson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate), Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple, Diane Hennebert
 - MRC Members Absent: Catey Ritchie, Kevin Anderson
- **Others in Attendance:** Catherine Houck (volunteer); Caitlyn Blair (NWSC); Elizabeth Drozda (The Salish Sea School); Leah Skare (NWSC); Jeff Whitty (NWSC)

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

Approval of Minutes: February 8, 2024, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: None

MRC Membership and Northwest Straits Commission Representative Update: *Diane Hennebert*

- MRC member and NWSC representative, Diane Hennebert accepted a new position and will be resigning from the MRC at the end of this month. We greatly appreciate Diane's positive energy and tireless dedication, expertise, and contributions in support of Skagit MRC's mission. She made a huge impact and will be missed!
- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson was appointed to take Diane's place as the NWSC representative.
- A new NWSC alternate will also need to be appointed to fill in for Lynne when she is unable to attend the meetings. Meetings alternate between in-person and virtual. Darla volunteered to be the NWSC Alternate but will be out of town for the next six months.
- Also looking for either the NWSC representative or NWSC alternate from Skagit MRC to serve on the NWSC European Green Crab Ad Hoc Committee. Only NWSC representatives can participate on the EGC Ad hoc Committee because of its designation as a decision-making authority. However, NWSC reps aren't required to join the EGC Ad Hoc Committee.
 - Jude- can't step into the role of NWSC rep or alternate due to a conflict of interest with his position as Director at PBNERR but is involved in a lot of EGC work and would be happy to engage on behalf of the MRC if there are any opportunities. Will check with Lucas.

The Salish Sea School Update: *Elizabeth Drozda*

Elizabeth is the Program Coordinator for The Salish Sea School and Amy Eberling is the founder and Director. The Salish Sea School is actively growing and interested in branching out in the community and being more involved with the Skagit MRC to help support Skagit MRC's mission. The Salish Sea School currently leads several stewardship and educational programs for students and adults. Right now, their focus is trying to connect students with stewardship-based action activities and get them involved in collecting scientific data such as: marine bird surveys, forage fish surveys, intertidal surveys, and stormwater monitoring. They also have a boat and take both teens and adults to do surveys in areas that are less accessible and have two cold water divers on their team.

- MRC members encouraged Elizabeth to apply for MRC membership.
- Jude- there could be some cross pollination opportunities with the Salish Sea Stewards training program and volunteer opportunities that students could participate in. There could also be some opportunities at Padilla Bay.
- Darla- suggest an afternoon cruise for patrons interested in supporting The Salish Sea School.

- Pete- Re-Resources will no longer be able to continue leading the Intertidal monitoring at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve. The Salish Sea School expressed interest in managing and coordinating intertidal surveys in the future but will likely need some funding. Pete suggested Skagit MRC consider allocating funding to keep the intertidal surveys going in Fidalgo Bay because it would be beneficial to continue collecting important baseline data to track any changes.
 - Catherine Houck, Citizen Stewardship Committee member of the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve- before allocating funding to another entity to lead the intertidal monitoring effort at Fidalgo Bay, please consider what question we want to answer with the monitoring data and think about the big picture to help determine the best path forward. What is it we are doing with the monitoring data and why? What have we learned from the data already collected from the past ten years? How can we improve it? Where is the best place to house it?
- Lynne- the Skagit MRC is working on an improved Diversity, Equity, Inclusion approach to our membership and our work. One of the areas that we would like to improve is engaging more with youth, especially in underserved communities. The Salish Sea School could really help the Skagit MRC in this area.
 - Elizabeth- Connecting with youth in underserved communities and across different cultures is really at the heart of The Salish Sea School's mission. Securing funding for transportation is always a huge challenge with these programs.

Northwest Straits Commission Report: *Diane Hennebert*

Last NWSC meeting occurred **February 23**, 10am-3pm at the Whatcom Civic Building. Highlights shared with the MRC in the meeting packet.

- 2024 NW Straits Initiative Conference: **November 15-16** at the Delta Hotel in Snohomish County. The pre-conference survey is out! Now is your chance to provide input on topics for the 2024 conference.
- NWSC Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Assessment: Working with Athena Group to assess DEI goals.
- 2023 NWSC Impact Report: Now available on the NWSC website at [this link](#).
- Puget Sound Day on the Hill: May 13-17, 2024, in Washington DC.
- Northwest Straits Foundation Community Event: May 5, 2024, at the Edmonds Yacht Club.
- Boldt Decision 50-Year Celebration: Several NWSC members attended and talked about how impactful it was. Recommended the book 'Treaty Justice'.
- Whatcom County Climate Action Plan: Shared by a Whatcom County Council member. All Cities and Counties are required to update their Comprehensive Plans in 2025. Diane recommended Skagit MRC be a voice in that process for Skagit County and the City of Anacortes. Community meetings will be held to help guide the priorities.
- San Juan Derelict Vessel Turn-In Event: April 2024. For more information click [here](#).
- Next NWSC meeting: **March 29**, 10am-noon, held virtually via Zoom. This will be Diane's last NWSC meeting.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - Training held Tuesdays from 1-5pm starting Feb 6-April 30 at Padilla Bay. Erin Merklein is now facilitating the training. She is also the Volunteer Coordinator.
 - Full class with 27 very enthusiastic and engaged attendees!
 - Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting on March 15.
 - One of our SSS Alums (class of 2023), Dean Tillis, was awarded the Dick Knight volunteer of the year award from the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group.
 - To date, the Stewards & community volunteers have recorded over 50,000 volunteer hours since 2015.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - 4 Index sites (monthly samples): Guemes Channel, E. Similk Bay (Swinomish Reservation), Samish Island, and west of marina towards Skyline.

- 3 Restoration Sites (monthly samples): Bowman Bay, W. Similk Bay (private property), and Clayton Beach (every other month). Skagit volunteers alternate monthly sampling with Whatcom County at Clayton Beach.
- Forage fish survey data goes to WDFW in Olympia. WDFW hosts quarterly updates to forage fish survey volunteers.
- Fidalgo Bay surveys for DNR continue. New lead FF volunteers from Citizen Aquatic Reserve are now coordinating monthly sampling at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve: Tom Flanagan, Catherine Houck.
- Upcoming Forage Fish Outreach Activities:
 - April 2- Pete will be one of the presenters leading a forage fish survey on April 2nd for the Salish Sea Stewards class.
 - April 18- Volunteers will be tabling at Mount Vernon Science night with forage fish eggs and microscopes and educational information.
 - April 16- WADNR will present forage fish data results collected over the last ten years at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve. The presentation will be held at Padilla Bay in the morning before the Salish Sea Stewards class.
 - May- Forage fish volunteers will assist 1st and 2nd graders from Island View Middle School down on the Fidalgo Bay beach in learning about forage fish.
- June 28- Big outreach event at Bowman Bay will include forage fish surveys & interpretive station, beach seining, and plant maintenance.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - 10 classes, 250 students from 3 schools participating in the spring program with classroom and field data collecting and analysis components: mudflats, forage fish, and beach seining. Many students have never been to the beach before:
 - April 15 - April 19: **Concrete 9th-12th grade** (3 classes- underserved students). Per teacher's request, students will collect quantitative mudflat biodiversity and abundance data at Padilla Bay, rather than forage fish surveys at Fidalgo Bay. The class will visit the Padilla Bay interpretive center afterwards.
 - May 6 - May 10: **Evergreen Elementary in Sedro Woolley** 4th grade, 75 students.
 - May 20 - May 24: **Allen Elementary in Mount Vernon** 4th and 5th grade, 84-100 students (English 2nd language for many of the students).
 - 4th graders will get to participate in the mudflat safari and 5th grade students will get to participate in beach seining at Padilla Bay. The idea is to create a different field experience for students for each grade level.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert:
 - Working on a maintenance plan and securing one or two lead stewards to maintain the Mt Erie School rain garden.
 - Diane and Tracy are planning a site visit to the La Conner School rain garden to assess the site and test the soil to determine why it's not working properly and come up with a game plan to get the site going and maintained.
 - Interns with the county and the Northwest Straits Foundation might be able to help with rain garden maintenance.
 - Planting at the La Conner School rain garden is targeted for the fall of 2024.
 - MRC grant funding would be used to purchase plants, mulch, and interpretive signage. Funding expires December 31, 2024.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith/Tracy Alker:
 - Date has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - This will be the 20th anniversary of FBD!
 - Need help planning this year's event. Currently only have 3 people on the planning committee and no MRC Lead or Event Chair.
 - Reserved the Shannon Point touch tanks.
 - Beach seining demo will be led by Matt and Jason around 2pm.

- Planning documents including task lists and timelines are being updated.
- Will be reaching out to past participating organizations and volunteers with Save the Date cards soon.
- The Samish Canoe Family expressed interest in possibly participating in Fidalgo Bay Day this year. The tides look good.
- The event will be posted in the next edition of A Town Magazine.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneel:
 - Field work is ongoing now through April including monitoring outplant sites and outplanting additional juvenile abalone at some outplant sites.
 - Hope to have more information to share next month.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel:
 - Annual monitoring of Olympia oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay will start up again in May to continue monitoring the annual variabilities of oyster densities and post larval settlement and setting out new shell bags for monitoring larval settlement next year. Paul and his son will be doing all the field work. No need for additional volunteers until the next 5-year assessment in 2028.
 - Recent articles about Olympia oyster restoration work sparked a lot of interest from the public in getting involved in volunteering. The most recent article was in the [Salish Sea Current](#).
 - March 19- Paul will be presenting the Olympia oyster restoration work to the Salish Sea Stewards class.
 - March 21- Paul will be presenting the Olympia oyster restoration work to the Kiwanis Club of Anacortes.
 - June 13- Padilla Bay NERR staff will be presenting Olympia oyster restoration work in Padilla Bay at the June 13th MRC meeting.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Tracy Alker:
 - Skagit MRC's Grant Funding from NOAA (\$58k) for this project expires December 31, 2024.
 - The City of Anacortes has a contract with Hanson Professional Services for the Fidalgo Bay trestle project that is expected to get signed in April.
 - MRC members expressed concern about being able to spend the funds before they expire and meeting the funding criteria and deliverables. The deliverables include:
 - Education and Outreach Strategy/Plan
 - Conceptual Design
 - The Committee discussed possible MRC outreach opportunities including:
 - Design and fabrication of interpretive signage along the Tommy Thompson trail.
 - Distributing outreach materials at the Fidalgo Bay Day event along with a guided walk along the Tommy Thompson Trail and/or a short presentation.
 - Tracy plans to meet with Jonn Lunsford with the City of Anacortes staff soon to discuss the project and Skagit MRC's grant funding requirements. Jude, Paul, Lynne, and Cynthia expressed interest in attending the meeting.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - There are 4 kelp beds surveyed in Skagit County between June and September each year by experienced kayak volunteer leads.
 - Jeff Whitty is working to establish a MRC Kelp Kayak Advisory Committee to act as an advisory body to help advance and improve the kayak kelp monitoring program. This committee would be composed of 1-2 reps from each MRC/MRC's kayak group. Steve Olsen, the kayak lead for Bowman Bay kelp surveys, will be Skagit MRC's rep. Steve also led a kayak tour business for several years in Skagit. Lynne will be Steve's backup.
 - Steve Olsen has been looking for new kelp beds to potentially add to our surveys. He found one near Lone Tree Point that might be a good option in collaboration with the Swinomish Tribe. The ecological significance of the kelp bed site is that it has freshwater inputs which could be helpful in better understanding how freshwater can affect kelp growth and vitality. Lynne and Steve scheduled a site visit at the Thousand Trails Campground boat launch to see if it might be feasible. If the new kelp bed is added, it will be a 5-year commitment.
 - Only experienced kayakers are allowed to participate in kelp surveys. Kayaker volunteers must sign liability forms each season and review the safety training videos that NWSC provides.

- Jeff is looking for interest from volunteers in scheduling a kayak safety class in the field led by a certified instructor.
- Lynne and Jeff interviewed for an [article about kelp](#) in the Skagit Valley Herald that just came out earlier this month, March 1st.
- Jeff will be presenting on kelp at the April 16 Salish Sea Stewards class.
- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance and Beach Seining– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Skagit MRC funds and supports plant maintenance and beach seining at the Bowman Bay restoration site in partnership with NWSF and Parks. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is also providing some funding to support the beach seining project. They are interested in the data for their feasibility study to open the wetland to Fidalgo Bay.
 - The MOU for plant maintenance and beach seining with NWSF has been finalized and signed.
 - Lynne is working with Lisa Kaufman to come up with a plant maintenance schedule for this spring. Will borrow the Park's leftover firewater to water plants. Will try to coordinate plant maintenance with forage fish surveys and beach seining if possible.
 - Last month's storm uncovered some buried debris and additional armor north of the boat launch that we didn't know was there because it wasn't part of the restoration site. The boat launch is also very buckled and broken from the storm. Lisa is looking into potential funding options for a feasibility study for removing the boat launch and armoring. The Park would like to replace it with a soft ramp for kayaks.
 - Jason Morgan with the NWSF is leading the beach seining effort twice a month at Bowman Bay with the help of volunteers from February through June. They are seeing flounder which is unusual for this time of year. They are also seeing sculpin, pink salmon, Chinook, and pipefish. They also found a northern lantern fish, not typically found on the nearshore.
 - Planning an outreach event on June 28th with beach seining, forage fish surveys, and plant maintenance in collaboration with the NWSF, MRC, SFEG, and The Salish Sea School. Still working out the details.
- Skagit Shorelines Needs Assessment– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - The Request for Quotes and Qualifications notice was sent to over 235 environmental firms.
 - The Advisory Team reviewed and evaluated proposals from 5 different firms. The top 3 candidates were selected to interview. We hope to have a new contract in place early April.
 - The consultant will be responsible for: designing a new geodatabase, performing literature review, developing a prioritization process, analysis, and identifying geospatial focus areas, and developing a list of proposed shoreline protection and restoration projects. Data will be uploaded to SoundIQ with the help and support of Suzanne Shull.

MRC Derelict Vessel Workgroup Update: Lynne, Tracy, and Melissa

- The Blanchard derelict vessel was originally scheduled for removal Tuesday but has been delayed because the plates for the machinery sunk in the mud. Swinomish fish dock is also planned for removal.
- Swinomish in partnership with NWSC, Skagit MRC, Port of Skagit, and DNR had a meeting Feb 14th to continue discussing the possibility of co-hosting a turn-in event this year with NWSC funding. Next meeting planned for March 27 at 2pm.
- The vessel turn-in event will likely be held this summer, sometime after July 4th - the slowest time at the La Conner marina and boatyard for hosting an event.
- Will know more at the April MRC meeting.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Mount Vernon High School Science Night - Thursday, April 18th 5-8pm. Skagit MRC will be co-hosting a European Green Crab Outreach table with the NWSC. The Forage Fish survey volunteers will be hosting a forage fish outreach table with microscopes and surf smelt eggs.
- Friends of Skagit Beaches Lecture Series- Looking for volunteers to help plan and carry out a new lecture series in November 2024 at the Northwest Educational Center in Anacortes.

- EGC Molt Search Training Workshop- Planning a Molt Search workshop at Padilla Bay in partnership with the NW Straits Commission, Padilla Bay, and Skagit MRC.
- Acidification Nearshore Monitoring Network (ANeMoNe)- WADNR, Aquatic Reserve (Fidalgo Bay) starting in May with a sensor swap. interested in new ideas for collaboration and are super happy to meet to discuss opportunities for folks interested in getting involved in nearshore climate research.
- Intertidal Monitoring- Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve- Re-Sources will no longer be able to continue leading the Intertidal monitoring at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve or the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve. The AmeriCorps person with Re-Sources will lead two surveys at each Aquatic Reserve this summer but won't likely be able to continue doing that. They will be hosting a Zoom meeting this Friday, March 15th at 9am to explore partnership opportunities to help keep the monitoring program going in future years.
- Northwest Youth Corps Conservation Crews for Hire: Would like to discuss potential future collaborations. Will be presenting more information at future MRC meeting.
- Skagit County Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update: The County Planning Department is currently in the process of compiling a list of community events to disseminate information about the Periodic Comprehensive Plan to the public. They are dedicated to engaging with a wide range of agencies and groups to ensure robust public input in our planning process. Will be presenting more information at a future MRC meeting.
- City of Anacortes Stormwater Master Plan Update: City just signed contract. Scope of Work includes stream walk and stream assessment focused on fish barriers but will also include capital projects for stream restoration.
- Skagit Conservation District Collaboration: Tracy will be meeting with Cindy Elston this Friday to chat about the roles and capacity the CD could participate and collaborate with the MRC.

The meeting adjourned at 10:59am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams on April 11, 2024



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **April 11, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Betsy Stevenson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate), Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple, Catey Ritchie, Kevin Anderson
 - *MRC Members Absent: Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase*
- **Others in Attendance:** Cynthia Nielsen (Volunteer); Elizabeth Drozda (The Salish Sea School); Dana Oster (NWSC); Jeff Whitty (NWSC); Robby Eckroth (Skagit County Planning); Tara Satushek (Skagit County Planning)

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

Approval of Minutes: March 14, 2024, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: None

Skagit County Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update: Tara Satushek/Robby Eckroth, Skagit County Planning

- The County Planning Department is working on an update to the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan that must be completed by June 30, 2025.
- The Comprehensive Plan is a visioning document to help guide how the County should direct population growth in our community, while still protecting our environment and natural resources.
- Working with a consulting team to add 2 new elements: 1. Housing Affordability and 2. Climate Change. Will also be updating all existing elements.
- In the very early stages of the public engagement process. Nothing to review yet.
- Conducting a survey located on the [County Planning Department website](#) to get public input and perspective on what changes should be made.
- Focused on Diversity Equity and Inclusion and making sure all voices are being heard in the community.
- Looking for ways to engage with a wide range of agencies and groups with various expertise to ensure robust public input in the planning process. Plan to host several workshops and open houses.
- The MRC discussed the idea of reviewing certain elements of the Comprehensive Plan Update, such as climate change and sea level rise, and providing comments as a group. However, it was determined that it would be too complicated to do that as a group. Several MRC members represent other entities that will be providing their own comprehensive review/comments and would not be able to participate in Skagit MRC's formal review/comment process due to the potential conflicts of interest.
 - **Action:** Betsy will ask Tara and Rob if the MRC could review the Draft documents and provide guidance on certain elements like sea level rise before anything goes out to the public. It would be a more informal process and a good way for the MRC to provide a valuable service without any potential conflicts.
 - **Action:** Betsy will keep the MRC updated on any progress and timeline and will share the document when its ready for review.
 - **Action:** Representatives from the different entities that will be conducting their own comprehensive review process and providing comments will have an opportunity to share their different perspectives with the MRC at a future MRC meeting.

Northwest Straits Commission Report: Lynne Wenberg

Last NWSC meeting occurred **March 29**, 10am-noon, held virtually via Zoom. Highlights shared with the MRC in the meeting packet.

