



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **December 14, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Diane Hennebert, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey Ritchie's Alternate)
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Jeff Whitty (NWSC), Brooke Zibell (Swinomish), Tim Gohrke (FOSB), Yuki Reiss (SFEG), Jenn Johnson (SCPW)

**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:** November 9, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

**Public Comments:** None

## Northwest Straits Commission Report: *Diane*

Last NWSC meeting occurred December 8<sup>th</sup> via Zoom, from 10am-12pm. Highlights shared with the MRC.

- Bob and Elsa have completed their terms on the MRCs and NWSC.
- Presentation of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal Program (found [here](#)).
- UW Evans School student consulting lab working on Needs Assessments for MRCs to better understand community priorities for marine resources.
- Kelp Plan has been updated with a summary of five themes to focus on including social science.

Next NWSC meeting will occur virtually on Zoom, January 26<sup>th</sup> from 10am-12pm. All are welcome to join.

## Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
  - New flyer to circulate.
  - Advisory committee met to start planning for upcoming Salish Sea Stewards training with Sarah, SSS Training Coordinator
  - Training will be held Feb 6-April 30 at Padilla Bay. Max of 25 people, 13 spots available. Registration is open through January 31st.
  - SSS program planning is going well, very organized Advisory Committee with all new members.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith:
  - Started 2004, this will be the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary – August 24, 2024. Will use the Fidalgo Bay Resort again.
  - Plan to have 20 booths from many groups to teach people and share information. Contacted Shannon Point for touch tanks. Beach seining will be available. Goal is to increase public awareness of marine environment and foster marine stewardship. Also plan to have free samples of seafood and a no-host salmon lunch.
  - No current lead, only a committee of 3 sharing the responsibility. Need more help with event planning. Hoping the Samish Tribe will cohost the event. We will be relying heavily on Salish Sea Stewards volunteers.
  - Really fun 1-day, 5-hour event for the community on a small \$3,500 budget and various contributions. 300-350 people attend.
- Kids on the Beach – Pete Hasse:
  - Concrete was the only school that participated in the fall program.
  - There has been a lot of turn-over recently with teachers. It takes a while to get new teachers on board with programs outside of their normal curriculum like KOTB.