- Skagit MRC's NWSC Rep: Diane announced her new position and last day as the NWSC rep and introduced Lynne as the new rep. Diane will continue to be an advisor to the Friends of Skagit Beach's stormwater monitoring project.
- Jefferson and Clallam joint MRC Meeting- March: Cecilia Gobin gave a great presentation on tribal treaty rights. Cecilia is willing to give this presentation to other MRCs.
➤ **Action: Tracy will Invite Cecilia to present at a future Skagit MRC meeting.**
- Clallam MRC Olympia Oyster Restoration: 47 tons of Pacific oyster shells spread in Sequim Bay in partnership with Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe.
- Puget Sound Day on the Hill: May 13-16, 2024, in Washington DC.
- Northwest Straits Foundation Community Event: May 5, 2024, at the Edmonds Yacht Club.
- New Science Advisory Committee Member: Anne Beaudreau, Associate Professor at the UW School of Marine and Environmental Affairs.
- NWSI Program Funding: Thanks to Patty Murray the NWSI has been awarded programmatic funding which means we won't have to keep lobbying for funding year after year which is a big deal for sustainability!
- San Juan MRC Boater Impact Project: Will be collecting recreational boating impact data via aerial images and boots on the ground as part of their eelgrass protection initiative. Counting number of boats anchoring near and in eelgrass areas.
- Clayton Beach Restoration: Northwest Straits Foundation received additional funding for the Clayton Beach project (\$500k) and a match will be required.
➤ **Action: Tracy will Invite Lisa to give an update on Clayton Beach at a future Skagit MRC meeting.**
- Next NWSC meeting: **April 26**, 10am-noon, held virtually via Zoom.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - Training held Tuesdays from 1-5pm, Feb 6-April 30 at Padilla Bay.
 - 25 trainees slated to graduate and join the ranks of 365 trained Stewards.
 - Graduation will be held April 30th at Padilla Bay at 4pm. All MRC members and SSS alumni are welcome to attend.
 - Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting held April 5th.
 - To date, SSS have recorded over 50,000 volunteer hours since 2015.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - 4 Index sites (monthly samples): Guemes Channel, E. Similk Bay (Swinomish Reservation), Samish Island, and west of marina towards Skyline.
 - 3 Restoration Sites (monthly samples): Bowman Bay, W. Similk Bay (private property), and Clayton Beach (every other month). Skagit volunteers alternate monthly sampling with Whatcom County at Clayton Beach.
 - Forage fish survey data goes to WDFW in Olympia. WDFW hosts quarterly updates to forage fish survey volunteers.
 - Fidalgo Bay surveys for DNR continue.
 - Upcoming Forage Fish Outreach Activities:
 - April 2- Pete was one of the presenters leading a forage fish survey on April 2nd for the Salish Sea Stewards class.
 - April 16- WADNR will present forage fish data results collected over the last ten years at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve. The presentation will be held at Padilla Bay in the morning before the Salish Sea Stewards class.
 - April 18- Volunteers will be tabling at Mount Vernon Science night with forage fish eggs and microscopes and educational information.

- May- Forage fish volunteers will assist 1st and 2nd graders from Island View Middle School down on the Fidalgo Bay beach in learning about forage fish.
- June 28- Big outreach event at Bowman Bay will include forage fish surveys & interpretive station, beach seining, plant maintenance and outreach display booths.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - 10 classes, 250 students from 3 schools participating in the spring program with classroom and field data collecting and analysis components: mudflats, forage fish, and beach seining. Many students have never been to the beach before:
 - April 10: **Concrete 10th-11th grade.** Two classes of 10th grade Physical Science students and one class of 11th grade Environmental Science students participated in the Kids on the Beach program at Padilla Bay. Every student was involved in data collection including density and biodiversity of intertidal organisms at three locations along a transect line. They also collected weather, water temps, and substrate composition data. Some of the students participated in the KOTB program when they were in elementary school. There was a great group of volunteers with one adult to four students. The class visited the Padilla Bay interpretive center afterwards.
 - May 6 - May 10: **Evergreen Elementary in Sedro Woolley** 4th grade, 75 students.
 - May 20 - May 24: **Allen Elementary in Mount Vernon** 4th and 5th grade, 84-100 students (English 2nd language for many of the students).
 - 4th graders will get to participate in the mudflat safari and 5th grade students will get to participate in beach seining at Padilla Bay. The idea is to create a different field experience for students for each grade level.
- School Rain Garden – Tracy Alker:
 - Working with Diane and the NWSF on a maintenance plan for the Mount Erie School Rain Garden which will likely be led by interns with the NWSF and the County Natural Resources Division.
 - Diane and Tracy are planning a site visit to the La Conner School rain garden on April 27th to assess the site and test the soil for infiltration.
 - Planting at the La Conner School rain garden is targeted for the fall of 2024.
 - MRC grant funding would be used to purchase plants, mulch, and interpretive signage. Funding expires December 31, 2024.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Tracy Alker:
 - Date has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Samish Indian Nation will be supporting Fialgo Bay Day this year with some additional funding.
 - The Samish Canoe Family expressed interest in possibly participating in Fidalgo Bay Day this year. The tides look good.
 - Save the Date notices will be sent out to past participating organizations and volunteers by the end of this month.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneil:
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) began field work in February.
 - Monitoring abalone outplant sites at 7 locations (3 in Skagit).
 - The two new sites near Deception Pass that were outplanted for the first-time last year were surveyed in February. Survival was low at both sites. One of the sites will not be seeded again. But the other site had enough abalone to justify an overseeding again this season.
 - Recovered oceanographic sensor arrays from 6 outplant sites (2 in Skagit).
 - Surveyed 10 historic index sites (2 in Skagit).
 - Scouted/set up 7 new outplant sites (2 in Skagit).
 - PSRF has been working with and training the Seattle Aquarium dive team for the past several years in outplant site scouting, set up and post-seeding monitoring. The Seattle Aquarium is also one of their satellite nursery partners and have been successful in culture efforts. They will help with outplants and monitoring at several sites in Skagit.

- The Samish Tribe is another new partner with a dive team that will take on one of the original Burrows Island outplant sites along with a new site on Sinclair Island. PSRF will be training their dive team in abalone survey and outplant methods later this month.
- Hatchery production and juvenile culture at both the Manchester Chew Center and the Seattle Aquarium's ACC has gone well since last summer's spawning efforts, and abalone that are larger than 5 mm at these facilities have been sorted into outplant groups.
- During the week of April 15th and during a second outplant week in early June, teams from PSRF, WDFW, the Seattle Aquarium and Samish Tribe anticipate outplanting more than 10,000 juvenile abalone to at least 10 different recovery sites. It is anticipated that 4 of these sites will be in Skagit County.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Sampling for annual oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay will start up again in May to continue monitoring the annual variabilities of oyster densities and post larval settlement and setting out new shell bags for monitoring larval settlement next year. Paul and his son will be doing all the field work. No need for additional volunteers until the next 5-year assessment in 2028.
 - Paul presented on the Olympia oyster restoration work to the Salish Sea Stewards class and the Kiwanis Club of Anacortes in March.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Tracy Alker:
 - Skagit MRC's Grant Funding from NOAA (\$58k) for this project expires December 31, 2024.
 - The City of Anacortes has a contract with Hanson Professional Services for the Fidalgo Bay trestle project that is expected to get signed in April.
 - MRC staff and 4 MRC members briefly met with the City of Anacortes staff on March 21 to discuss the project and how the MRC grant funds will be used to make sure we will meet our grant deliverables, timeline, and funding requirements including:
 - Develop Outreach Strategy and Messaging Plan with the help of scientists and communications team to include:
 - Design and fabrication of interpretive signage along the Tommy Thompson trail.
 - Providing outreach materials at the Fidalgo Bay Day event along with a guided walk along the Tommy Thompson Trail and/or a short presentation.
 - Creating website content with science- based messaging to help answer the “why”.
 - Creating short educational video clips with links that will be posted on the website.
 - Collect additional scientific data to support the conceptual design and outreach messaging.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - There are 3 sites surveyed monthly in Skagit County between June and September each year by experienced kayak volunteer leads (Biz Point-John Fritto, Coffin Rocks-Steve Olsen, Shannon Point (2 kelp beds)-Lynn Wenberg-Davidson).
 - The kelp team has been looking for new kelp beds to potentially add to our surveys. They found a huge healthy kelp bed near Lone Tree Point that might be a good option. The ecological significance of the kelp bed site is that it has freshwater inputs which could be helpful in better understanding how freshwater can affect kelp growth and vitality. The kelp bed has been observed at that location even during the colder winter months! Lynne and Steve are working with the Swinomish to access the site by launching from the Thousand Trails Campground. They plan to do a reconnaissance in May to see if it might be feasible. If the new kelp bed is added, it will be a 5-year commitment. They also plan to check out another kelp bed near the Swinomish clam garden and Kiket Island that was recommended by the Swinomish staff. The Swinomish already has a monitoring buoy out there that collects water quality data near the clam garden. It would be interesting to see if there is a correlation between water quality, healthy kelp, and shellfish. Lynne talked to one of the property owners on Similk Bay about using the boat launch next to his property to access the kelp bed near Kiket Island. He seemed very supportive and excited to hear about the kelp monitoring work.
 - Jeff Whitty established a MRC Kelp Kayak Advisory Committee to act as an advisory body to help advance and improve the kayak kelp monitoring program. This committee is composed of 1-2 reps from

each MRC/MRC's kayak group. Steve Olsen, the kayak lead for Bowman Bay kelp surveys, is Skagit MRC's rep. Lynne is Steve's backup. They recently held their first meeting. They talked about the use of drones, water quality monitoring (including ocean acidification), and other data collection that other MRCs are involved in or are interested in. There will be at least 2 or 3 more meetings this year.

- Jeff presented on the NWSC kelp program at the April 16 Salish Sea Stewards class. There are a lot of experienced kayakers in the group.
- Jeff will be hosting the kelp kayak kick-off meeting at Padilla Bay on May 1st. First half will be hybrid and include presentations on the protocol, related safety, and preseason preparation. The remainder of the meeting will be in person only and include hands-on activities to practice skills needed for data collection and management.
- Skagit Kelp Survey Team will schedule a pre-season shake down paddle and a kick-off BBQ at Steve Olsen's home.

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

- **Beach Seining:** Jason Morgan with the NWSF is leading the beach seining effort for Skagit MRC with the help of volunteers from January 2024 through December 2025. Beach seining currently takes place twice a month through June. It will be reduced to once a month starting in July through the end of 2025. We've been seeing Chum salmon, Pink salmon, and Chinook. Last month we saw newly hatched surf smelt, a sharp-nosed sculpin, and a northern lanternfish. Around 7 volunteers help with seining each week, including MRC members (Paul Dinnel and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson) and 10 to 14 hours of volunteerism. Forage fish surveys have been coordinated with beach seining activities.
- **Plant Maintenance:** Lisa Kaufman with the NWSF is leading the plant maintenance effort for Skagit MRC. It was determined that weekly plant maintenance was too much for volunteers, so we decided to go back to monthly plant maintenance work parties. The events will be held May 30th, June 28th, July 25th, and August 22nd from 9am-11am. Foundation staff will continue to do weekly plant maintenance at the site to make sure the plants get watered on a regular basis during the hot and dry summer months.
- **Additional Shoreline Restoration:** Recent winter storms have caused a lot of erosion and damage along the shoreline. The boat ramp is broken and unusable now. Lisa found some grant funding for a feasibility study to replace the broken concrete boat launch with a soft beach launch for kayaks, remove additional riprap, and restore the shoreline. The state no longer has funding to replace the damaged fishing pier as originally planned. The interpretive signage that is near the pier is eroding away. We are looking into options for moving it or stabilizing it before it washes away. Can't move it upland without doing another cultural survey.
- **Bowman Bay Outreach Event- June 28th**- In partnership with NWSF, SFEG, State Parks, and Skagit MRC. Details are still being work out. Will include beach seining demos, plant maintenance, forage fish survey demos, outreach tables, etc.

- Skagit Shorelines Needs Assessment– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

- The Request for Quotes and Qualifications notice was sent to over 235 environmental firms.
- The Advisory Team reviewed and evaluated proposals from 5 different firms. They were all excellent proposals. The top 3 candidates were selected to interview. Confluence Environmental was offered the contract. Phil Bloch with Confluence was heavily involved in the Skagit Bays Blueprint project for the Skagit MRC many years ago when he worked for People for Puget Sound.
- We held a kick-off meeting with Confluence Environmental on April 19.
- Confluence Environmental will be responsible for: designing a new geodatabase, performing literature review, developing a prioritization process, analysis, and identifying geospatial focus areas, and developing a list of proposed shoreline protection and restoration projects. Data will be uploaded and housed in SoundIQ with the help and support of Suzanne Shull.

Vessel Turn-In Event Update: Melissa

- Swinomish in partnership with NWSC, Skagit MRC, Port of Skagit, La Conner Marina, DNR, and Skagit County will be co-hosting a vessel turn-in event towards the end July with NWSC and DNR funding.
- We are still working out details regarding the handling of hazardous materials and the different waste streams.

- We will start promoting the event in May. It will be posted in the Swinomish newsletter so that people can start registering. Registration will close the end of June. The event flyers will be shared on websites and social media and will also be printed and posted at marinas and yacht clubs.
- There are several vessel owners that have already expressed interest to Catey about participating.
- The Turn-In Event could last a few days to a few weeks depending on how many vessels register.
- There will likely be a media day with the partners and press present.

MRC Membership Application: *Elizabeth Drozda*

Skagit MRC voted by consensus to make the recommendation to the Skagit Board of County Commissioners to appoint Elizabeth Drozda to the MRC. Elizabeth is the Program Coordinator for The Salish Sea School and will be an amazing addition to the Skagit MRC!

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: *All*

- MRC Grant Quarterly Progress Reports and Volunteer Hours are Due for all 3 MRC grants by April 15th!

The meeting adjourned at 10:39am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams on May 9, 2024



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **May 9, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Betsy Stevenson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate), Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Catey Ritchie
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Elizabeth Drozda
- **Others in Attendance:** Cecilia Gobin (NWIFC); Cynthia Nielsen (Volunteer); Jeff Whitty (NWSC)

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

Approval of Minutes: April 11, 2024, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: None

Tribal Treaty Rights: *Cecilia Gobin, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC)*

- The U.S. recognizes tribes as sovereign nations and the rightful owners of the land through the signing of treaties.
- Treaties are defined as the "supreme law of the land," which trumps state law.
- 29 federally recognized tribes in WA.
- The NWIFC works for 20 of the federally recognized tribes in WA that have treaties with the federal government.
- 5 treaties negotiated with tribes in western WA in 1854-55 to make way for western expansion. Language barriers were a limiting factor during negotiations.
- Treaties reserved portions of tribe homelands/reservations for their exclusive use and occupancy in perpetuity and the right to govern themselves. They also gave tribes rights to fish, hunt, and gather at all their usual and accustomed grounds and stations on and off reservation.
- Treaty of Neah Bay was only signed by the Makah tribe and gave them the right to hunt whales. Other treaties were boiler plate signed by multiple tribes.
- The Fish Wars was an era throughout the 1960s. As more settlers came to WA there was an increase in non-tribal commercial fisheries, logging, and agricultural practices which impacted fish habitat and salmon stocks. Non-Indians blamed tribes for the dwindling resources and put pressure on the state government to crack down on tribal harvests. Indians were arrested when they tried to harvest fish off-reservation even though they had the right to.
- Boldt Decision 1974 established tribes as co-managers of the resource with the state of Washington and gave tribes the right to 50% of the harvestable salmon returns (including hatchery fish).
- Washington State refused to implement Boldt's ruling until 1979 when Supreme Court largely upheld the decision of lower court and temporarily took away the State's power to manage fishing and gave power to the Coast Guard and U.S. Marshalls to enforce the court order.
- Additional Supreme Court rulings: State and tribes must co-develop long term plans rules for management and allocation of salmon. Salmon must be managed by river system, run by run. It was determined that the term "fish" in treaties refer to all fish species, not just salmon, including shellfish and marine mammals that have been traditionally hunted.
- Shellfish Harvesting Rights- Tribes have the right to harvest shellfish on state and private tidelands which was a hotly debated decision. Tidelands belong to the public in most states. WA is unique in that private landowners

can own tidelands. Private tideland property owners were concerned tribes would overharvest their personal property, but that hasn't happened.

- Tribes also have the right to have fish protected from environmental degradation. Tribes filed a lawsuit in 2001 to force WA to repair their failing, fish-blocking culverts. In 2013 Supreme Court ordered WA to repair nearly 600 culverts by 2030. Tribes meet with the State regularly to get updates on progress to make sure work is getting done.

Northwest Straits Commission Report: *Lynne Wenberg*

Last NWSC meeting occurred **April 26**, 10am-noon, held virtually via Zoom. Highlights shared with the MRC in the meeting packet.

- San Juan MRC Derelict Vessel Turn-In Event- April: 14 vessels were turned in and deconstructed. Highlighted in NWSC newsletter.
- NWSI Fall Leadership Retreat: ECO Resource Group performing a series of interviews with reps from the MRCs, NWSC, and NWSF to define what the NWSI is today and looking forward. Results will be presented virtually: July 10 from 3-5pm. Contact Caitlyn Blair (blair@nwstraits.org) for more info.
- "Fish War" Film Premiering May 11-12, 2024: Seattle International Film Festival. More details and trailer on [website](#).
- Snohomish MRC Community Needs Assessment: The UW Evans School Student Consulting team will present Community Needs Assessment results at Snohomish MRC meeting on May 15 from 6:30pm-7:10 pm. Contact Elisa Dawson for Zoom Link: elisa.dawson@snoco.org.
- Speed Date with a Scientist Presentation: How collaborative partnerships (including MRCs) use science in the Puget Sound basin presented by Tom Koontz and Craig Thomas. Summary report shared with MRC members. Invited to present at the July 11 Skagit MRC meeting.
- Next NWSC meeting: **May 31**, 10am-3pm, at the Camano Island Library

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - Final class and graduation held April 30 at Padilla Bay with 26 new graduates.
 - The last class featured a 1-hour presentation "One Year as a Salish Sea Steward" by Ron Conte, a 2023 graduate, highlighting some of his volunteer work including plankton surveys, juvenile Dungeness crab molt studies, forage fish surveys, and stormwater monitoring.
 - Each new Steward was given a Certificate of Completion, letters of congratulation from the SMRC & Padilla Bay NERR along with a SSS logo T-Shirt/uniform, a name tag on a lanyard, and a current list of volunteer opportunities.
 - AC Member Rachelle Kierulff educated the graduates on the purpose of the Advisory Committee and encouraged new volunteers to join. 2 new graduates are considering auditing the AC meetings to see if it might be a good fit.
 - Volunteer opportunities are posted every 2 weeks in *The Wave*, an electronic bulletin maintained by PBNERR.
 - Next Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting will be held May 17.
 - To date, SSS have recorded over 50,000 volunteer hours since 2015.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly sampling continues at 4 Index sites: Guemes Channel, E. Similk Bay (Swinomish Reservation), Samish Island, and west of marina towards Skyline.
 - Monthly sampling continues at 3 Restoration Sites: Bowman Bay, W. Similk Bay (private property), and Clayton Beach (Skagit volunteers alternate monthly sampling with Whatcom County).
 - Monthly surveys at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve for DNR continue.