- 3 schools participating in the spring program:
    - April 15- April 19: Concrete 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade with 20 students participating.
    - April 29- May 2: Evergreen Elementary 4<sup>th</sup> grade with, 100 students participating.
    - April 29- May 2: Allen Elementary 4<sup>th</sup> grade with 100 students participating.
  - Darla - asked about having Anacortes schools participate.
    - Anacortes schools haven't been able to participate in the past because if one class signs up, all classes must participate, and we do not currently have the capacity or manpower to handle the large volume of students.
    - Lynne – could consider working with high schoolers who need volunteer credit. Teachers have asked if their students can take the trainings. Just need to figure out the student curriculum.
  - Lynne – is there a way to do a more intentional link to promote/explain the MRC and its work as part of the KOTB program? Help to have a stronger link to get feedback from teachers as well.
    - Pete- Good idea to share with Jude. Good to bring a teacher who has been with it a while to be brought into the conversation and how to connect MRC work with program.
  - Pete- Susan Wood, Education & Outreach Coordinator at PBNERR, is retiring in January. Won't post job opening until Feb 1, so mostly likely will remain vacant for a couple of months. Padilla Bay's Education Programs will be a little uncertain until Susan's position is filled.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase & Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
    - 3 Index sites (monthly samples): Guemes Channel, Similk Bay, and Samish Island.
    - 2 restoration sites: Bowman Bay and Clayton Beach.
    - Surveys currently led by volunteers. Quite a bit of work but fun and a valuable service. Will continue through the next year. Might need some changes as we start project planning. It would be good to have a paid coordinator to lead this effort and keep the continuity and institutional knowledge going.
    - Surveys out in Fidalgo Bay are on behalf of DNR as a State Aquatic Reserve. That work will slow down in January because DNR doesn't have the need for the amount of surveys/data we do for the QAQC work they have to do. Will make decisions on next steps in the new year. Might involve the Samish as well.
    - There is a quarterly Zoom meeting for all those involved in forage fish surveying work where everyone also shares best practices. If anyone is interested, please let Pete know.
  - 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 volunteers.
    - Data collected goes to NWSC. Link to kelp survey information on NWSC website [here](#). Link to the Kelp Recover Plan is also on the NWSC website [here](#).
    - NWSC will host a meeting to share data, notes, and best practices from all MRCs involved in kelp monitoring (6 out of 7 MRCs). Anyone interested can listen in to the meeting.
    - The Washington State floating kelp indicator is part of a larger regional effort to monitor, conserve and recover kelp that is composed of a broad alliance of partners. It is also part of the [Puget Sound Partnership vital signs](#) and is GIS-based with an online [interactive map](#) that allows people to explore the combined data on floating kelp that comprises the indicator.
      - Jeff- the indicator interactive map data runs about a year behind, but next year MRC 2022 and 2023 data will be added.
      - Yuki– do counties data trend together? Jeff – no, MRC sites do vary. A few areas are struggling more than others, but. Snohomish MRC kelp bed sites are not doing well compared to Skagit MRC kelp bed sites.
      - Lynne – Indicator does well in sharing information and helps tell the bigger story of kelp. Use lots of sources and historic data beyond the surveys. Found data from early 1900s where kelp was used as fertilizer.
  - 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.
- Paul –Are the weeds actually a problem out there? Lynne- Just need to make sure native plants don't get overwhelmed by weeds. All noxious weeds must go. Parks also cares about the aesthetics. Planting more native plants is helpful. Once we establish the natives then watering can be less, and weeds will have less room to take over. Need to get through transitional stage. We can talk to Lisa more about it.
- Pete – had forage fish survey last week and the parking lot was full of cars with people everywhere for a running event. Big audience for teaching, but not interested

- Population estimates increased from 3 million in 2018 to 5.5+ million in 2023, so almost a doubling in 5 years. Native oysters have continued to increase in numbers and expand outside shell plot areas. Biggest surprise was the number of oysters down in south end of bay near highway 20 at Sharpe's corner. Now those channels are filled with Olympia Oysters, estimate 1.2 million in channels.
- Working on incorporating PSRF data and photos into final report.
- The Fidalgo Bay native oyster population has become a very important source population for other oyster restoration projects to use and transfer oyster stock to other areas.
- Darla – is it a closed fishery? Paul- Illegal to harvest Olympia oysters under 2.5 inches (which is most of the population) so not really harvested.
- Project to remove the trestle could have an impact by opening up to wave energy, but probably won't make a big difference in the oyster population.
- Derelict Vessel Removal & Turn-in Events – Melissa Ciesielski:
  - Identified vessels off fishing docks that could fall under NWSC funding criteria, but not sure on status.
  - Looking into doing a joint vessel turn in event with Swinomish, MRC, NWSC, DNR, and the Port of Skagit in the spring with funding available from the NWSC. Will meet in new year about proceeding forward. Other MRCs looking into similar vessel turn-in events.
  - Darla – what happens with insurance?
    - There is a process once a boat is abandoned to try to contact owner, before DNR can add it to their list for potential removal. It is vessel owners' responsibility, but often they are just abandoned. Wind Jammer example – time-lapse video available. Vessel turn-in hopeful to prevent the abandonment of vessels as option to off load it properly.
- Clayton Beach Restoration
  - No other updates besides forage fish surveys continue.