- In April, volunteers got some unusual looking egg samples in Similk Bay that they could not identify. Sent the samples to WDFW to ID.
- One of the newly graduated Salish Sea Stewards joined the forage fish survey team.
- Forage Fish Outreach Activities:
 - April – MVHS Science. Very busy with lots of kids.
 - May 21- Forage fish volunteers assisted 1st and 2nd graders from Island View Middle School in learning about forage fish at the Fidalgo Bay Resort beach. Kids learned about forage fish and forage fish habitat in the classroom prior to the field trip.
 - June 28- Big outreach event at Bowman Bay will include forage fish surveys & interpretive station, beach seining, and plant maintenance.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - 10 classes, 250 students from 3 schools participating in the spring program with classroom and field data collecting and analysis components: mudflats, forage fish, and beach seining. Many students have never been to the beach before:
 - April 10: **Concrete 10th-11th grade.** Collected biodiversity and density data of intertidal organisms at Padilla Bay with the help of volunteers.
 - May 6 - May 10: **Evergreen Elementary in Sedro Woolley** 4th grade, 75 students. There was a shortage of bus drivers. Chartering a bus was too expensive. Will need to reschedule.
 - **Action:** MRC might want to consider budgeting for buses for KOTB in the future.
 - May 22: **Allen Elementary in Mount Vernon** 5th grade, 40 students (English 2nd language for many of the students). Will be participating in the mudflat safari at Bay View State Park with the help of volunteers. A lot of these kids have never been to the beach before.
 - The Kids on the Beach program has been so successful that it has infiltrated into many other educational programs at Padilla Bay NERR where they've incorporated many elements from the KOTB program.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) finished monitoring all the outplant sites for the season and some outplanting of juvenile abalone. Will finish up outplanting at 4 sites in Skagit in June with Teams from PSRF, WDFW, the Seattle Aquarium and Samish Tribe.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - During the last several weeks Paul has been picking up some of the native oyster recruitment bags in Fidalgo Bay to monitor recruitment from last year. Counted 450 juvenile oysters per 100 shells in sample bags at the trestle, which is the highest settlement we've seen in Fidalgo Bay in the last 20 years!
 - Paul and his son worked with Matt to set out shell strings (shells on a stick) for the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to monitor oyster settlement throughout Puget Sound.
 - Significant new oyster beds have been cropping up in the muddy area south of the trestle in an area that didn't seem like it would be good habitat for oyster settlement. Some of the new beds are small, but one of them appeared to be around 100 square meters.
 - Paul gave a presentation on oysters to the WCC at Padilla Bay NERR. The WCC will be helping with the oyster restoration work happening at Padilla Bay.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Tracy Alker:
 - Skagit MRC's Grant Funding from NOAA (\$58k) for this project expires December 31, 2024.
 - The City of Anacortes has a contract with Hanson Professional Services for the Fidalgo Bay trestle project that is expected to get signed in April.
 - We are still negotiating the Interlocal Agreement Scope of Work and deliverables with the City of Anacortes. We are getting pretty close to getting it all sorted out.
 - Proposed Framework:
 - Interpretive Signage: City would contract with Museum to create the layout design and will contract with an outside company to fabricate (with MRC grant funds). Skagit MRC Science team will create content.

- Website: City will host the project page on their website and create the QR Code. Skagit MRC Science team will help create content.
- Video: City video contractor would create a series of 3 short video clips (30 or 60 seconds) for social media and websites. Could include drone footage and interviews with scientists. Details will have to be fleshed out.
- Community Engagement: City would host 3 community meetings at the Anacortes Senior Center hosting local scientists and project partners. City staff would also host an informational booth at Fidalgo Bay Day.
- Preliminary Concept Design: This is one of our grant deliverable requirements. The concept design will not be completed until after our grant expires. Hanson would provide a very preliminary concept design by the end of December. City provided updated scope and fees which would cost an estimated \$48k for additional Geotech and hazardous materials sampling, and testing.
- Communications Plan and Outreach Strategy: One of our other grant deliverable requirements is to create a Communications Plan with Messaging and Outreach Strategy which will not be included in the Interlocal Agreement with the City. Jessica Owens, the NWSC Communications Coordinator, offered to help facilitate this and shared the Communications Plan template to start plugging in information.
- **Action 1**: Approve Scope of Work and budget allocation of MRC Grant Funds to finalize the Interlocal Agreement with the City of Anacortes.
- **Action 2**: Assemble a team of scientists to start developing content and messaging.
- **Action 3**: Create a Communications Plan with Messaging and Outreach Strategy
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - Date has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Save the Date notices have been sent out to past participating organizations and volunteers. Responses are slowly trickling in.
 - Will start reaching out directly to past volunteers in a couple of weeks to confirm participation and fill spots.
 - Trying to schedule our next planning meeting this month.
 - Erin Merklein, Volunteer Coordinator with PBNERR, and the County NRD education/outreach staff joined the planning committee! Will need to update the flyers with new partner logos.
 - Reached out to Amy with The Salish Sea School to ask if students might be interested in hosting the craft tables and/or face painting this year. She said she would ask, but students are busy so no guarantee. Plan to contact the Childrens Museum next.
 - Rosie confirmed she will be participating again this year with the No-Host Salmon BBQ. We will need to get more details from her regarding the menu & prices.
 - Looking for someone to take the lead on contacting restaurants for chowders.
- School Rain Garden – Tracy Alker:
 - Tracy met with Diane and Lynne at the La Conner School Rain Garden on April 27th to do a soil infiltration test and assess the existing conditions of the site.
 - The soil drained quickly and appeared to be very healthy, so no need to replace it.
 - The plants that were there also appeared to be very healthy and happy mature plants.
 - There are several bare areas that could use some sprucing up with additional plants and mulch.
 - The impervious area along the eastern corner of the rain garden could use an upgrade where stormwater isn't draining properly into the raingarden.
 - Lynne created a diagram showing existing conditions and list of proposed actions for making improvements including:
 - ❖ Spruce up the rain garden with additional native plants and mulch and incorporate indigenous plantings for food and/or a medicine garden to support the Swinomish's Between Two Worlds program.

- ❖ Improve stormwater flow into the rain garden by creating additional notches or removing sections of the curbed area and creating a drain path in the asphalt area to the rain garden.
- ❖ Adding interpretive signage like the one installed at the Mt. Erie School Rain Garden.
- Next Steps:
 - Scheduled a site visit on May 20th with the Skagit County Road Shop Staff, Skagit Conservation District Staff, and Swinomish staff to get their technical expertise and cost estimates on the proposed improvements. The School Principal and Facilities Staff will likely be there as well. The School District will need to approve the proposed work before moving forward with construction.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - NWSC/NWSF held the annual 2024 Kelp Kayak Kickoff meeting on May 1 in person at PBNERR and partially online for all participating MRC's. Safety, kelp data resources and preseason prep were covered, as well as hands-on practice skills for protocols, data collection and management for those interested. It was well attended by the Skagit kelp kayaker team.
 - Kelp presentation at the Salish Sea Stewards training along with a plug for new kayaker kelp survey volunteers – we had one interested, but they will likely join the Whatcom MRC team.
 - 2024 Kelp Surveys will begin again in June with a Skagit team pre-season review and BBQ scheduled for June 6 and a shake-down paddle planned for June 14.
 - Exploring the possibility of adding new kelp bed(s) to survey in collaboration with the Swinomish off Lone Tree Point and Hope Island and Kiket Island - Steve Olsen has offered to lead. The Swinomish will provide launch access at Thousand Trails. The site recon went well and looks feasible. The next step is to find a few experienced kayak kelp survey volunteers willing to add this kelp bed to their schedules this year.
 - Lynne and Jeff W met with Pacific Northwest National Labs to learn more about the work they are doing to model the currents in the Salish Sea:
 - <https://nvs.nanoos.org/WaysWaterMoves>
 - <https://ssmc-uw.org/2023/07/12/sscofs-current/>
 - They also have a You-Tube site where you can get short vignettes of different higher resolution studies that have done for various areas across the Salish Sea:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/@salishseamodelingcenter7155>
 - David Trimbach, NWSC Science Advisory Committee and WDFW Conservation Social Scientist is meeting with MRC kelp teams and others to collect information for a HSIL proposal to connect with diverse communities, including Asia Pacific Islanders, on their relationships / interaction with kelp. Objective is to provide more targeted and useful communication to communities on the value of kelp (seaweed), including legal uses and restoration / monitoring / protection needs. Lynne recently met with David about the project.
- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance and Beach Seining– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Beach Seining:** Jason Morgan with the NWSF is leading the beach seining effort for the Skagit MRC with the help of volunteers including MRC members (Paul Dinnel and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson), from January 2024 through December 2025. Beach seining currently takes place twice a month through June. It will be reduced to once a month starting in July through the end of 2025.
 - **Plant Maintenance:** Lisa Kaufman with the NWSF is leading the plant maintenance effort for the Skagit MRC. Foundation staff continues to do weekly plant maintenance at the site every Thursday to make sure the plants get watered on a regular basis during the hot and dry summer months. Monthly volunteer stewardship events will be held May 30th, June 28th, July 25th, and August 22nd from 9am-11am.
 - **Bowman Bay Outreach Event- June 28th:** In partnership with NWSF, SFEG, State Parks, and Skagit MRC. Details are still being work out. Will include beach seining demos, plant maintenance, forage fish survey demos, outreach tables, etc.

- **Other (non-MRC) Bowman Bay Restoration Updates:** With funding leftover from another project, the NWSF is working with Deception Pass State Park and USFWS to develop a design for removal of the Bowman Bay boat ramp and armor/debris that was exposed during the December 28 storm event. The boat ramp would likely be replaced with a gravel slope to allow for hand-carried vessels. USFWS will provide federal ESA permitting assistance to Parks. Design should be completed by end of September.
- **Skagit Shorelines Needs Assessment– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:**
 - **Goal:** Produce a Skagit Geodatabase with interactive web-based tools compatible with SoundIQ; Skagit Nearshore Inventory Resource List; List of Prioritized Skagit Focus Areas and a Top Priority List of Skagit MRC Projects and recommended action plans. Confluence Environmental was the firm selected for this project through a competitive process.
 - **Updates:** The Shoreline Needs Assessment project is underway.
 - Kickoff meeting was held April 19 – introductions, review more detailed Confluence Project Plan, open Q&A and a focus on the Task 1 geodatabase design and deliverables. Suzanne Shull (NWSC) attended and was a significant help in clarifying approach needed for Task 1/5 Geodatabase and deliverables to be compatible with SoundIQ.
 - Next steps: Confluence set up 30 minute “check in’s” every 2 weeks to monitor progress and answer questions as the deliverables are developed.
 - First check in was Wed May 5 which covered project status, project needs and next steps.
 - Next Deliverables Due: Initial Geodatabase design (Task 1) and Literature Review (Task 2) (Due: June 10)

Vessel Turn-In Event Update: *Melissa*

- Swinomish in partnership with NWSC, Skagit MRC, Port of Skagit, La Conner Marina, DNR, and Skagit County will be co-hosting a vessel turn-in event towards the end July with NWSC and DNR funding.
- We’ve started promoting the event this month.
- Registration will close the end of June.
- The County intern will be distributing flyers to local marinas today.
- There are several vessel owners that have already expressed interest to Catey about participating.
- The Turn-In Event could last a few days to a few weeks depending on how many vessels register.
- There will likely be a media day with the partners and press present.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: *All*

- **Skagit Green Crab Molt Search Training:** Saturday, June 15 from 10:30am to 12:30pm at Padilla Bay. Must register! <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/skagit-molt-search-training-tickets-884423523567?aff=oddtcreator>. This training will be co-hosted by the Skagit MRC, Padilla Bay, and the Northwest Straits Commission.
- **Bowman Bay Stewardship Days:** Weeding, watering, and spreading compost and mulch. Bring you Discover Pass, water bottle, garden tools, and gloves! Hope to see some MRC members out there!
 - May 30: 9am-11am
 - June 28: 10am-1pm (part of a larger outreach event)
 - July 25: 9am-11am
 - Aug 22: 9am-11am
- **Skagit MRC Website is Getting an Upgrade:** Will be migrating content to the new website sometime next month. Looking for good photos and input on content and design.
- **Voluntary No Anchor Zones:** NWSF will begin coordination and permit applications for Seafarer’s Park in summer 2024 including outreach to area tribes. Will likely contract for an updated eelgrass survey (boat based). Potential constraint may be the ability to reach US Coast Guard for permits. The Lummi Island project has diverted to virtual project due to a lack of communication from USCG.
- **Shore Friendly Update:** *Shore Friendly Living Video Series:* “Trees and Views” video published in January 2024. Additional video development on hold until summer 2024. *Contractor Training Curriculum:* Three coordination meetings have been held to date to develop curriculum for arborists/landscape contractors. Survey emailed to

contractors listed on ISA “Find an Arborist” database to determine interest including topics, time of year, locations, etc. Anticipate first workshops to be held in late fall 2024 or early 2025. Note: NWSF has concurrent funding through the HSIL as of March 2024, for these same projects and programs. Need to coordinate with Sasha and MRC to determine best use of remaining funds.

- **The Fish Wars**: This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Boldt Decision. To help celebrate, The Fish Wars documentary will be featured at the Seattle Film Festival this weekend. Tickets can be purchased online.

The meeting adjourned at 11:11am. The next MRC meeting will be held in person at Padilla Bay on June 13, 2024



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **June 13, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Facility.

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate), Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Elizabeth Drozda, Betsy Stevenson
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Pete Haase, Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Jeff Whitty (NWSC); Sylvia Yang (PBNERR); Holli Watne (Skagit Watershed Council); Gabe (PBNERR); Kat Hayes (SCPW); Sasha Horst (NWSC); Caitlyn Blair (NWSC); Annie England (PBNERR); Chandler Colahan (PBNERR)

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

Approval of Minutes: May 9, 2024, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: None

Native Oyster Restoration at Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve: Sylvia Yang and Gabe (WCC)

- Padilla Bay is one of 19 sites around the Puget Sound region prioritized for native oyster restoration.
- Stressors and other factors can impact success rate of Olympia oyster restoration efforts which could include pathogens, predators, population size, larval supply, water temps, salinity, sedimentation, hypoxia, presence of food, substrate, etc.
- Paul Dinnel and Sylvia Yang were instrumental in getting the native oyster restoration project started at Padilla Bay. Skagit MRC's Skagit Restoration Initiative (SRI) funding from the NW Foundation was used to purchase bags of cultch that were placed in Fidalgo Bay to collect juvenile native oysters. The oysters were later transferred to test plots in Padilla Bay. Mount Vernon High School students helped wash the bags of oysters and inspect them for invasive species prior to deploying them in Padilla Bay.
- Several additional experimental research projects grew from this initial oyster restoration pilot project. A few bags of cultch provided by the MRC went a long way!
- Interesting findings:
 - Oysters grown in bags do not grow as flat as oysters that grow on the ground.
 - Keeping the oysters in bags wasn't a good idea because native species like Dungeness crabs got trapped in the bags. In addition, the oysters kept in bags at certain locations were killed by sedimentation.
 - The winter freeze also killed most of the oysters at one location, but it didn't seem to impact them at other sites. It might have been due to the extremely low tides at that location during the freeze.
 - There were some signs of potential oyster larval recruitment at one of the sites.
 - There were also some signs of some oysters surviving despite predation of oyster drills.
 - Oyster drills appeared to be attracted to barnacles.
 - There is some literature that oysters can induce a defense mechanism in response to predation by making a thicker shell.
 - Evidence that shell cultch in the right places can attract European Green Crabs. They recently caught four EGCs in locations where oyster shell bags were in Padilla Bay.
- PBNERR is looking for feedback from MRC on possible expansion of oyster restoration in Padilla Bay and opportunities for collaboration.

- Paul suggested using longlining oysters - oyster shells placed on lines so they are elevated to keep them out of sediments as well as possibly protecting them from some oyster drill predation.
- Grow oyster spat in the presence of oyster drills to research impact on shell growth and on next generation of oysters.

Northwest Straits Commission Report: *Lynne Wenberg*

Last NWSC meeting occurred **May 31**, 10am-3pm, held at the Camano Island Library. Highlights shared with the MRC in the meeting packet.

- DEI Focus Groups: Athena Group is hosting virtual focus groups for NWSI members to discuss DEI. The next focus group open to all is June 13, 5-6:30pm. A presentation is scheduled June 25th. All MRC members are welcome and encouraged to attend.
- New NWSC Chair/Vice Chair: Tim Ellis – Chair; Alan Clark -Vice Chair.
- NWSI Fall Leadership Retreat: ECO Resource Group performed a series of interviews with reps from the MRCs, NWSC, and NWSF in preparation for the upcoming retreat tentatively set for Thursday, Aug 22 at Padilla Bay and Thursday, Sept 19 (location TBD).
- Speed Date with a Scientist Presentation: Jay Krienitz, Department of Ecology, presented on the new Coastal Resilience Initiative. Jill Lipoti, Island MRC, gave a presentation on Building a Sense of Place. Lynne will share the presentation with those interested.
- Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization: At the Puget Sound Day on the Hill, meetings were held with the Washington State delegation to share the work of MRCs and our regional partners as part of the reauthorization discussion. Reauthorization would help assure more predictable federal funding appropriations for longer term planning.
- Why Evidence-Based Hope is Crucial to Salish Sea Recovery and Beyond: Article for the Salish Sea Institute's Emerging Issues in the Salish Sea Series co-written by Ginny Broadhurst and Dr. Elin Kelsey. Read it [here](#).
- NWSI Conference- Nov 15-16- at The Delta Hotel in Everett. The planning team is working on the agenda which will include a Collaborative Networking Activity. MRCs have been asked to select one project to feature at a station. Conference participants will rotate throughout the stations so that everyone has a chance to learn about work happening in other areas and find areas of common interest. There is no requirement to participate, though it is strongly encouraged. Looking for idea for Skagit MRC projects to highlight.
- Next NWSC meeting: June 28, 10am-12pm, held virtually via Zoom. Darla Gay Smith will be attending as Lynne's alternate as the Skagit MRC rep.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - Final class and graduation held April 30 at Padilla Bay with 26 new graduates joining the ranks of 365 trained Stewards. Many have already started volunteering!
 - 2 new SSS graduates, Barabara Clark and Jenn Dumas, recently joined the AC.
 - Volunteer opportunities are posted every 2 weeks in *The Wave*, an electronic bulletin maintained by PBNERR.
 - The Advisory Committee is in the process of reviewing the 2024 SSS Class Surveys and planning the Summer Alumni social with Padilla Bay.
 - To date, SSS have recorded over 50,000 volunteer hours since 2015.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - May forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites were cancelled due to schedule conflicts.
 - The "annual" Anacortes Island View Elementary kids program on May 21 was held at RV Park for a great time by all. Huge thanks to a big group of volunteers who made it work in Pete's absence!
 - June forage fish survey schedule is now out.
 - Pete will be at the Bowman Bay Discovery Day event on June 28 and will be leading some small group forage fish sessions and sample survey work.

- Kids on the Beach – Annie England:
 - April 8-12: **Concrete 10th-11th grade.** Weeklong program. 1 field day, 4 classroom days. 45 students collected species abundance and biodiversity of intertidal organisms at Bay View State Park with the help of volunteers on April 10. Students collected data from natural beach habitats and compared them to habitats that have been armored and beach habitats that have been partially restored as an indicator of ecosystem health. Students created graphs, analyzed data, and gave presentations.
 - May 22: **Allen Elementary in Mount Vernon-** 40 fifth grade students participated in the mudflat safari at Bay View State Park. This was their first year participating! A lot of these kids have never been to the beach before. The teachers were impressed by how engaged their students were! There was a good student to volunteer ratio. Recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- School Rain Gardens – Tracy Alker and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Mt. Erie School Rain Garden:** Diane Hennebert hosted a Rain Garden Maintenance Orientation at the Mt. Erie School in May and again in June with MRC and NWSF staff, one County Intern, and two NWSF interns. Pulled lots of weeds. There are still a lot of weeds left to pull, but the rain garden is looking healthy overall. Starting to fill in with new growth. Might need some additional planting and mulch in the fall or next year to help it fill in. The interns will maintain the rain garden this summer into the fall with NWSF staff oversight. The NWSF is working on a maintenance schedule and will be purchasing some tools, a hose, and key for water access.
 - **La Conner School Rain Garden:** Tracy and Lynne facilitated a site visit on May 20th with the Skagit County Road Shop Staff, Skagit Conservation District Staff, and Swinomish staff (ie Catey Ritchie) to get their technical expertise on the proposed improvements. The School Principal and Facilities Staff attended as well and were able to track down a copy of the original rain garden design. Proposed improvements include:
 - Improving stormwater flow to the rain garden (top priority).
 - County can help with construction. Recommended creating additional notches in the curb around the rain garden and shaving the asphalt area to help direct stormwater flow into the rain garden. Cost estimates are around \$6,000.
 - School Principal's daughter is a civil/environmental engineer who specializes in designing water flow systems for property development. She offered her engineering services (if needed) free of charge!
 - Spruce up the bare areas with additional native plants and mulch and incorporate indigenous plantings for food and/or a medicine garden to support the Swinomish's Between Two Worlds program.
 - There won't likely be enough funding left to install interpretive signage this year, but we hope to get it done next year.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - Date has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Save the Date notices have been sent out to past participating organizations and volunteers.
 - Volunteer recruitment noticed posted in the Salish Sea Stewards electronic news bulletin The WAVE and the SSS alumni newsletter.
 - Event Agenda and Volunteer Needs:
 - Beach Seining: Matt Castle will lead the beach seining activity.
 - Samish Canoe Family: Expressed interest but haven't confirmed.
 - Shannon Point Touch Tanks: Confirmed.
 - Kids Craft Tables: 2 volunteers signed up to help with face painting, but we haven't had much luck recruiting volunteers to help with the craft tables so far. The Skagit Childrens Museum is too busy with back-to-school events in late August. We also reached out to the Anacortes High School Green Club and the Mount Vernon High School Key Club but haven't heard back.
 - Chowders: Cynthia Nielsen is coordinating the chowders. Two restaurants confirmed participation this year: Bob's Chowder and Adrift. Anthony's and Secret Cove donated gift cards since they are unable to participate at the event this year.

- Shellfish: Paul is coordinating the Shellfish BBQ and has several volunteers signed up. Taylor confirmed they will be donating shellfish for the event. Has a volunteer lined up to pick up the BBQ equipment rental.
 - No-Host Salmon BBQ: Rosie confirmed participation.
 - Discovery Passports: Friends of Skagit Beaches confirmed participation.
 - Outreach Booths: 27 organizations confirmed participation.
- Several Volunteer Vacancies: Parking, zero waste, popcorn, kids craft tables, Event MC/announcer, photographers, roving volunteer break relief, and setup/cleanup.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneil:
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) currently doing field work- outplanting with Teams from PSRF, WDFW, the Seattle Aquarium and Samish Tribe. So far this year they've outplanted around 12,000 juvenile abalone in the San Juan Island area at 17 outplant sites. 5,600 of those abalone went to Skagit sites.
 - PSRF finished monitoring all the outplant sites for the season.
 - Collected 20 new broodstock for spawning in the hatchery.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneil:
 - Paul retrieved shell strings for the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to monitor oyster settlement throughout Puget Sound.
 - Sampled oyster shell patch at the muddy southern channels of Fidalgo Bay. 82% of oysters were dead in the southern channels, possibly due to freezing winter temps during low tide. On the plus side, there were a lot of juvenile oyster settlement on the shell. The oyster shells will continue to provide substrate for future oyster settlement where there is very little substrate in the muddy bay.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Tracy Alker:
 - Skagit MRC's Grant Funding from NOAA (\$58k) for this project expires December 31, 2024.
 - The City of Anacortes has a contract with Hanson Professional Services for the Fidalgo Bay trestle project.
 - Our Interlocal Agreement with the City of Anacortes is being presented to the City Council this week. The City will be responsible for the following deliverables:
 - Interpretive Signage: City will create the layout design, fabricate, and install up to 3 interpretive signs. Skagit MRC Science team will help create messaging content.
 - Website: City will host the project page on their website and create the QR Code. Skagit MRC Science team will help create content.
 - Video: City will create a series of 3 short video clips (30 or 60 seconds) for social media and websites with input from Skagit MRC Science team.
 - Community Engagement: City will host 3 stakeholder meetings at the Anacortes Senior Center and several community meetings. City staff will also host an informational booth at Fidalgo Bay Day.
 - Preliminary Conceptual Design: Hanson will provide a very preliminary conceptual design by the end of December. The conceptual design process will include geotech and hazardous materials sampling, and testing. The conceptual design will not be finalized until after our grant expires but will still be shared and presented to the MRC.
 - Need a team of MRC members to help develop messaging and content for public outreach (interp signage, website, videos, etc.) based on scientific data extracted from existing Fidalgo Bay studies, complete the Communications Plan and Outreach Strategy, and attend stakeholder meetings with the City.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Background: Skagit surveys include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and proposed new "Lone Tree Point" (Steven Olsen – Lead).

Updates: Kelp Season is here!

- May 11, Steven Olsen and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, with help from the Swinomish - obtained access to Thousand Trails boat launch and did a recon of Lone Tree Point and Skagit Island kelp beds. Found a healthy young kelp bed starting around the reef off Lone Tree. Steven, as lead, determined access and managing currents / tides were feasible (although something to watch). The MRC approved the addition of the new Lone Tree Point site to the kelp surveys. First survey for Lone Tree occurred June 21.
 - Skagit kayakers and NWSC reps (Jeff and Suzanne) met June 7 for a team BBQ and pre-season coordination at Steven's house. Topics covered: coordinating shake-down cruise for June 14 (Steven leading), debrief from NWSC kelp meetings and discuss what other MRC's are doing, new equipment needed, etc. (NWSC has what we need). Team leads shared their survey schedules and discussed resources needed to add the new bed. Although we have lost 4 kayakers (and added 1) this year, the team agreed to rally to share kayakers to ensure all teams have the kayakers they need (an online schedule and contact list was established).
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
Background: 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. A new Beach Seining project was funded by the SMRC for 2024-2025 with Jason Morgan as the NWSF Lead Scientist. SFEG has an adjacent restoration project in the works and will be providing 50% of the necessary beach seining funds -Yuki Reiss, SFEG Restoration Ecologist will lead this effort for SFEG. An MOU with NWSF and SMRC has been signed and formalized.
Updates:
 - Beach seining currently takes place twice a month through June with the help of volunteers including MRC members (Paul Dinnel and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson. It will be reduced to once a month starting in July through the end of 2025.
 - BB has been experiencing high levels of ulva and at least one seining session had to be called off. In May they caught a few juvenile Chinook and chum salmon and a large number of juvenile pink salmon, surf smelt, Sculpin, and English sole.
 - A team of 8 volunteers contributed a total of 41 hours.
- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
Background: Lisa Kaufman with the NWSF is leading the plant maintenance effort for the Skagit MRC. Foundation staff continues to do weekly plant maintenance at the site every Thursday to make sure the plants get watered on a regular basis during the hot and dry summer months.
Updates:
 - Stewardship event on May 30th with 13 volunteers and 3 NWSF staff in attendance, focusing on plant maintenance, such as weeding throughout the entire restoration site.
 - Monthly volunteer events have been scheduled for June 28, July 25, August 22. June 28th will be a larger event including project partners (NWSF, MRC, SFEG, TSSS and MG Native Plants) and nearshore monitoring activities and demonstrations.
 - Coordinating the season's plant maintenance schedule of stewardship events with weeding, watering, and spreading compost and mulch.
 - No watering to date due to rainy spring. Next event is June 28.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
Background: This project will produce a Skagit Geodatabase with interactive web-based tools compatible with SoundIQ; Skagit Nearshore Inventory Resource List; List of Prioritized Skagit Focus Areas and a Top Priority List of Skagit MRC Projects and recommended action plans. Confluence Environmental is the firm that has been contracted to do this project.
Updates:
 - Meeting with Confluence every 2 weeks. June 20 was a one-hour progress meeting (1st deliverable) to review status of all the tasks in detail and solicit input from the Skagit advisory team members.
 - Phil reviewed latest conceptual model for determining marine processes, structure and function stressors, degradation and linkage analysis.

- The preliminary literature review is almost complete and will be shared with the MRC for review. It will initially take the form of a table of all possible data approaches in summary form. The list of data will be broad but not necessarily used in the analysis. All datasets will become part of the final Skagit Resource Inventory for future use. Literature Review will be iteratively updated as new information is needed over time.
- Phil noted some data sources from agencies (like WDFW) will require a public disclosure request before data will be made available. For digital access to Skagit Bay Blueprint data, Phil and Suzanne talked about other possible sources who might have this data archived somewhere – they haven't given up yet!
- Phil recommends we use Google Earth initially to more easily map existing MRC projects (completed, partially completed or incomplete).
- The geodatabase analytical unit will likely be shoreline (line segment) rather than parcel (polygon). Suzanne recommended looking at how other agencies define their data.
- Nearshore connections were noted of most importance to MRC: kelp/eelgrass, forage fish, native Olympia oysters and crab, consistent with current adjacent MRC projects. We may elect to add areas up the watershed in the future.
- The following preliminary categories were proposed for prioritization:
 - Landscape Context
 - Ecosystem Process
 - Habitat Function
 - Overall
- Phil provided a Nearshore Context diagram to verify what areas of the nearshore we want covered and asked if we also want to add areas higher up in the watershed for water quality.
- Vessel Turn-In Event- Melissa Ciesielski:
 - Swinomish in partnership with NWSC, Skagit MRC, Port of Skagit, La Conner Marina, DNR, and Skagit County will be co-hosting a vessel turn-in event towards the end July with NWSC and DNR funding.
 - Applications are being accepted through June 24th.
 - Potentially over 30 vessels interested.
 - There will likely be a media day with the partners and press present. Communications team (NWSC, Swinomish, Port of Skagit, DNR, and ECY reps) coordinating on media day logistics and plan.
 - Next meeting mid-July to finalize plans.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- **Skagit Green Crab Molt Search Training:** Saturday, June 15 from 10:30am to 12:30pm at Padilla Bay. Must register! <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/skagit-molt-search-training-tickets-884423523567?aff=oddtcreator>. This training will be co-hosted by the Skagit MRC, Padilla Bay, and the Northwest Straits Commission.
- **Friday, June 21: 2025 Skagit comprehensive Plan Update Stakeholder Interview with MRC.** – 2pm-3pm via Microsoft Teams. Interview questions have been provided. All MRC members are encouraged to attend.
- **Skagit Watershed Council Updates:** Salmon Recovery Board currently has 18 projects for this round of grant funding. Two marine restoration projects are ready for construction. One is for over 260 acres in the Skagit Delta through Department of Fish and Wildlife land. The other project is Similk Bay at the Swinomish golf course where they will be adding a new bridge.

The meeting adjourned at 11:11am followed by a tour of the PBNERR upland coastal meadow restoration project and touch pool tour with PBNERR staff. The next MRC meeting will be virtually July 11, 2024, via Microsoft Teams.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **July 11, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Elizabeth Drozda, Betsy Stevenson, Pete Haase, Kevin Anderson, Raquel Crosier (Jude Apple's Alternate)
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Darla Gay Smith, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Jude Apple, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Leah Skare (NWSC); Sasha Horst (NWSC); Craig Thomas (UW); Cynthia Nielsen (SSS Volunteer); Ryan Mielke (FBAR Volunteer); Tom Koontz (UW); Chang, Katherine (UW)

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

Approval of Minutes: June 13, 2024, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: None

How Collaborative Partnerships Apply Science: Craig Thomas and Research Team (U.W.)

- Last fall, Skagit MRC helped the U.W. research team field a survey on how collaborative partnerships with diverse interests find and apply science in their decision-making processes to develop policies, plans, proposals, projects, etc. The report was shared with MRC members.
- **Research questions:** When do collaborative participants in the Puget Sound basin seek scientific information, and how do they find it and evaluate it? What makes a piece of scientific information useful? How do they apply it to their local context? In relative to science? (could be any type of science: social science, natural science, physical science, etc.)
- **Research project included 3 phases:** (1) building a catalog of collaborative environmental organizations in the Puget Sound region working on ecosystem restoration planning and projects; (2) interviewing members of several of these organizations to help set up survey questions (interviewees were randomly selected using a software system); and (3) conducting a web-based survey of participants across all these collaborative organizations.
 - Skagit MRC members were not interviewed, but several committee members completed the online survey.
 - 54 ecosystem recovery partnerships invited to participate in the web-based survey in 2023.
 - 292 viable responses received out of 940 eligible members and across 51 partnerships (no responses from 3 partnerships). Mostly from government led partnerships (e.g. Lead Entities, RFEGs, MRCs, LIOs, etc.).
- **Expertise of respondents:** Most indicated natural science expertise. Many other types of expertise are also represented. Its possible that more scientists took the survey than non-scientists. Social science ranked low. Respondents ranked social science as less important than natural science.
- **Most common barriers to applying science:** logistical constraints, such as cost and decision deadlines.
- **What makes scientific information useful:** relevance and credibility ranked highest.
- **When do respondents seek scientific information?** To understand problems and develop solutions and recommend a specific course of action.
- **Most common obstacles to finding science information:** insufficient time or labor to find it, too much data to sift through, and missing data.

- MRCs indicated capacity was one of the biggest hurdles. Capacity was less of an obstacle for respondents from other organizations.
- **Where do most respondents get their scientific information?** Request help from others within or outside their partnership, particularly scientific information produced by government bodies.
- **Where do MRCs get scientific information?** Meetings and conferences and inviting expertise/speakers to share information and networking with other partnership members.
- Asked which of these findings resonate with MRC members and how might these results be useful for MRCs and NWSC? Weren't sure if any non-science people filled out the survey.
 - Several MRC members that are not scientists took the survey. Although they don't consider themselves to be scientists most have taken some form of science classes or training.
 - MRC members feel that communicating science with others in a way that resonates with them is important and it's something we should incorporate into planning and implementing projects.
 - This information could help inform our thoughts about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and bringing more people with different expertise into these types of projects. How do MRCs recruit new members with more diverse expertise and backgrounds or invite those experts to present at MRC meetings?
 - Puget Sound Partnership Social Science Advisory Committee meets monthly and is a good place to get more information and certain expertise to present at MRC meetings.

Northwest Straits Commission Report: *Darla Gay Smith*

Last NWSC meeting occurred **June 28**, 10am-12pm, held virtually via Zoom. Highlights shared with the MRC in the meeting packet.

- **NWSI Reauthorization:** On June 18, 2024, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), and U.S. Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA-02) reintroduced legislation to reauthorize the Northwest Straits Initiative. Reauthorization will recognize the Initiative as a federal program and acknowledge the importance of locally driven marine conservation.
 - **Senator Patty Murray visit:** Tuesday, July 16 at Padilla Bay with the Northwest Straits Commission and reps from all MRCs to talk about the NWSI reauthorization and MRC projects from each county. Paul Dinnel and Todd Woodard will talk about MRC and Samish projects in Skagit County.
 - **Rep Rick Larsen visit:** Aug 22 or 27 at Fidalgo Bay Resort with the NWSC and Skagit MRC to talk about the NWSI reauthorization and MRC projects in collaboration with the Samish and NWSC regional projects.
- **New Gubernatorial Appointee:** The NW Straits Commission welcomed Jamie Stephens as the new gubernatorial appointee to the Commission. He is a former San Juan County Council member and Lopez Island resident.
- **Diversity Equity Inclusion Assessment Presentation:** Tevin Medley & the Athena Group shared a brief update of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion assessment survey, focus groups, and a project summary presentation.
- **Ohop Creek Stormwater Management Pilot Project Presentation:** Keith Estes from *Long Live the Kings* presented on the *Ohop Creek stormwater management pilot project*. The project tested the efficacy of using an above ground compost-based biofiltration system to collect and clean stormwater from roadway runoff.
- **Next NWSC meeting:** **July 26**, 10am-3pm, held at the Port Townsend Yacht Club

Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:**
 - The SSS Advisory Committee started their summer break. The AC will resume with an in-person meeting in October to review the 2024 Steward Class surveys and start to plan for the 2025 SSS Training Program at Padilla Bay.
- **Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:**
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.

- Spawning is good in Fidalgo Bay and is picking up in Similk Bay.
- Volunteers helped with forage fish sampling demos at the Bowman Bay Discovery Day on June 28. Several students from The Salish Sea School that participated spoke very little English. An interpreter was there to help communicate the information that was being shared. An important reminder to be mindful of these communication barriers and to do our best to make sure the information we provide is accessible to everyone.
- Pete announced he will no longer be the forage fish lead after the end of this year. He is working with other volunteers to figure out how to restructure and reorganize and transition things over to someone new.
- Bob Weathers, a longtime volunteer for forage fish surveys and bull kelp kayak surveys recently moved to California. The good news is that two longtime volunteers, Dale Fournier and Brad Smith, are moving back to Shelter Bay after moving to the east coast two years ago and are eager to get involved in volunteering again!
- Kids on the Beach – Raquel Crosier:
 - Kids on the Beach programs took place in April with Concrete High School students and in May with Allen Elementary Mount Vernon fifth grade students (first year participating). Lots of help from volunteers during field days. It was a very successful spring program. Planning will start up again soon for the next school year.
- School Rain Gardens – Tracy Alker:
 - **Mt. Erie School Rain Garden:** The NWSF is leading the maintenance effort at this site with their two interns and the County intern. They purchased some tools, a hose, and key for water access. Weeding and watering took place on July 15.
 - **La Conner School Rain Garden:**
 - Elizabeth Drozda will be taking over as the new MRC project Lead of the school rain garden project.
 - The top priority is to improve stormwater flow to the rain garden because it isn't currently functioning properly as a rain garden. The County Road Crew will create additional notches in the curb around the rain garden and re-grade the asphalt area to help direct stormwater flow into the rain garden. Construction will hopefully take place in August, before school starts back up again (once we get permission from the school).
 - This fall we plan to spruce up the bare areas with additional native plants and mulch with the planting plan provided by the Skagit Conservation District. We also hope to incorporate culturally significant plantings for food and/or a medicine garden.
 - There won't likely be enough funding left to install interpretive signage this year, but we hope to get it done next year.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Tracy Alker:
 - Date has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Event Agenda: Samish led beach seining, Shannon Point Marine Center Touch Tank (waiting on confirmation), outreach tables, chowders, shellfish, no-host salmon BBQ, popcorn, face painting, kids craft tables, Corra the Mermaid-Selkie, discovery passport activity, Samish canoe experience (waiting on confirmation).
 - 27 outreach booths confirmed.
 - Collecting and coordinating Discovery Passport Station Questions for outreach booths. The deadline for Passport questions is August 3.
 - Only 21 volunteers signed up so far. Still have lots of volunteer vacancies to fill: Parking, zero waste, popcorn, kids craft tables, Event announcer, photographers, roving volunteer break relief, and setup/cleanup.
 - Event promo starting to ramp up. Posted event to online event calendars and resources.
 - Skagit Soils will take our compost free of charge for this event with our pre-approved compostable plates, bowls, cups, and utensils we have in stock.

- Planning kids craft activities. Skagit MRC and The Salish Sea School will be hosting the kids craft tables this year along our outreach booths/Discovery Passport Station activity.
- Chowder Samples provided by Bob's Chowder Bar and Adrift (Thanks to Cynthia Nielsen for coordinating!) Anthony's and Secret Cove donated gift cards since they are unable to participate at the event this year. The gift cards will be given to FBD volunteers in a free drawing.
- Shellfish provided by Taylor Shellfish and BBQ'd by volunteers (Thanks to Paul for coordinating!). Kat will reserve the BBQ rental equipment soon.
- Traditional Coast Salish No-Host Salmon BBQ provided by Rosie and family.
- Popcorn- Kat contacted the Anacortes Boys and Girls Club to reserve the popcorn machine. Still waiting to hear back. Elizabeth said The Salish Sea School also has a popcorn machine we could borrow for this event if needed.
- Looking for an MRC member to kickoff the Fidalgo Bay Day event with a welcome, brief event agenda/overview, and tribal lands acknowledgement (we can provide a short script).
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneel:
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) with the help of WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Samish Indian Nation, and Seattle Aquarium completed field work for the winter/spring season (Feb- June).
 - Field work included monitoring of previously established outplant sites, adding new seed abalone, collecting new spawners for the laboratory, and commencing spawning activities in the lab to produce seed abalone for 2025.
 - Outplanted around 12,000 juvenile abalone in the San Juan Island area at 17 outplant sites. 5,600 of those abalone went to Skagit sites.
 - Collected 20 new broodstock for spawning in the hatchery.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel:
 - Paul Coordinated with Puget Sound Restoration Fund to get new shell strings for deployment in Fidalgo Bay and later deployed strings at the trestle & Weaverling Spit. Also collected and processed the shell strings that had been set out in 2023. Collected and processed the 2023 shell recruitment bags from four Fidalgo Bay location. Settlement proved to very high in 2023. Set out new recruitment bags for collection in 2025.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Tracy Alker:
 - Skagit MRC's Grant Funding from NOAA (\$58k) for this project expires December 31, 2024.
 - The City of Anacortes has a contract with Hanson Professional Services for the Fidalgo Bay trestle project including site investigation and baseline assessment (Geotech and hazardous materials), structural assessment (hydrodynamic modeling and sediment transport), alternatives analysis, and conceptual design.
 - Our Interlocal Agreement with the City of Anacortes was recently signed by the City. It is anticipated to get signed by the County next week. It includes the following deliverables: Interpretive signage, project website, short video clips for social media, community meetings, informational booth at Fidalgo Bay Day, and preliminary conceptual design.
 - The City would like the MRC and other stakeholders to help develop messaging and content for public outreach (interp signage, website, videos, etc.) and to participate at community meetings.
 - The Board of County Commissioners is interested in a presentation to learn more about this project. Would like MRC members to share perspectives why this project is important. Other speakers invited to present include the City of Anacortes, the Samish and WADNR Aquatic Reserve. Speakers will have the option of presenting in person or online. Trying to find a date that will work.
- 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).