#### Volunteer Stormwater Monitoring Update: *Tim Gohrke and Diane Hennebert*

- This volunteer effort was initiated by the Friends of Skagit Beaches to address a shortcoming in our federal Clean Water Act that does not require any periodic monitoring of stormwater outfall pipes. The amount of stormwater pollution entering the Salish Sea is unknown.
- There are 78 outfalls in Anacortes, but the City of Anacortes, like most other municipalities across the region, does not have the manpower or finances to monitor all of them.
- The Friends of Skagit Beaches applied for and was awarded grant funding to start the volunteer Stormwater Monitoring program with technical support and guidance from the City of Anacortes's Stormwater Manager, Diane Hennebert. The data collected will be used by the city to help guide the city's pollution source identification work.
- An ad was placed to recruit 18 volunteers to collect monthly stormwater samples –30 people responded the next week!
- The volunteer stormwater program has since expanded to 7 cities and is now supported by 55 volunteers.
- Samples are collected monthly following protocols established by the Department of Ecology.
- A contractor was hired to manage all the data collected.
- Program budget for 7 cities with sampling gear for teams of volunteers is \$80,000. About \$20,000/year to add a new city.
- Lessons learned: Good clear communication with volunteers and municipalities is very important. The volunteers under this program are not pollution watchdogs but are helpers in collecting data that can be used by municipalities to identify the pollution source where data indicates high levels of stormwater pollution, and hopefully fix the problem.
- Several successes: Fidalgo Bay outfall showed continual high bacteria counts (not one time thing) – made use of wastewater treatment lab to sample throughout the system to narrow down where it was coming from – narrowed down to 2-block area to do a smoke test which identified one sewer event pipe at a house, completed a dye test to show sewage was going to storm system instead of sewer. Planning to go visit the first site that had an immense number of bacteria.

## Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Pacific Shorebird Count for Pacific Byway for all migratory birds. There are 32 sites here, Darla participated. It was promoted in the Wave.
- Pete – CREST with WWU research project to see how teachers incorporate environmental type education. Skagit MRC wrote a support letter. They received the funding and will start having their planning sessions soon. Pete is a representative to help get it started and will share what is expected of MRC and help plan/organize those efforts.
- Pete – Tracy hopefully moving into a full time MRC position. Jenn reported progress is being made.
- Pete – local Anacortes school participating in Salish Sea School doing monthly surveys in the bay. It was an MRC approved project, but it did not meet the NWSC funding criteria. MRC will not be funding, but the program will be continuing with other funding sources. Pete hopes to have a bigger conversation about how the MRC can help support the Salish Sea School programs that follow the state funding guidelines.
- Does the MRC want to meet in person more than once a year?
  - Input that many people are tired of virtual meeting.
  - Have more in person in the new year. Maybe host at county.

The meeting adjourned at 11:29am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually on January 11<sup>th</sup>.



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **November 9, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Betsy Stevenson, Catey Ritchie, Cynthia Nielsen, Darla Gay Smith, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Tracy Alker (MRC Staff)
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Diane Hennebert
- **Others in Attendance:** Allie Simpson, NWSC; Annie England, PBNERR; Cindy Elston, SCPW; Jason Morgan, NWSF

**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:** October 14, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as modified by Tracy.

**Public Comments:** None

## Derelict Crab Pot Removal in Skagit County Waters: *Jason Morgan, NWSF*

- The derelict crab pot removal project was funded by NOAA marine debris grant with match from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) for 2-year crab pot removal in Skagit County waters in 2022 and 2023.
- The project site (Anacortes – Padilla Bay area) was selected because it was unique in that in 2018 it had the highest density of derelict pots seen in Puget Sound with a density of 72.24 pots/km<sup>2</sup> (Puget Sound avg. 34 pots/km<sup>2</sup>). And most derelict pots in that area were commercial crab pots (73%) compared to other areas in Puget which were mostly recreational.
- In 2022, 335 pots were removed in the Anacortes and Padilla Bay area at a density of 38.95 pots/km<sup>2</sup> (closer to the average density in Puget Sound) 71% of them were commercial pots.
- In 2023, two sites were completed: Samish Bay (with Skagit MRC funding), and Anacortes to Padilla Bay (with NOAA marine debris grant).
  - In the Anacortes to Padilla Bay region, 216 pots were removed at a density of 21.65 pots/km<sup>2</sup> (below the Puget Sound average). Of those, 71% were commercial pots.
  - Samish Bay, 91 pots were removed at a density of 20 pots/km<sup>2</sup>, which was less than expected. 76% were commercial pots. Expected to find more recreational crab pots in this area.
- Overall Results from 2022 to 2023
  - 642 derelict pots removed
  - 17,205 lbs. of marine debris
  - 92% returned, recycled or reused
  - 3,257 acres cleared
- Marine traffic (commercial and recreational) was the biggest contributor to pot loss. Currents and sudden depth changes were also factors.
- Next Steps:
  - The Foundation has leftover money in the NOAA marine debris grant with match from WDFW that will be used to fund another year of removals from the same areas in 2024. The data collected will help calculate the annual loss rate for two years in a row and evaluate any change to determine if what we are doing is making a difference.
  - The Foundation will host a workshop with commercial crabbing and marine traffic industry to try to come up with a solution to reduce crab pot loss in our area.
  - There is potential for collaboration with the Swinomish tribal crabbers/fishers who have also been involved in marine debris removal. Melissa can help with outreach.