- **Coffin Rocks:** A team of 3 volunteers surveyed June 20. Observations: Kelp density and health looked very good with young kelp still below surface. Next survey is July 19.
- **Shannon Point:** A team of 3 volunteers surveyed June 18.
 - West Kelp Bed Observations: Kelp appeared to be sparse but very healthy. Many individual bulbs were noted to the south of the track bed, as well as many detached small bulbs found washed up at shoreline.
 - East Bed Observations: Very little bull kelp – only 11 random single small bulbs (searching multiple times), several bulbs found surrounded in Sargassum. Not enough bulbs to track a bed. The shoreline is overrun with thick, invasive Sargassum.
 - Next SP survey is scheduled for July 17.
- **Biz Point:** survey was not conducted in June due to a scheduling conflict. The next BP survey is scheduled for July 9.
- **Lone Tree:** No survey was conducted in June due to access issues. Next LT survey is planned for July 22.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Beach Seining Updates:** Beach seining is a project funded by Skagit MRC and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and is led by Jason Morgan as the lead scientist with the help of volunteers including MRC members (Paul Dinnel and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson). Beach seining in June took place June 17 (150 fish) and June 28 (311 fish). They caught lots of shiner perch English sole, gunnel's and staghorn sculpin. They also caught Chinook, prickleback, and greenling. 7-8 volunteers contributed a combined total of 21 volunteer hours each day.
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:** Lisa Kaufman with the NWSF is leading the plant maintenance effort for the Skagit MRC. Foundation staff continues to do weekly plant maintenance at the site every Thursday.
 - Using the Parks water truck, NWSF staff watered the restoration site on June 13th, June 20th, and July 3rd. The weeks that were skipped were due to sufficient rain for early season and no watering was necessary.
 - The next stewardship event is on July 25th with the NWSF staff, Foundation Board Members, and volunteers.
 - **Bowman Bay Discovery Day- Celebrating Habitat Restoration- June 28:** We kicked off the event with an overview of the history and ongoing habitat restoration of Bowman Bay presented by Lisa Kaufman. Outreach booths were hosted by the Skagit MRC, NWSF, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, The Salish Sea School, and the Salal Chapter of the Washington National Plant Society. Activities included spreading two yards of mulch within the restoration site, beach seining demonstrations, forage fish sampling demonstrations, forage fish eggs under microscopes, build a beach activity, and native plant ID. 14 first - third graders and 20 fifth – sixth graders from The Salish Sea School participated.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

The Shoreline Needs Assessment project with Confluence Environmental is underway.

 - Meeting with Confluence every 2 weeks.
 - Task 1 – Initial new Geodatabase
 - Task 1 deliverable was provided by Confluence for MRC review containing the proposed initial database structure, including snapshots of the current parcel and drift cell datasets. It is expected the database design will be updated iteratively as we make more decisions going forward.
 - Task 2 – Literature Review
 - Task 2 deliverable was provided by Confluence for MRC review containing a spreadsheet of 168 possible source publications and dataset descriptions.
 - Not all data will necessarily be used in the analysis. All datasets will become part of the final Skagit Resource Inventory for future use.

- Nearshore connections were noted of most importance to MRC: kelp/eelgrass, forage fish, native Olympia oysters and crab, consistent with current adjacent MRC projects.
- Task 3 – Develop Prioritization Process, Perform Analysis, Identify MRC Focus Areas
 - The following preliminary categories were proposed for prioritization:
 - ❖ Landscape Context
 - ❖ Ecosystem Process
 - ❖ Habitat Function
 - ❖ Overall
 - Additional descriptions and attributes were reviewed and will continue to be developed for purposes of prioritization and analysis.
 - We confirmed that priority should be nearshore to maintain scope, but we may elect to add areas up the watershed in the future.
- Task 4 – Develop High Priority Restoration or Protection Projects
 - tbd
- Task 5 – Final Geodatabase
 - tbd

SSS Volunteer Coordinator Project Recommendation: Betsy

- State Funding for Year 1 of the Salish Sea Stewards Volunteer Coordinator project ended 6/30/24. This project was experimental, and it has proven to be challenging as a stand-alone project and unable to meet all the grant deliverable requirements. In addition, Lynne is stepping down as project lead, and in the absence of an MRC member project lead it is no longer eligible for Commission funding. Lynne, Darla, and Pete are making the recommendation to the MRC to close the Volunteer Coordinator Project and reallocate Year 2 funding (\$20k) to the Salish Sea Stewards Training project to help supplement the training program and some volunteer coordination. The recommendation was brought to a vote by the MRC.
 - Action: MRC voted by consensus to approve the recommendation to close the Volunteer Coordinator project and reallocate \$20k to the Salish Sea Stewards Training project for year 2 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025).

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- MRC Quarterly Grant Progress Reports Due: July 15
 - Action: MRC members were asked to submit hours and project reports to Tracy as soon as possible.
- Pigeon Guillemot Breeding Survey: The Program Coordinator for the Salish Sea Guillemot Network's Pigeon Guillemot (PIGU) Breeding Survey would like to explore the possibility of expanding surveys to Skagit County if there are any volunteers willing to get involved in coordinating the effort.
 - Action: The Committee requested the Program Coordinator be invited to a future MRC meeting to share more information about this project.
- Passport to Marine Adventure: The NW Straits Foundation is refreshing their Passport to Marine Adventure Application where participants collect points when they visit sites and redeem points for discounts at local businesses. They would like the MRC to select 3 new sites to add along with a brief description and something engaging for the user to do along with a photo of the for each site. Potential new sites: Bowman Bay Deception Pass State Park, Sunset Beach Washington Park, and South Padilla Bay Shore Trail. Looking for MRC volunteers to take the lead on this!
 - Action: Raquel volunteered to write something up for the South Padilla Bay Shore Trail. Betsy volunteered to take on the Sunset Beach Washington Park location.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually August 8, 2024, via Microsoft Teams.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **August 08, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker, Betsy Stevenson, Jude Apple, Cynthia Nielsen, Darla Gay Smith, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Pete Haase, Elizabeth Drozda, Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Lisa Kaufman (NWSF), Shannon Boldt (PIGU)

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

Approval of Minutes: July 11, 2024, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: None

Salish Sea Pigeon Guillemot (PIGU) Network's Breeding Survey: Shannon Boldt

- PIGU live in Puget sound year around and are considered a Marine Bird indicator species. They are adaptable to change and appear to be doing well.
- PIGU Network's Breeding Survey started on Whidbey Island in 2004. It is a collaborative effort between eight independently coordinated and sponsored survey regions across the Salish Sea, from Olympia all the way to the San Juans.
- 255 volunteers. 64 colonies surveyed. 2000 birds monitored last year.
- PIGU surveyed during the breeding season, from June through September. This entails survey teams sitting and observing PIGU breeding activity at their colonies for one hour, once a week. Record population numbers, frequency and types of prey delivered, and disturbances.
- Surveys take just 1 hour, done by 9am. Some areas require 2 surveyors others need more.
- Tides effect activity. More activity with high tides.
- Data Informs WDFW and UW. Value in long-term data sets.
- PIGU nest in bluffs, rock cavities and structures along the water. Not always easily observed from the shore. Easier with a boat. Have survey protocol for collecting population data for when burrows not visible.
- They like to eat crustaceans and gunnells are their favorite fish. Sculpin 2nd favorite.
- Currently don't have any surveys occurring in Skagit County and would love to explore the possibility of expanding surveys to Skagit if there are any volunteers willing to get involved in coordinating the effort.
 - Skagit MRC was involved in PIGU surveys in 2007 and has some maps that show where the breeding sites were located.
 - If interested in sponsoring surveys in Skagit, they ask for a \$500/year donation to be part of the PIGU Breeding Survey Network.
 - Would need to scout and look for site to set up a survey. Organize and determine number volunteers needed and get signed up.
 - Elizabeth- The Salish Sea School has a boat and is very interested and has already been in contact with Shannon.
 - Matt Castle expressed interest as well. The Samish DNR sees a lot of PIGU during their field work.
 - Lynne offered to reach out to members of the Skagit Audubon to see if there is interest in this opportunity.
- For more information: <http://www.pigeonguillemot.org/>. Survey toolbox on website with lots of resources.

Clayton Beach Project Update: *Lisa Kaufman*

- Feasibility study completed by Herrera. The project has expanded. It now includes nearshore restoration, filling in the dredge hole, and eelgrass restoration.
- Existing Conditions: BNSF railroad runs adjacent to the site. 1200-1300 linear feet of rock armor that sits low in the intertidal area. 189 piling stumps of varying heights in the upper intertidal. Mostly dredged fill material along upper shoreline. Not much natural sediment. Additional beach nourishment will likely be needed.
- Herrera did extensive wave model to determine where the waves are breaking along the shoreline. Determined the dredge hole is causing the waves to break closer to shore which is having a big impact on the erosion hot spot along the shoreline. The erosion hot spot has been increasing in width. Bathymetry maps show eelgrass all along the nearshore, almost continuous except for dredge hole- no eelgrass. Filling dredge hole and re-seeding and replanting of eelgrass is recommended. There should be an opportunity for a lot of natural recolonizations of eelgrass here.
- Need to finalize the QAPP. Trying to get permission to take the rock and potentially some of the fill from the shoreline to help fill the dredge hole. Other dredged material would be used to fill in the rest of the hole. It will require sediment testing which will require permission from landowners.
- Evaluated three alternatives and the preferred alternative for nearshore restoration work:
 - Alternative 1: Remove the rock and pilings (leave some rock to protect railroad). Remove the fill. Add beach nourishment-flatten beach profile. Eventually, the beach will likely narrow due to limited sediment source and nothing to hold the sediment as it moves up drift from south to north.
 - Alternative 2: Install two groins using existing rock, partially buried to help hold some sediment in place and protect the railroad. Remove rock armor. Remove pilings. Remove fill. Add beach nourishment-flatten beach profile.
 - Alternative 3: Install one groin using existing rock, partially buried. Excavate upland to remove more fill material and reclaim backshore area. Concern- don't know what's in there. Could potentially destabilize bank more.
 - Preferred Alternative: Combination of alternatives. Install one groin to create 2 pocket beaches. No excavating backshore area. Armor removal. Remove pilings. Fill removal. Beach nourishment and revegetation.
 - Need to get approval from State Parks on preferred alternative.
 - Waiting on tribal discussion and feedback from other stakeholders.
 - Have enough funding to get through conceptual design phase.
- Would like to plan a community beach walk sometime in late September to introduce the project to the community. Could use MRC assistance.
- Clayton beach is a sand lance spawning beach. Might want to consider using different monitoring protocol for this beach.

Northwest Straits Commission Report: *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*

Last NWSC meeting occurred **July 26**, 10am-3pm, held at the Port Townsend Yacht Club. Highlights shared with the MRC in the meeting packet.

- Expanding Techniques for Monitoring Floating Kelp: Jefferson County MRC is using a variety of aerial imagery/pixels to assist with tracking trends and changes in kelp beds of specific sites.
- Speed Date with a Scientist: Liz Tobin, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, presented on how they rely on data and collaboration to inform sustainable shellfisheries co-management such as the Dungeness crab larval monitoring and population genetics research coordinated by the Pacific Northwest Crab Research Group.
- Science Advisory Committee Roles – articles of association outlined [here](#).
- Puget Sound Partnership Climate Commitment Act- Fact sheet [here](#)
- NWSI Retreat- Sept 19, 2024: for NWS Commissioners and staff, NWS Foundation Board members and staff, and MRC staff. A retreat planning committee with representatives from each of these groups is currently working on an agenda. Lynne is on the sub-committee determining what MRC's role is. Meeting Aug 12.

- NWSI Conference- Nov 15-16: at the Delta Hotel in Everett.
- NWSI Reauthorization: On July 31, 2024, U.S. Senator Patty Murray announced The NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill passed out of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee! This is a major milestone that now gives the bill a chance of being voted on by the full Senate.
 - **Rep Rick Larsen visit:** Aug 27 at Fidalgo Bay Resort with the NWSC staff and Skagit MRC to talk about the NWSI reauthorization and MRC projects in collaboration with the Samish. Have a draft agenda. Still working out the details.
- Next NWSC meeting: **August 23**, 10am-noon, held virtually via Zoom.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - The SSS Advisory Committee is on their summer break. The AC will resume monthly meetings starting in October to review the 2024 Steward Class surveys and start to plan for the 2025 SSS Training Program at Padilla Bay.
 - Darla and Pete are working to recruit new AC members. The AC provides guidance and oversight of the SSS Program, helps Padilla Bay develop & organize the yearly SSS training, and assists in steering topics & speakers for the class and are responsible for publicity, and graduation gear, reviews new volunteer opportunities, and brainstorm alumni events.
 - Darla reminded the MRC that SSS graduates are a reliable source of new MRC members. Four of our MRC members were SSS graduates: Pete, Lynne, Darla, and Cynthia.
 - Darla encouraged MRC members to help recruit or volunteer time to support the SSS Advisory Committee.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - Not much happening right now. Planning and coordinating will start up again soon for the upcoming school year.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda:
 - On July 31, the County Road Crew regraded the asphalt and created additional notches in the curb around the rain garden to help direct stormwater flow into the rain garden. They suggested creating a swale in the asphalt to the rain garden.
 - Coordinating with the school's facilities staff to clean up the raingarden and remove some plants to make room for culturally significant native plants.
 - Will reach out to Washington Native Plant Society to see if they have the plants on our list available for planting this fall.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - The event will be held Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Event setup will take place Friday, August 23 from noon-4pm.
 - Saturday event set up will be 9am-10:30am.
 - Jude Apple is the MC and will help kick off the event at 11am. Need a microphone.
 - Samish welcome will hopefully be provided by Chairman Tom Wooten or another member. Waiting on confirmation.
 - Matt will be unable to participate so Jason Morgan will lead the beach seining at 2:00pm. Already has volunteers lined up.
 - 28 Discovery Passport Outreach Stations. Collected questions for kids and adults. Will print 250 passport booklets.
 - Promoted event online. Handed out flyers in Mt. Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, Burlington, La Conner, and Anacortes. Contacted Skagit Kid Insider to place an ad. Hope to send out the press release Friday.
 - Pete and several forage fish volunteers will posted the FBD event banner on R Avenue today.
 - Ordered supplies for food and kids crafts. Still need to order a few more things.

- Cynthia completed the Umbrella Food permit application. It's been submitted to the Health Dept.
- BBQ rental equipment reserved. Paul will purchase the top- secret ingredients for the shellfish.
- Still working on getting a popcorn machine for the event. Might have to do without this year.
- Started cutting out crab and orca hat templates. The kelp forest craft activity is coming along nicely.
- Not as many volunteers helping this year as in the past but grateful for the support we have.
- Have a new appreciation for those volunteers who have coordinated this event in the past like Darla and Pete. Many kudos to you!!
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinne!
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) with the help of WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Samish Indian Nation, Seattle Aquarium, and Port Townsend Marine Science Center completed the second round of outplanting in June where they seeded 8 additional sites around north Puget Sound.
 - 4 sites in Skagit County were outplanted this year, including 2 new sites with help from Shannon Point Marine Center.
 - Successful hatchery spawning. 1000 larvae were seeded into culture tanks to provide juveniles for next year's outplants.
 - PSRF is currently working on data analyses and the annual report due in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinne!
 - Field work has been completed for this year. Shell bags were distributed around Fidalgo Bay to catch this year's seed oysters to assess next spring.
 - Paul gave a brief presentation on oysters during Senator Patty Murray visit to Padilla Bay as part of the NWSI reauthorization discussion. Other MRCs, NWSC staff and NWSF staff presented as well.
 - Betsy pointed out that Paul deserves special recognition for his dedication, hard work, and many hours contributed to the success of the oyster restoration project. Thank you, Paul!
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Cynthia Nielsen:
 - Cynthia Nielsen is the new MRC Project Lead for the Fidalgo Bay Trestle project. Thank you, Cynthia!!
 - Our Interlocal Agreement with the City of Anacortes has been fully executed with the following deliverables: Interpretive signage, project website, short video clips for social media, community meetings, and preliminary conceptual design- due December 31, 2024.
 - The City of Anacortes hosted the first community meeting with stakeholders including Skagit MRC and Samish DNR, on August 1 at the Anacortes Library. Not a lot of people showed up, but it is still very early in the process. The City provided an overview of the project and the stakeholders shared perspectives.
 - Cynthia is coordinating and facilitating the communications plan and interpretive signage content development in collaboration with the City and other stakeholders. The Teams kickoff meeting will be held August 15, 2:30-3:30pm via Teams.
 - This project from start to finish could potentially take up to 15 years to complete!
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Skagit surveys occur monthly June-Sept 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).

 - **Coffin Rocks:** A team of 3 volunteers surveyed July 19. Observations: Kelp density and health very good. Overall kelp bed appears larger than June survey with fingers of kelp extending beyond circular perimeter. Next survey is Aug 20.
 - **Shannon Point:** A team of 4 volunteers - surveyed July 17.
 - West Kelp Bed Observations: Overall kelp was very healthy, still a lot of bulbs underwater but only tracked those above.
 - East Bed Observations: Very little kelp bulbs observed (4 total) same as last month. Significant amount of sargassum observed close to shore and farther out where bull kelp is normally found (50-100 feet). Next survey is scheduled for Aug 16.

- **Biz Point:** A team of 3 volunteers surveyed August 6. Overall kelp was very healthy with long blades and dense in places. Tracks provided for “new” south and north beds, along with the primary bed. Next survey is Aug 19.
- **Lone Tree:** A team of 3 volunteers surveyed July 22 for the inaugural paddle. Kelp very dense and very healthy in appearance. Kelp appeared clean-nothing on blades. Very fresh looking. Eelgrass in hallow area by reef in 1-2 foot depth at minus 1 to minus 2 tide. Next survey is Aug 20.
- **WA DNR’s Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead (HSIL):** team will be visiting Bowman Bay or a nearby area on August 29th (sometime between 12:30 and 3:00). The HSIL team supports Puget Sound habitat recovery and conservation issues through HSIL funding and also runs various implementation strategies, including a Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy that will be developed over the next year. Bree Turner, who is organizing this trip, asked if Jeff W can present on the Kelp Plan and Steven Olsen will present on Skagit’s kayak kelp surveys.
- **Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:**
 - **Beach Seining Updates:** Beach seining is a project funded by Skagit MRC and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and is led by Jason Morgan as the lead scientist with the help of volunteers including MRC members (Paul Dinnel and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson). Beach seining took place July 16. Caught a total of 376 fish: Chinook, lots of shiner perch, snake prickleneck, English sole, and sculpin
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:** Lisa Kaufman with the NWSF is leading the plant maintenance effort for the Skagit MRC. Foundation staff continues to do weekly plant maintenance at the site every Thursday.
 - Using the Parks water truck, NWSF staff completed watering of the restoration site July 3, July 11, July 16, July 25, and July 31. We have not gotten substantial rain, so we are watering once a week. However, the native vegetation seems to be increasing in survivability and growth, in large part to weekly watering, mulching, and weeding.
 - A stewardship event was held July 25th with 3 NWSF staff, 2 Skagit MRC members and staff, 6 Foundation Board Members, and 5 volunteers with a catered lunch. We successfully spread the remainder of the mulch throughout zones 3 and 4, and substantially cut back the blackberry from the landward side of zone 6 in hopes to minimize it’s spread into the restoration site.
 - Moving forward we will continue to water as needed, and our next stewardship event will take place on August 22nd. In the next month we will schedule a planting event, possibly in lieu of Orca Recovery Day, as well as another fall stewardship day for cutting back more blackberry.
- **Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:**
The Shoreline Needs Assessment project with Confluence Environmental is underway.
 - Meeting with Confluence every 2 weeks. A Skagit Co GIS representative has requested to participate and will attend meetings as possible.
 - A one-hour update and review held with Skagit Advisory Team (this time Lisa Kaufmann, Rick Haley, Suzanne Shull, Tracy and me for feedback.
 - Task 1 – Initial new Geodatabase
 - Task 1 deliverable (memo with proposed initial database structure, primary datasets to be used and prioritization datasets) was reviewed with Skagit Advisory Team.
 - Feedback for Confluence includes: ensuring parcel vs. polygon GIS objects are integrated; ensure rising seas information with elevation based on estuary models – recently completed; Need to clarify how far upstream (with rising sea models) this assessment will cover. Suzanne will try to attend next session to clarify her questions.
 - Task 2 – Literature Review
 - Task 2 deliverable provided contains a spreadsheet of 167 possible source publications and dataset descriptions.
 - Good feedback from Skagit Advisory Team will be shared with Confluence – appropriate scale is biggest concern (multiple large scale, older data sources)
 - Not all data will necessarily be used in the analysis. All datasets will become part of the final Skagit Resource Inventory for future use.

- Nearshore connections were noted of most importance to MRC: kelp/eelgrass, forage fish, native Olympia oysters and crab, consistent with current adjacent MRC projects.
- Task 3 – Develop Prioritization Process, Perform Analysis, Identify MRC Focus Areas
 - The following preliminary categories were proposed for prioritization:
 - ❖ Landscape Context
 - ❖ Ecosystem Process
 - ❖ Habitat Function
- Task 4 – Develop High Priority Restoration or Protection Projects
 - tbd
- Task 5 – Final Geodatabase
 - tbd

Collaborative Networking Activity- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment: *Lynne*

- The annual NWSI Conference November 15-16 in Everett will include a collaborative networking activity in a tabling format where attendees will rotate through the stations to discuss highlighted work of each MRC, the NWSC and NWSF. The goal of this activity is to provide opportunities for MRC and NWSI members to learn what work is happening in other counties and identify potential collaboration opportunities. The NWSC provided an application to fill out by September 20 which will be used to create a one-pager in preparation for the event.
- Lynne completed the application for the Shoreline Needs Assessment project for the collaborative networking activity for the Skagit MRC. No other MRC project ideas were brought forward for this activity.
 - Action: Tracy will submit the Shoreline Needs Assessment application for the collaborative networking activity to the NWSC by the end of August.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: *All*

- Tracy- Will be out of the country in September. Looking for someone to take minutes at the September 12 MRC meeting. Betsy knows someone in her office that might be able to help.
- Tracy- MRC website is getting an upgrade! Will be migrating information and photos from old site this month to go live by the end of August. The new format is set up to include photos and short bios of our MRC members. Please send Tracy your bio and a photo that we can post on our website as soon as you get a chance.
- Tracy/Lynne - The Vessel Turn-In Event took place July 22 - Aug 16. Media day took place August 1 with project partners and several elected officials and media outlets in attendance. The La Conner Maritime team was very efficient in deconstructing over 43 vessels! A special Thanks goes to Dana, Catey and Melissa for planning and coordinating and successfully getting 50 boats signed up! Recent article in the NWSI newsletter and in the Skagit Valley Herald.
- Tracy- Northwest Straits Foundation is seeking new board members to serve a three-year term starting January 1, 2025. Would like to have someone from Skagit county. It doesn't have to be someone on the MRC, although that would be a plus. Will post in The WAVE.

The meeting adjourned at 11:10am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually September 12, 2024, via Microsoft Teams.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **September 12, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Betsy Stevenson, Cynthia Nielsen, Darla Gay Smith, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Elizabeth Drozda, Melissa Ciesielski
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Pete Haase, Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Tracy Alker
- **Others in Attendance:** Caitlyn Blair (NWS), Jeff Whitty (NWS), Carolyn Moulton (Anacortes City Council), Caitie Sheban (Skagit County Planning and Development Services), Jenn Johnson (Skagit County Public Works)

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

Approval of Minutes: August 8, 2024, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments: None

Northwest Straits Commission Report: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

Last NWSC meeting occurred **August 23**, 10am-12pm, held via Zoom. Highlights shared with the MRC in the meeting packet.

- The Science Advisory Committee – is hosting a Social Science Seminar: Understanding and Engaging Communities Using Social Sciences on October 2nd from 4:00pm to 5:30pm. All MRCs and staff, and NW Straits members are invited. *See MRC Sep 12 meeting packet for more information about an invitation and the Zoom link.*
- NWSI Annual Conference- Nov 15-16: at the Delta Hotel in Everett. Registration is now open. *See MRC Sep 12 meeting packet for more information about reimbursement protocol.* Event website: [2024 Northwest Straits Conference \(nwstraits.org\)](https://2024.nwstraits.org)
- NWSC approved a proposed budget for \$1M in NOAA programmatic funding appropriated for fiscal year 2024. The funds will be spent over three years, allowing for MRC grant funding through 2027. Commission staff are preparing the application to submit to NOAA for approval in September.
- Skagit MRC Vessel Turn-In Recycling Event began July 22, 2024, Applications for 50 vessels to be deconstructed during the event were received. 47 vessels were completed during the initial timeframe. La Conner Maritime Service extended and upgraded the contract to finish all the approved vessels by 9/27. A media event was held with all the project partners, special guests, elected officials and media to witness the deconstruction and recycle process. The media day event was an opportunity to showcase the amazing collaborative work by all the project partners. Jessica Owens made a video.
- NW Straits Insider Roundup will have first iteration in September– looking for feedback. Goal to share resources distinct from external communication channels, foster connections, stay informed and share information.
- Next NWSC meeting: **September 27**, 10am-noon, held virtually via Zoom.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - The SSS Advisory Committee will begin planning for the 2025 training program with an in-person meeting at Padilla Bay Reserve on October 18, 2024.

- On September 10, 2024 Darla Gay Smith, as the MRC Stewards Lead, participated in NOAA's 5-year review of the PBNERR at the Reserve. She reported to the NOAA review panel the invaluable collaborative role the Reserve plays in the Steward program by:
 - Using the PBNERR in Program advertising
 - Using the classroom at the Reserve to hold training over 10 weeks
 - Using Reserve staff to recruit speakers on current scientific topics for Program training sessions and facilitating the training classes
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase via Betsy from written report:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
 - Negotiating with WDFW to include an additional index survey site near the old Lovrick Marina on the Guemes Channel. Waiting for landowner permission to access the site.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple via Betsy from email:
 - Reserve staff unavailable for MRC meeting and report because of NOAA evaluation.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda:
 - On July 31, the County Road Crew regraded the asphalt and created additional notches in the curb around the rain garden to help direct stormwater flow into the rain garden. They suggested creating a swale in the asphalt to the rain garden.
 - Coordinating with the school's facilities staff to clean up the raingarden and remove some plants to make room for culturally significant native plants.
 - Will reach out to Washington Native Plant Society to see if they have the plants on our list available for planting this fall.
 - May be enough money so signage is an option, too.
 - Working with Elizabeth Fakkema, Principal, on the possibility of having 4th and 5th grade science ambassadors be involved in talking about the value of rain gardens.
 - Mount Erie School rain garden needs maintenance. Elizabeth would like to replace nonnative species with native and culturally significant plant species.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Tracy Alker via Betsy from report:
 - Despite the cold rainy weather, an estimated 300 people showed up (less than last year, but still a pretty good turnout) We received lots of positive feedback.
 - We had 35 participating organizations, 31 Discovery Passport Outreach Stations (a new record), 155 Passport Booklets handed out, over 30 volunteers (much fewer than usual), and 5 local businesses supporting the event this year.
 - A few planned activities were canceled including the Samish Canoe family canoe rides and Corra the Selkie.
 - Jude Apple was the MC and kicked off the event (thank you Jude!) followed by a Samish welcome from Rosie Cayou.
 - Jason Morgan with the help of volunteers led the very popular beach seining demonstration in the afternoon. Shannon Point Marine Center's touch tanks were also a crowd favorite.
 - Food included complimentary popcorn and chowder and shellfish samples and a traditional No-Host Coast Salish BBQ Salmon and Indian Tacos.
 - Crab hats, orca hats, fish prints, and face painting (thank you Elizabeth) were a huge hit.
 - Skagit MRC's kelp forest coloring activity "fort hideout" was also a huge hit. Some parents couldn't get their kids to come out of the kelp forest (see photos on page 6).
 - There was a raffle drawing just for the volunteers. 13 names were drawn for gift certificates to local seafood restaurants.
 - The Anacortes American published a recent article about the event.
 - Thank You cards and emails were sent out to participants.
 - Need a new lead for next year's Fidalgo Bay Day event.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneel via Betsy from email:

- No new updates of significance for abalone.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel via Betsy from email:
 - No new updates of significance for oysters.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Cynthia Nielsen:
 - Cynthia Nielsen reported there was a kickoff meeting on August 15, 2024.
 - Cynthia is coordinating and facilitating the communications plan and interpretive signage content development in collaboration with the City of Anacortes and other stakeholders. They have signage and a videographer. Birdie Davenport from DNR is doing the text for signage and webpage for Anacortes and should all be completed by December.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Skagit surveys occur monthly June-Sept 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 Season is wrapping up! September are the last surveys of the year – weather starts to break down and tides/currents can be challenging this time of year so hopefully we can all squeeze in our surveys safely.

 - **Coffin Rocks:** August 18, Steven lead the team of Hal Lee and Joan Magee. Observations: Kelp bed surrounds Coffin Rocks completely; very healthy in appearance. Thick clusters close to rocks, and numerous outliers on edges (2-4 single kelp). Rock top exposed with a flock of seagulls perched on top. One juvenile pigeon guillemot observed. Two-three porpoises surfaced north of rock with a harbor seal surfacing after the porpoises left.
 - Next CR survey is September 16.
 - **Shannon Point:** August 15, Lynne lead the team of Hal Lee, Dorothy Bradshaw and Elizabeth Drozda-Freeman.
 - West Kelp Bed Observations: Nanoose was more accurate reflection of currents (again). The current and winds were calm with little boat wakes. The "new" southern kelp bed grew into a full larger bed connecting with typical north kelp bed. Additional sparse kelp was found along the shoreline outside of track. Some sargassum observed nearer to shore. "New" bed formed south of traditional west bed with narrow but connecting row of bulbs to make a single track. Kelp very healthy with long blades. Sparse sargassum observed close to shore. Two harbor porpoise and one bald eagle in a tree observed.
 - East Bed Observations: Current and winds were calm, few boat wakes. Some single kelp bulbs were observed outside of track both near shore and far offshore. Kelp was healthy and very sparse, but enough bulbs and spacing to get a small track. The sargassum has died way back to shore from last two months. There were other single kelp bulbs outside track. Two herons, belted kingfisher and a purple sea star observed.

Next survey is scheduled for September 14.
 - **Biz Point:** Lynne led the team with Joan Magee and Catherine. Calm winds, light fog / mist. Current was slack. Sparse kelp observed outside of main bed and outside of the "new" south and north beds. Kelp was very healthy, long blades and dense in places. Tracks provided for "new" south and north beds - more kelp was observed outside of all the tracked beds. Two harbor porpoises, many harbor seals, pigeon guillemots, fried egg jellyfish, belted kingfisher and large schools of small silver fish among the kelp beds.

Next BP survey is scheduled for September 16.

 - **Lone Tree:** August 20, Steven led the team with Catherine Houck and Joan Magee. Localized winds picked up to 15-25 knots, so paddle was cut short. Several crab trap buoys trapped in kelp beds on north side of reef. Possibly still anchored to crab traps below surface. Kelp appears very healthy and very dense/thick on NW side of reef. Kelp bed extends westward of survey area toward Hope Island. Conditions too rough with white caps to survey further. About one hour after slack water flood current submerged kelp north of reef.

Next LT survey is scheduled for September 17.

Kelp bed name update: Per Lindy Hunter, The Swinomish Cultural Committee had a meeting on Thursday and I was able to present your kelp bed naming request. They are leaning towards using the Lushootseed place names for the bed off Skagit Island and Lone Tree Point but have requested time to brainstorm and discuss. They don't meet very often so it might be a while before I can get the names to you. I will check in with them at their next meeting and have requested that the names are decided on before your next year of surveying begins. I'll be in touch when they've decided.

- **WA DNR's Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead (HSIL):** team will be visiting Bowman Bay or a nearby area on August 29th (sometime between 12:30 and 3:00). The HSIL team supports Puget Sound habitat recovery and conservation issues through HSIL funding and also runs various implementation strategies, including a Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy that will be developed over the next year. Bree Turner, who is organizing this trip, asked if Jeff Whitty can present on the Kelp Plan and Steven Olsen will present on Skagit's kayak kelp surveys.

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

BOWMAN BAY BEACH SEINING (2024 – 2025):

Updates:

Date	Species	Count
8/14/2024	english sole	4
8/14/2024	staghorn sculpin	22
8/14/2024	starry flounder	2
8/14/2024	snake prickleback	1
8/14/2024	penpoint gunnel	1
8/14/2024	saddleback gunnel	1
8/14/2024	shiner perch	362
8/14/2024	threespine stickleback	1
8/14/2024	Bay pipefish	1
8/14/2024	Sand sole	1
8/14/2024	Greenling	1

Date	# Volunteers	Total Volunteer Hours
8/14/2024	5	11

8/14/2024 Total Fish: 397

▪ Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:

- Using the Parks water truck, we completed watering of the restoration site August 8th, August 15, and August 22. We received substantial rain to allow for no watering on the week of August 22nd but anticipate watering a few more times throughout September as the warm weather continues. The native vegetation appears to be continuing to increase in survivability and growth, in large part to weekly watering, mulching, and weeding by staff and volunteers.
- On August 22nd we hosted our final scheduled stewardship event for the summer season. We were joined by 3 NWSF staff, 2 Skagit County MRC staff, and 3 volunteers. We continued to tackle some of the blackberry at the South end of Bowman Bay. We also weeded the majority of the zones in preparation for the coming fall.
- Moving forward we will continue to water as needed. We are in the planning phases for planting party at Bowman Bay during Orca Recovery week (October 19), we have ordered some native vegetation to supplement bare areas within the restoration site. More information and registration page will be distributed soon.

- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

The Shoreline Needs Assessment project with Confluence Environmental is underway.

- Meeting with Confluence every 2 weeks. A Skagit Co GIS representative has requested to participate and will attend meetings as possible.
- A one-hour update and review held with Skagit Advisory Team (this time Lisa Kaufmann, Rick Haley, Suzanne Shull, Tracy and me for feedback.
- Task 1 – Initial new Geodatabase
 - Task 1 deliverable (memo with proposed initial database structure, primary datasets to be used and prioritization datasets) was reviewed with Skagit Advisory Team.
- Task 2 – Literature Review
 - Task 2 deliverable provided contains a spreadsheet of 167 possible source publications and dataset descriptions.
 - Good feedback from Skagit Advisory Team will be shared with Confluence – appropriate scale is biggest concern (multiple large scale, older data sources)
- Task 3 – Develop Prioritization Process, Perform Analysis, Identify MRC Focus Areas
 - The following preliminary categories were proposed for prioritization:
 - ❖ Landscape Context
 - ❖ Ecosystem Process
 - ❖ Habitat Function
- Task 4 – Develop High Priority Restoration or Protection Projects
 - tbd
- Task 5 – Final Geodatabase
 - tbd

Collaborative Networking Activity- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment: Lynne

- On another note, Suzanne Shull and Confluence both plan to provide demonstrations during the Collaborative Networking Activity (an MRC report out) of 1) the new SoundIQ (Suzanne) and 2) Skagit Needs Assessment Web Map (Confluence) at the upcoming NWS Commission Annual Conference on November 15-16. These demonstrations will show how the Shoreline Needs Assessment products will interface with the new SoundIQ capability that Suzanne has been working on. It should be pretty cool!

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Elizabeth followed up with Shannon about the Pigeon Guillemot Network survey proposal possibly sponsored by Skagit MRC. They are developing “burrows not visible protocol” to be able to take surveys by land so it won’t require boats being available. It’s possible 2025 could be a scouting year for potential survey sites and surveys could begin in 2026 using the modified protocol. She conferred with Tim Manns and discovered it was a challenging proposition to find areas to access by land.
- Lynne mentioned that Bill Dewey from Taylor Shellfish approached her about the MRC hosting a booth for the Skagit Festival of Family Farms October 5 and 6. She asked for volunteers to help. Betsy agreed to help.
- Registration open for the NW Straits annual conference November 15-16. Instructions for reimbursement were contained in Tracy’s email with MRC September meeting materials. Register by October 15. Caitlyn Blair offered insight into the program and agenda.
See website for more details <https://www.nwstraits.org/2024-northwest-straits-conference>
- Betsy summarized the visit with Representative Rick Larsen at the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort on August 27, 2024. Boots in the Bay organized by NW Straits Commission staff to showcase the work being done by Skagit MRC, Samish Indian Nation, Padilla Bay Reserve, Port of Anacortes, City of Anacortes, and the Northwest Straits Commission. These project demonstrations and presentations were a great opportunity to highlight the type of work the NW Straits reauthorization bill supports.

The meeting adjourned at 11:10am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually September 12, 2024, via Microsoft Teams.

FIDALGO BAY DAY MRC DISPLAY





SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **October 10, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Betsy Stevenson, Cynthia Nielsen, Darla Gay Smith, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Elizabeth Drozda, Melissa Ciesielski, Pete Haase, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Caitlyn Blair (NWS), Kat Hayes (Skagit County Public Works), Jason Wells (Anacortes Middle School Robotics)

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

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

Public Comments: None

Pigeon Guillemot

Anacortes Middle School Robotics Team: Jason Wells

The Anacortes Middle School Robotics Club (6th, 7th, and 8th grade students) will be competing in a robotics competition in December. They must come up with an innovative project where they identify a problem that they design a solution for. It would most likely just be a concept design and not something that they would build at this stage. This year's theme is "underwater challenges". They only have two months to come up with a problem statement and design. Looking for ideas, guidance, and partners. Are there issues or problems happening underwater that the students could try to design a solution for? MRC members discussed a few ideas:

- What does the substrate under the bull kelp beds look like? Does the substrate differ from kelp bed to kelp bed and what does that tell us about the kelp in terms of depth, and the type of substrate, temperature, etc.
- How is anchoring impacting eelgrass? What does a pre-and post-survey of eelgrass look like before and after a no anchor zone is implemented? What would be required to set that up?
- Find and detect where derelict crab pots are located.
- What marine species are benefiting from oyster habitats compared to non-oyster habitats.

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

Last NWSC meeting occurred **Sept 27, 2024**, 10am-12pm, held via Zoom. Highlights shared with the MRC in the meeting packet.

- Social Science Seminar –Oct 2: Understanding and Engaging Communities Using Social Sciences. Additional resources were shared with the MRCs that include the basics of conservation social sciences, guidance on social science methods, how to create surveys and bonus reading material for those wanting a deeper dive. The Science Advisory Committee will be working with the NWSC's DEI group on some actionable tools to better engage the diverse voices in our community.
- NWSI Annual Conference- Nov 15-16: at the Delta Hotel in Everett. Registration is open until October 15. MRC members are encouraged to attend at least part of the event. Conference is free for MRC members. MRC members can get reimbursed for lodging and travel (contact Tracy for more info). Event website: [2024 Northwest Straits Conference \(nwstraits.org\)](https://2024.nwstraits.org)
- Diversity Equity, and Inclusion Project – Phase 2: Athena Group will be evaluating DEI implementation tools to help the MRCs and NWSC integrate DEI practices into regular operations. MRC members have been invited to

join a DEI learning cohort to work toward the selection and practice of tools that will work best for MRCs. Melissa Ciesielski from the Skagit MRC joined the cohort.

- Regional Olympia Oyster Restoration: Julieta Martinelli's (WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife) presentation highlighted MRC contributions in regional Olympia Oyster Restoration efforts. She is available to present to the MRCs if interested.
- Taylor Shellfish- Festival of Family Farms- October 5-6: NWSC and Skagit MRC tabled at the event. The NWSC's outreach booth focused on European Green Crabs. Lynne, Betsy, Kat Hayes, and Dale Fournier hosted Skagit MRC's outreach booth which included shell identification and a tracing and coloring activity created by Elizabeth that was a huge hit and great conversation starter about our native oyster restoration and pinto abalone work. Also shared information about forage fish (with the forage fish corn hole game) and the Salish Sea Stewards training.
- Next NWSC meeting: **No meetings in October or November.** The next NWSC meeting will be held December 6, 2024, 10am-noon, held virtually via Zoom.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith from written report:
 - The SSS Advisory Committee will begin planning for the 2025 training program with an in-person meeting at Padilla Bay Reserve on October 31, 2024. We look forward to another outstanding Class in 2025.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
 - Pete announced he is stepping down as the lead coordinator of the forage fish surveys beginning in 2025. We are very grateful to Pete and all the years he has led this effort and the countless hours he spent hauling and maintain equipment, and training and coordinating all the other volunteers and school groups. Pete is in the process of finding a replacement and looking into several options. There is a lot of coordination, equipment maintenance, meetings, and paperwork involved so it will be difficult to find a volunteer willing to take this on. Pete recommended allocating money to contract with a professional to do the forage fish survey coordination work.
 - The mysterious eggs sampled in March at the east Similk Bay restoration site on the Swinomish Indian Nation reservation near Turner Bay were identified as Herring eggs by WDFW.
 - FF survey volunteers will be assisting with Kids on the Beach program on October 16th.
- Kids on the Beach – Annie England:
 - The fall 2024 Kids on the Beach (KOTB) program started Friday, October 11 with 40, 8th grade students from Conway from two classes. Working with a new teacher, Tiffany since Ron retired. In-classroom sessions held Oct 11th, 15th, 17th and 18th. The field day will be held Wednesday, October 16th at Fidalgo Bay. We have a great group of volunteers that will be assisting. 2 volunteers per 4 students. Classroom sessions include an intro to forage fish-estuary food web game, formed hypothesis/experiment ideas, prepared for field day/fish drawing game. In the field, students collect forage fish egg samples, and fish seining data. In the classroom following the field day, students will learn how to interpret data, make graphs, prepare presentations, and present to classmates.
 - 2024 KOTB spring and fall programs overview: 200 students, 3 schools. 4 schools were originally set to participate but Sedro Woolley Elementary School (3 classes) had to cancel at the last minute due to a bus driver shortage issue. Teachers need to reserve the buses/drivers early.
 - Funding for busing can be an issue for some schools. Annie suggested the MRC consider allocating funds for busing in the KOTB program budget in the future. Busing costs around \$300/group. Probably need 2 buses depending on class size for \$600. The Padilla Bay Foundation is currently subsidizing the busing for the KOTB. Betsy said the School Foundation could also be a resource to help pay for busing.
 - 2025 KOTB Spring program is at full capacity: Concrete High School is set to participate with 45 10th and 11th graders from two classes. Concrete Middle School teacher was not interested in participating. Concrete School District always needs bus funding. Sedro Woolley Evergreen Middle School is also set

to participate with 3 classes of 6th graders, 86 students and Allen Elementary 4th & 5th graders. Many of the students come from a Spanish speaking background. KOTB will include academic language support. The 2025 spring KOTB program is now full, no more schools can be added. However, there is room to add another school to the 2025 fall KOTB program if there is interest.

- Anacortes Middle School has continued to express interest in participating in the KOTB program. Unfortunately, we are not currently able to accommodate a school that size because their 5th grade includes 7-9 classes with 175-200 students which would require more staffing and a lot more funding to expand the program.

- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda:

- The school's facilities staff did a beautiful job cleaning up the rain garden to make room for culturally significant native plants. They also applied a rock pathway and mulch.
- Purchased around 36 native plants from the Washington Native Plant Society's Salal Native Plant Garden.
- Borrowed tools from the NWSF and gloves from The Salish Sea School.
- The La Conner Elementary 4th & 5th grade science class helped plant the plants on October 8th and are excited to become ambassadors for the rain garden at the school.
- The students plan to complete some research about rain gardens and the native plants they planted and will share what they learned with other students.
- The next step is to design and install interpretive signage. A sign company in La Conner offered to donate the sign. Elizabeth is looking for input from the MRC to create the content.

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Tracy Alker:

- We had another successful event, despite the weather.
- Lots of positive feedback from attendees and participating organizations
- Thanks to Kat for drafting the final 2024 FBD report! Kat is also working on cleaning up the planning documents, including lessons learned, for next year's event.
- Next step: Schedule debrief mtg and start looking at dates and planning for next year's event.
- Need a new MRC Project Lead and someone to coordinate this event in 2025!
- Need to start looking into the possibility of contracting with someone, like an event planner, or hiring an intern to take this on, but it will require additional funding in the next grant cycle.
 - Jude - Ecology is in the process of hiring a PT events coordinator that will be helping with the PBNERR's Coastal Training Program and planning the NWSI annual conference. The position will be located in Lacey, WA. This person could potentially help with FBD event planning and coordinating as well if majority can be done remotely. Will need to determine how much time would be required and if it could be included as part of this new position requirement.

- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneel:

- Puget Sound Restoration Fund completed data analyses and finalized the 2024 pinto abalone report which was shared with MRC members. It will also be posted on the MRC website.
- Monitoring and outplanting of juvenile abalone will take place again in winter-early spring 2025.

- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinneel:

- Shell strings that were placed in Fidalgo Bay in the spring of 2024 by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to monitor recruitment of juvenile oysters were recently recovered from the trestle and RV Park areas for analysis.
- The Puget Sound Restoration Fund and Nature Conservancy are looking into the possibility of using a drone to document native Olympia oyster beds in Fidalgo Bay in the spring of 2025. They are particularly interested in the south end of Fidalgo Bay and other harder to reach channels where we know oysters have been settling recently in great numbers and in the middle of the Bay where new oyster beds are starting to show up.

- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Cynthia Nielsen via email update:

- The project's first interpretive sign is currently under fabrication. It is focused on the history and why the trestle needs to be replaced. The second sign will focus on the science. The interpretive signage includes the QR code linked to the [Project Website StoryMap](#).

- A recent article in Anacortes's A -Town Magazine with a link to the project StoryMap.
- Bull Kelp Kayak Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Background: 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).

Updates: The June – September Kelp Season 2024 has wrapped up! Jeff Whitty (NWSC) has scheduled a meeting with each MRC Bull Kelp Kayak Team to review their monitoring data for the year for clarity, accuracy and to ask / answer questions. Skagit's meeting is scheduled for November 4th.

 - **Coffin Rocks Season Summary:** Kelp beds off Coffin Rocks (offshore of Bowman Bay) have been very healthy all summer long around the rocky reef. Steady growth and density have been observed since the June survey began and ending with September's survey, including numerous outliers (2-4 single kelp bulbs) observed around perimeter of bed.
 - **Shannon Point Season Summary:** I can't say enough about the improvements we have seen when using Nanoos / Ways Water Moves current modeling data. It has made a huge difference in our ability to more accurately hit the survey timing for both beds. Kudos to Northwest Association of Networked Ocean Observing Systems (NANOOS)!
 - **West Bed:** Early June surveys found only a small bed at north end of traditional perimeter. While kelp was healthy it was very sparse. By July another bed south was beginning to form but did not meet tracking protocols. However, by August the two beds merged into a larger bed than we have seen in past years! The kelp was very healthy but sparse.
 - **East Bed:** This is the kelp bed close to the Anacortes Ferry Terminal and you may recall we observed very little kelp (like 2 – 4 bulbs total) in June and July. There was a significant amount of invasive Sargassum from nearshore to fairly far offshore – which appeared to be choking out the bull kelp. Fortunately, by August, the Sargassum had significantly disappeared, and we observed a small bed forming of sparse, but healthy bull kelp, around one of the reef rocks offshore. This bed was still observed, but roughly same size, in September.
 - **Biz Point Season Summary:** The main kelp bed at BP was observed as healthy and dense starting in July through September (June was skipped due to schedule conflicts). A north and south bed have been forming with dense bull kelp as well, so it was decided to also track those two beds separately (outside of the Shoreline Segments). Additional bull kelp was observed beyond the "new" outer beds as well.
 - **Lone Tree Season Summary:** The inaugural paddle for this new kelp bed was July 22! In our July survey, the team established a track protocol by surveying north side of large reef only, and observed very healthy, dense kelp. As this is a new survey area, we are still learning about the conditions which tend to be subject to changing currents and localized winds. The kelp observed in the early recon survey in May was already very thick and healthy so by August, the bed had expanded and was quite large, but unfortunately the localized winds picked up to 25 knots during the survey, and the team lead (wisely) decided to curtail the complete survey. September currents and weather did not permit another survey. We want to express our thanks and recognize that, without the support of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and access to the Lone Tree boat ramp, we would not be able to survey this kelp area – a big thanks! We look forward to learning more next year.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**
 - No beach seining in September due to large amount of ulva.
 - Beach seining resumed in October.
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**
 - Using the Parks water truck, we completed watering of the restoration site several times throughout the summer months.
 - Weekly weeding by NWSF staff and several stewardship events with volunteers occurred throughout the spring, summer, and fall.
 - The native vegetation appears to be continuing to increase in survivability and growth, in large part to frequent watering, mulching, and weeding by staff and volunteers.

- A fall planting party at Bowman Bay is planned for October 17 during Orca Recovery week to plant native vegetation to supplement bare areas within the restoration site.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
Background: A Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment has been 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 (PS 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. Skagit Co has a contract in place with Confluence Environmental (April 1 - December 31, 2024).
Updates: The Shoreline Needs Assessment project with Confluence Environmental is underway.
 - Meeting every 2 weeks with Confluence, a major progress review was held on September 18 with a focus on finalizing the prioritization matrix framework, developing the geospatial display for existing MRC Shoreline Projects, and other graphical conventions of Skagit's shorelines needed for interactive web maps and to better communicate MRC projects for the public.
 - A meeting with the Advisory Team (MRC, NWSF, NWSC, SWC and concerned citizens) is being scheduled to validate existing project data, review and decide on project design decisions, and review and provide feedback and several proposed products.
 - Suzanne and Confluence both plan to provide demonstrations during the Collaborative Networking Activity (an MRC report out) of 1) the new SoundIQ (Suzanne) and 2) Skagit Needs Assessment Web Map (Confluence) at the upcoming NWS Commission Annual Conference on November 15-16. These demonstrations will show how the Shoreline Needs Assessment products will interface with the new SoundIQ capability that Suzanne has been working on. It should be pretty cool!

Skagit MRC Membership Application- Carolyn Moulton: Betsy Stevenson

Skagit MRC voted by consensus to make the recommendation to the Skagit Board of County Commissioners to appoint City of Anacortes Council member Carolyn Moulton to the MRC. Carolyn also works for Lautenbach Recycling as their Government and Community Relations Manager. The vote was unanimous!

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Elizabeth- Pigeon Guillemot Network survey proposal follow-up: Elizabeth spoke with Clallam MRC to find out how they do their Pigeon Guillemot surveys. They started out very small and expanded as they found new volunteers. These surveys involve many volunteers because they occur weekly and early in the morning during the breeding season. Most of the known burrows in Skagit County are only visible by boat which makes it tricky for volunteers. However, the new "Burrows Not Visible" protocol could make it possible for Skagit volunteers to survey from the shore. Rosario Beach could potentially be a great location for the surveys from shore. The Salish Sea School has a boat and is very interested in partnering with Skagit MRC on this project. They would like to do an exploratory survey by boat in May 2025 to see where the current breeding colonies are in Skagit and come up with a plan for future surveys with the help of volunteers and students. Tracy recommended putting the Pigeon Guillemot survey proposal and other potential MRC project proposals on the November MRC meeting agenda for the MRC to consider funding with the remaining OTGP-2024 unallocated grant funds that will become available January 2025. The projects must meet the NWSI funding criteria and will need to be approved by the NWSC staff.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually November 14, 2024, via Microsoft Teams.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **November 14, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Betsy Stevenson, Cynthia Nielsen, Darla Gay Smith, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Elizabeth Drozda, Pete Haase, Matt Castle, Tracy Alker
 - *MRC Members Absent:* Catey Ritchie, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Kevin Anderson, Carolyn Moulton
- **Others in Attendance:** Allie Simpson (NWSC), Lea Robinson (NWSC), Emma Kortuem (Matt's Alternate), Jenn E. Johnson (SCPW)

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

Approval of Minutes: October 10, 2024, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

Public Comments:

Spartina Awareness: The Skagit County Noxious Weed Coordinator, Maddy Loy, asked that we share information about stopping the spread of Spartina. Plants have recently been identified at Fidalgo Bay this year. Seeds could potentially be spread by boots in the mud. Please be sure to clean your boots before going from one site to the next.

European Green Crab Update: *Allie Simpson, Leah Robinson*

- WDFW is the state lead and co-manages EGC with Tribes, state, and local partners.
- Management Strategies:
 - Core site monitoring
 - Targeted hotspot removal trapping
 - Assessment trapping
 - Education & Outreach
- Truly eradicating all EGCs is not a realistic goal due to the continuous input of larvae from other areas on the Pacific Coast. Reducing numbers can help reduce potential negative impacts on the ecosystem and coastal resources.
- NWSC coordinated the local management of EGC in two focus areas, Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay.
- NWSC coordinated trapping effort included 20 trappers from WCC, WDFW, Padilla Bay, Taylor Shellfish, and a few volunteers. A total of 655 European Green Crabs trapped in Samish Bay in 2024!
- NWSC trapped 282 EGCs and Taylor Shellfish trapped 373 EGCs!
- 67% of all EGCs trapped came from the east site location.
- We now have 3 years of valuable data to help assess relative abundance, seasonality, recruitment, and growth patterns. An encouraging trend is the decreasing amount of larger Y2+ crabs seen between 2022 -2024.
- Will be transitioning from Emergency Management to Long-Term Management in 2025. Focus will be on incorporating trapping sites that are community priorities.
- WDFW has funding for Long-Term Management which requires a collaborative effort of multiple partners.
- Skagit MRC needs to determine our role in long-term management. Discussed some of the following possibilities:
 - Outreach update mailing to shoreline landowners
 - Additional volunteer help with trapping in the fall

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

Last NWSC meeting occurred **Sept 27, 2024**, 10am-12pm, held via Zoom. Highlights shared with the MRC in the meeting packet last month. No highlights to share this month.

- NW Straits Initiative Annual Conference: **November 15-16** in Everett
- Next NWSC meeting: **No meetings in October or November.** The next NWSC meeting will be held December 6, 2024, 10am-noon, held virtually via Zoom.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - Planning for the 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program is now underway.
 - We welcomed 4 new Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee members: Barb Clark and Jen Dumas (both SSS Class of 2024); Elizabeth Drozda, Salish Sea School Program Coordinator & Skagit MRC member; and former AC member **Dale Fournier** (Class of 2018) who has returned from living on the East Coast. We now have a total of nine members.
 - The AC reviewed the 2024 SSS Class Survey results began implementing our Strategic Training Work Plan.
 - The 2025 SSS Training flyer with registration & program information has been drafted and will soon be on the SMRC website. An online registration form has been created.
 - The 2025 Training Program will commence February 18 – April 29, 2025. Classes will be held 1-5pm at the Padilla Bay Reserve.
 - Registration deadline is January 31. Limited to the first 26 applicants.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
 - Pete is stepping down as the lead coordinator of the forage fish surveys beginning in 2025 and is looking into several options for finding a replacement.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - The 2024 Kids on the Beach programs are complete.
 - 2025 KOTB Spring program is at full capacity: 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.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda:
 - The La Conner School Rain Garden is looking great! The rain this fall has helped a lot and plants are becoming established.
 - The next step is to design and install interpretive signage. A sign company in La Conner offered to print and fabricate the sign for free.
 - Elizabeth requested input from the MRC in developing the content. Tracy offered to help and will connect with Jessica Owens to assist with wordsmithing.
 - Elizabeth will reach out to Mellisa for guidance from the Swinomish with the Lushootseed names for some of the native plants in the 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!
 - Fidalgo Bay Resort facility has been reserved. Beach seining leads and Shannon Point Touch Tank staff have been contacted.
 - Save the Date cards have been created with beautiful jellyfish artwork by Skagit MRC member Darla Gay Smith.
 - Event Theme inspired by the jellyfish artwork “Go with the Flow” “Learn What’s Current”.
 - Looking for ideas for jellyfish craft activities for kids.

- Will schedule a 2024 FBD debrief meeting and contact participating volunteers and organizations with Save the Date Cards after the holidays.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Josh Bouma (Puget Sound Restoration Fund) and Paul Dinnel working on revising the annual 2024 pinto abalone report based on comments received by the NWSC. It will be posted on the MRC website after the revisions are made.
 - Monitoring and outplanting of juvenile abalone will take place again in winter-early spring 2025.
 - PSRF is also working with Clallam MRC on pinto abalone surveys and possible outplanting in the future.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - No work or new developments since last month.
 - The next oyster recruitment bag sampling will take place in April or May 2025.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Cynthia Nielsen via email update:
 - The [Project Website StoryMap](#) is up and running. A QR code linked to the website has been created for outreach materials, social media, and interpretive signage.
 - The project's first interpretive sign has been fabricated and has been installed along the Tommy Thompson Trail. It provides some history of the trestle, a brief overview of the project, and partners involved. The second sign has been drafted and is now under fabrication. It is focused on the environmental impacts of the trestle and why it needs to be replaced.
 - The [first video](#) has been completed and was recently released by the City of Anacortes.
 - The conceptual design work is on-going. The very preliminary conceptual design is expected to be completed by December 31, 2024.
 - A recent article in [Anacortes's A -Town Magazine](#) with a link to the project StoryMap.
 - Working on developing a new project page for the Skagit MRC website.
- 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).
 - The June – September Kelp Season 2024 has wrapped up!
 - The Skagit kayak team met with NWSC's Jeff Whitty, Leah Skare and Suzanne Shull on November 4th to review data submitted for the year for clarity and accuracy before being uploaded to SoundIQ.
 - The NWSC Kelp Team sent out a survey to determine interest for organizing a 2025 kayak safety training – similar to Spring 2024 training. Eight Skagit kayakers have already signed up.
 - The Swinomish Cultural Committee decided that it makes the most sense to name the new kelp beds based on their locations. Unfortunately, the Lushootseed words for the locations of Skagit Island and Lone Tree Point are particularly difficult ones (txʷstáʔəb and dadčulqíd, respectively). Understanding that the majority of individuals that will regularly be using these names are not Lushootseed speakers, the committee has elected to maintain the English place names for these kelp beds. So, it is the request of the Swinomish Cultural Committee that these kelp beds be named the Skagit Island and Lone Tree kelp beds.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**
 - Beach seining continues at Bowman Bay monthly through the end of the year.
 - Beach Seining October 7th Summary: 7 volunteers, 12.5 volunteer hours, 17 fish (English sole, staghorn sculpin, starry flounder, tubesnout, shiner perch).
 - November 4th beach seining rescheduled for November 14th due to high winds. we had some heavy shore break and ulva to contend with eventually leading us to call off the last two sets. we saw starry flounder, tubesnout, staghorn, perch, and three surf smelt. Our next one will be Monday, December 2nd at 12:30pm.
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**
 - We concluded our 2024 Bowman Bay plant maintenance this month with a volunteer planting event on October 17th - 3 NWSF staff and 5 volunteers planted a total of 98 native

plants along with compost. No supplemental watering was needed thanks to the recent rain events.

- 2024 Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance summary: Total Volunteer Hours=103.75. Total NWSF Staff Hours=102. Removed invasives, weeded, plant native vegetation, and utilized the Parks Dept water truck to water the plants throughout the summer.

Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment Tool Update & Demonstration: *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*

Overview: A web-based interactive assessment tool to identify high priority shoreline focus areas and future restoration projects.

- Meetings with Confluence Environmental continue every 2 weeks.
- Advisory Team (10 members) continues to review and provide feedback on final products.
- Confluence compiled existing data (over 165 datasets, 10-15 datasets used for this assessment), added relevant geospatial datasets to nearshore parcels and drift cells, established shoreline reaches using Skagit's SMP for baseline data, developed a prioritization framework and ranking methodology (combination of ecological and physical characteristics, restoration potential and feasibility), and identified short list of high priority shoreline restoration projects. A final list of 12 completed, partially completed and in-work MRC sponsored projects will be geospatially displayed, including brief project descriptions.
- A preliminary demonstration of the Assessment Tool was provided to the Advisory Team on 11/6/24.
- Confluence will provide a demo of preliminary Assessment Tool at NWSC Annual Conference – MRC Collaborative Networking Activity on 11/16/24.
- **Project deliverables status:**
 - Geospatial Database for displaying Skagit Shoreline Projects compatible with SoundIQ; incorporate existing completed and in-work MRC projects (complete)
 - Skagit Nearshore Inventory, a comprehensive list of existing geospatial datasets from authoritative sources (mostly complete)
 - Analytical Prioritization Framework to identify target high priority focus areas (complete)
 - A proposed list of High Priority Shoreline Restoration Projects (mostly complete)
 - Two Story Maps to highlight select Skagit restoration projects for SMRC website- 1. Olympia Oyster Restoration and 2. Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment (mostly complete)
 - Interactive, web-based geospatial shoreline assessment tool to be housed in SoundIQ (in the works)
 - Shoreline Assessment Tool uploaded into SoundIQ with links to MRC website (in the works)
 - Communication Plan for public roll-out and use (in the works)

OTGP- 2024 Grant- Project Proposals: *Tracy, Elizabeth, and Pete*

- \$31,500 under year 2 (Jan 1 – Dec 31, 2025) of the OTGP-2024 grant agreement is currently unallocated.
- Project proposals for this funding must meet the NWSI funding criteria and must be approved by the MRC and NWS.
- MRC members, Elizabeth Drozda and Pete Haase submitted the following project proposals for consideration:
 1. Pigeon Guillemot Surveys (MRC Project Lead Elizabeth Drozda)- Budget= \$2,450
 - Monitor current population trends as a bioindicator of the ecological integrity of Puget Sound as a Washington.
 - Fish and Wildlife Vital Sign of the Puget Sound Partnership. Initial project scoping and training provided by the Salish Sea Guillemot Network with boat support from the Salish Sea School. MRC volunteer member will shadow existing PIGU surveys in preparation for the initiation of Skagit County Surveys in 2026.
 2. Salish Sea Spark Birds (MRC Project Lead: Elizabeth Drozda)– Budget=\$15,015
 - Aims to inspire underserved youth to become lifelong stewards of marine ecosystems by bringing them out to the Salish Sea to observe and learn about marine birds. Focusing on the four key indicator bird species—Rhinceros Auklets, Pigeon Guillemots, Surf Scoters, and Marbled Murrelets—this program will support inclusive conservation education through the

Puget Sound Vital Sign Marine Bird Indicator Project. Students will be introduced to basic field science techniques used in marine bird monitoring, including data collection on bird sightings and environmental conditions.

3. Forage Fish Survey Coordination (MRC Project Leads: Pete Haase) – Budget=\$7,700

- Monthly forage fish surveys have expanded to include 8 different locations (15 samples.) The volunteer coordinating the surveys is longer able to continue leading this important effort.
- The Salish Sea School would be contracted to perform administration, leadership, coordination, and equipment management to continue forage fish surveys for the Skagit MRC in 2025.

Total Proposal Budget= \$25,165

Remaining Budget= \$6,335 (for MRC Operations)

- If approved, the grant will need to be amended and signed by Ecology and the County and a contract for the work will need to be in place before the work can begin.

➤ **Action:** MRC members voted by consensus to approve the draft project proposals and budget and submit to the NWSC for review before the December 12th MRC meeting.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- **2023 Skagit MRC Annual Report** is now complete and available on the MRC website [here](#)!
- **Clayton Beach Project Update:** Lisa Kaufman shared a written update with the MRC. They are still in a bit of a slow down while waiting for Parks to provide a right of entry which is currently in the works. Trying to get all the feasibility study documents onto NWSF project webpage. Shared a link to the docs including the feasibility study, preferred alternative memo, eelgrass report, and the updated project fact sheet.

The meeting adjourned at 11:18am. The next MRC meeting will be held **December 12, 2024**, location TBD.



SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **December 12, 2024**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) hybrid meeting held in-person at Padilla Bay and Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Elizabeth Drozda, Pete Haase, Matt Castle, Tracy Alker, Catey Ritchie, Jude Apple, Paul Dinnel, Kevin Anderson, Carolyn Moulton
 - **MRC Members Absent:** Cynthia Nielsen, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson
- **Others in Attendance:** Melissa Ciesielski (Swinomish); Jenn E Johnson (SCPW)

Call to Order and Introductions: Betsy called the meeting to order at 9:18 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: November 14, 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.

- **NW Straits Initiative Annual Conference: November 15-16** in Everett. 120 participants. A follow-up survey will be emailed soon. [2024 Conference](#) information on NWSC website (including agenda, speaker bios, presentations, MRC on-pagers, audio, session notes, etc) available [here](#). The 2025 conference will be held at Maple Hall in La Conner on **November 7-8, 2025**.
- **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](#).
- **Next NWSC meeting: January 31**, 10am-3pm. Held in person at the Coupeville Library- 788 Alexander St.

Northwest Straits Initiative Annual Conference Highlights & Takeaways: All

- Skagit MRC Attendees: Tracy, Betsy, Jude, Lynne, Matt, Elizabeth, Carolyn, Melissa
- Conference agenda, speaker bios, audio recordings, presentations, MRC one-pagers, session notes, photos, available on the [2024 NWSI Conference website](#).
- Keynote Speaker- Dr. Elin Kelsey: The Practice of Evidence-Based Hope. Should focus on the positive things that are happening locally and things we can do rather than focusing on the doom and gloom leaving everyone feeling overwhelmed and hopeless.
- Communicating with Elected Officials- Some MRCs are more engaged with elected officials than others. Some elected officials have an official seat on the MRC. It's in Whatcom County's code.
 - Elected officials like to get invitations to go on field trips, project site visits, hands on activities, etc. They like to hear about and see how our work benefits the community.
 - Could invite Skagit Commissioners to Kids on the Beach field day, particularly with Allen Elementary School, or have a ribbon cutting ceremony for the La Conner School Rain Garden, or visit the oyster restoration area, etc.

- Could seek guidance from the County Commissioners on whose community voices are missing on the MRC that we should be engaging with and could be impacted or benefit from the work that we do.
- MRC projects that we could present to County Commissioners in 2025:
 - Fidalgo Bay Trestle project
 - NEAP Tool
- Collaborative Networking Activity (10-15 minutes at each station)- was very informative and engaging. [MRC one-pagers](#) available on NWSI Conference website. Several MRCs had great handouts and swag items (coasters, magnets, project rack cards, etc). What type of handouts or swag would be good for Skagit MRC?
- Climate Change and Sea Level Rise- Look for the good news and people that are doing the work. Highlight the successes.
- Communicating Science- [Communications resources/toolkits](#) available on NWSI Conference website.
 - Quotes from volunteers, landowners, community, partners, MRC members, help tell the story. Make it more personable. It's not always the science that you need to communicate, but how it makes the people feel and their personal stories and how they are impacted. The social science is an important aspect of communicating 'the why', behavior changes, and measuring the successes.
 - Telling the story with art and engaging images is great for short attention spans.
 - Quotes from volunteers, landowners, community, partners, MRC members, help tell the story. Make it more personable.

Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - The 2025 Training Program will commence February 18 – April 29, 2025. Classes will be held Tuesdays 1-5pm at the Padilla Bay Reserve.
 - Registration deadline is January 31. Limited to the first 26 applicants.
 - The 2025 SSS Training Flyer and Press Release have been finalized.
 - The 2025 SSS Training flyer with registration & program information is available on the SMRC website along with an online registration form.
 - Erin Merklein is working on the training program curriculum and contacting speakers.
 - The Advisory Committee is working on promoting the training and has a well proven publicity & promotion lists which are being implemented.
 - The last SSS AC meeting was held virtually Nov 21. Next meeting will be held virtually Dec 19.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
 - This is a quiet time for surf smelt spawning for most survey areas except for Fidalgo Bay and Similk Bay which still has quite a bit of spawning happening.
 - Pete is stepping down as the lead coordinator of the forage fish surveys beginning in 2025.
 - Pete recently submitted a revised proposal for allocating OTGP-2024 MRC grant funding to pay for someone to coordinate and manage the forage fish surveys through The Salish Sea School with Pete as the MRC Project Lead in 2025. The proposal will need to be reviewed and approved by the NWSC.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - The 2024 Kids on the Beach programs are complete. Three schools and over 200 kids participated in the program.
 - 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: Concrete and Mount Vernon High Schools.
 - Bus funding and school bus driver shortages continue to be a challenge. School Buses cost around \$300-\$400/day.
 - The 2024 KOTB Final Report has been completed.
- La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Elizabeth Drozda:

- The La Conner School Rain Garden is looking great!
- Elizabeth and Tracy drafted verbiage for the interpretive signage, which was reviewed by NWSC Communications staff, Jessica Owens.
- Westar, a sign company in La Conner will design and fabricate the interpretive sign for free! The sign will likely be installed by the county.
- 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!
 - Save the Date cards have been created with beautiful jellyfish artwork by Skagit MRC member Darla Gay Smith.
 - Event Theme inspired by the jellyfish artwork “Go with the Flow” “Learn What’s Current”. Will have a jellyfish themed craft activity for kids.
 - Kat Hayes’s (County intern) last day was December 6th, which means she will no longer be able to take the lead in coordinating Fidalgo Bay Day as originally planned. However, Anna Thompson, the Education and Outreach Specialist for the Public Works Natural Resources Division said she could help.
 - Will schedule a 2024 FBD debrief meeting and contact participating volunteers and organizations with Save the Date Cards after the holidays.
 - Pete suggested printing and distributing save the date cards at the annual Storming the Sound conference on January 24, 2025, at Skagit Valley College.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Hatchery work continues. Raising juvenile abalone for outplanting in 2025.
 - Monitoring and outplanting of juvenile abalone will take place again in February to spring 2025.
 - Pinto Abalone Partners meeting will be held December 17th in Seattle with online option. Paul will be attending online.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Not much happening right now.
 - The next native oyster recruitment bag sampling will take place in April or May 2025.
 - The next bay-wide population survey is slated for 2028.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Cynthia Nielsen via email update:
 - The City of Anacortes hosted the second community meeting with Hanson (the consultant) and stakeholders including Skagit MRC and Samish DNR, on December 4 at the Anacortes Library. Hanson provided an update on the feasibility study and preliminary conceptual design. The meeting notice was shared on the City’s website and MRC website. The meeting was not well-attended. WADNR is one of the stakeholders and was not aware of the meeting. Need to figure out how to do a better job promoting future community meetings.
 - Could consider hosting an evening meeting to try to increase attendance.
 - Could post signage advertising planned community meetings and project updates somewhere along the trail and businesses with employees and clientele that frequently use the trail (e.g. refineries and bike shop, Port’s electronic reader board).
 - The City’s [Project Website StoryMap](#) is up and running. A QR code linked to the website has been created for outreach materials, social media, and interpretive signage.
 - The project’s first interpretive sign has been fabricated and installed along the Tommy Thompson Trail. It provides some history of the trestle, a brief overview of the project, and partners involved. The second sign has been fabricated and will be installed soon. It is focused on the environmental impacts of the trestle and why it needs to be replaced.
 - The [first video](#) has been completed and was recently released by the City of Anacortes.
 - The MRC’s new project page is up and running on the MRC website. It includes links to the City’s Project Website/StoryMap, video, interpretive signage, and other project partners/stakeholders websites.

- The preliminary conceptual design is expected to be completed by December 31, 2024. The City plans to present the conceptual design to the City Council in January 2025. Will likely be more opportunities for outreach/community meeting after the council meeting.
 - Cynthia completed the Final Report.
- 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. We expect more activity next year around April. Stay tuned!
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson via email update:
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**
 - Beach seining continues at Bowman Bay monthly through the end of the year. Funding is in place for NWSF to continue January – December 2025.
 - November 4th beach seining rescheduled for November 14th due to high winds. We had some heavy shore break and ulva to contend with eventually leading us to call off the last two sets. Only 8 fish total caught including surf smelt, staghorn sculpin, Tubesnout, and shiner perch. 5 volunteers contributed 9.5 volunteer hours.
 - The last beach seining was held Monday, December 2nd. Waiting for the report from the Foundation.
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**
 - Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance has concluded for the year. 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.
 - Meetings continue every 2 weeks with Confluence.
 - Confluence attended the NWSC Annual Conference in Everett and provided a preliminary demonstration to attendees during the Collaborative Networking Activity. We received positive feedback from many viewing the tool, as well as some good ideas for other applications.
 - Deliverables status:
 - Geospatial Database for displaying Skagit Shoreline Projects compatible with SoundIQ; incorporate existing completed and in-work MRC projects (**complete**)
 - Skagit Nearshore Inventory, a comprehensive list of existing geospatial datasets from authoritative sources (mostly complete, finalizing description fields of 155+ sources)
 - Analytical Prioritization Framework to identify target high priority focus areas (**complete**)
 - A proposed list of High Priority Shoreline Restoration Projects (in work)
 - Interactive, web-based geospatial shoreline assessment tool to be housed in SoundIQ (in work; Confluence is working inside the DOE Portal to establish the Assessment Tool)
 - Two Story Maps to highlight select Skagit restoration projects for SMRC website (in work; Confluence has received all Skagit inputs on Story Map content – some final edits are forthcoming. Confluence is working inside the DOE portal to establish the Story Maps). The two Story Maps in development are:
 - Native Oyster Restoration
 - Skagit’s NEAP Tool – (Nearshore Assessment and Priorities (NEAP) Tool)
 - Final all Team (Skagit Advisory Team and Confluence) meeting is scheduled for 12/17/24. A final small team meeting is planned to review final deliverables before end of year with MRC Admin and NWSC GIS staff.
 - Confluence to complete all grant deliverables before 12/31/24, including providing a list of specific recommended shoreline restoration projects.

- Coordination and development of the Assessment Tool will go into the DOE Portal to interface with NWSC's SoundIQ. We will have links to apply to our MRC website.
- Develop communication plan for public roll-out and use – initial 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 funding 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.

OTGP- 2024 Grant Amendment- Project Proposals: *Tracy, Elizabeth, and Pete*

- \$31,500 under year 2 (Jan 1 – Dec 31, 2025) of the OTGP-2024 grant agreement is currently unallocated.
- The following project proposals for the remaining OTGP-2024 grant funds were submitted by the MRC and reviewed by the NWSC staff: Pigeon Guillemot Exploratory Survey, Salish Sea Spark Birds, and Forage Fish Survey Coordination.
- The NWSC determined that these project proposals do not currently meet the NWSI funding criteria as written for the following reasons:
 - If the MRC contracts with The Salish Sea School to do the work, there would be a conflict of interest with Elizabeth as the MRC Project Lead since she is an employee of The Salish Sea School.
 - Additional clarification regarding MRC's role in these projects is also needed, otherwise it appears to be pass through funding which also does not meet the NWSI funding criteria.
- Next Steps:
 - Pigeon Guillemot Project Proposal: A volunteer with a boat offered to help with the exploratory surveys in 2025. No MRC grant funding would be needed for this. The surveys will help determine where the pigeon guillemots are currently nesting in Skagit County and whether any of those locations might be feasible for volunteers to monitor from the shoreline.
 - Salish Sea Spark Birds Proposal: Elizabeth and Pete will reach out to Tim Manns and other bird enthusiast volunteers to see if there is any interest in taking the lead on this project as an MRC member. If not, we will need to drop this proposal for now and Amy will likely seek other sources of funding to make this project happen.
 - Forage Fish Survey Coordination: The Salish Sea School would hire someone to coordinate and manage the forage fish surveys for the Skagit MRC. Pete agreed to continue to be the MRC Project Lead for forage fish surveys and revised the proposal to address the NWSC's comments and provided clarification on the MRC's role in this project. Tracy will submit the revised proposal this Friday after the MRC meeting.
 - NEAP Tool Improvements: Lynne plans to submit a follow-on proposal in January for (\$5-10K, depending on funding 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.
 - Grant Amendment: The grant cannot be amended until all the project proposals for this funding have been submitted and approved by the MRC and NWSC. Work on these projects can commence as soon as the grant gets amended.

Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: *All*

- Betsy Stevenson announced her retirement with the Skagit County Planning Department. Her last day will be December 24, 2024. Although Betsy will no longer be able to represent the County on the MRC, she hopes to eventually re-apply for MRC membership as a volunteer after taking some time off. Betsy has been an MRC member since 2007 and served as the MRC Chair for several years, Project Lead for Shore Stewards, and hosted the MRC booth at many outreach events. We are so grateful for Betsy's strong leadership, expertise, kind spirit, and invaluable contributions in marine conservation. She has had a positive impact in our community and will be sorely missed. We look forward to Betsy's return to the MRC as volunteer soon as she is able.
- Chandler Colahan recently accepted the Education Program Coordinator position at Padilla Bay NERR.

- Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Stakeholders and Partners meeting will take place January 29 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes at 1pm-3pm. The purpose of the meeting is to provide updates on the management of the aquatic reserve, the Tommy Thompson trestle replacement project, and monitoring projects/results, etc.
- Port of Anacortes is working on a huge community engagement planning effort focused on climate change over the next couple of years. There might be a good opportunity for the MRC to get involved as a stakeholder.
- Annual Youth Earth Summit with 100 high school students from green clubs from neighboring counties is taking place at Padilla Bay Friday, December 13th.
- Washington State is now under a hiring freeze, purchasing freeze and traveling freeze due to an anticipated budget shortfall for the next biennium as a precautionary approach which will affect Padilla Bay NERR and the NWSC.

*The meeting adjourned at 11:18am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams, **January 9, 2025.***