- Jason Morgan will share the final report with the MRC that includes live crab versus dead crab data and escape cord compliance.

#### **Northwest Straits Conference Debrief:** *Paul, Pete, Matt, and Cindy*

- The new conference format focused largely on communications and networking, and less on technical aspects.
  - There was some focus on rethinking how the MRCs are structured and how to bring in other members of their communities (Diversity Equity and Inclusion) including trying to bring in younger folks and mentoring the next generation.
- There were two technical panels – a climate change panel and a kelp panel. Each were well-done and provided good ideas.
  - Gained useful information about ideas for improving communication with the public about potential sea level rise issues.
- MRCs gave short presentations on some of the projects they've been working on.
  - There was a suggestion to create cross-county workgroups on specific topics - people working on similar projects between different MRCs. It would provide an avenue for brainstorming ideas and learn what other MRCs are up to.

#### **SMRC Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) Subcommittee Update:** *Lynne, Melissa, Tracy*

- NWSC is partnering with Snohomish and Jefferson MRCs and the Evans School at the University of Washington to develop a community needs assessment framework for locally led marine conservation that can be applied to other MRCs. In addition, NWSC hired a consultant to assess the current state of DEI within the NWSI, both internally and externally. This will be a multiple phased process that will result in documents with action items to help provide guidance in meeting our DEI goals.
- Although the NWSC's Needs Assessment and DEI Plan takes a regionwide approach, it aligns with the Skagit MRC's DEI Plan which is focused on the local level. Because Skagit MRC doesn't currently have the resources to take on this huge task on our own, the Committee decided to take a step back to see what comes out of the NWSC's Community Needs Assessment. In the meantime, MRC members were asked to look at our MRC membership roster and list of partners to help start identifying missing voices in our committee and how we can engage with them. Committee members will contact Tracy if there's anyone we should add, or priority groups that we should reach out to.

#### **OTGP 2024 Grant Project Proposal Update:** *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Tracy Alker*

- Clayton Beach: At the October MRC meeting, the MRC decided to hold off on submitting a proposal for funding until after the feasibility study is complete and hopefully more opportunities to get more directly involved. \$50,000 will be re-allocated to other MRC projects.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining: The proposal was revised to clarify Skagit MRC's role and resubmitted to the Northwest Straits Commission. Lynne and Tracy are working on a Partner Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding between the Skagit MRC and Northwest Straits Foundation. Funding starts Jan 1, 2024.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment: The proposal was revised to combine Phase1 and Phase2 and the total budget was increased to \$40k by reallocating \$17,417 from the Clayton Beach budget. The funding will be used to hire a consultant to do the work. MRC members will be involved in the consultant selection process, they will also provide input and review deliverables.
- MRC/Salish Sea School - Forage Fish Surveys: The MRC approved Pete Haase's request to reallocate \$2,000 from the Clayton Beach budget to the Salish Sea School to conduct forage fish surveys as part of their 'Students Training as Research Scientists' (STARS) program.
- Derelict Crab Pot Removal: The Committee discussed the possibility of reallocating some of the remaining funds from the Clayton Beach project to derelict crab pot removal in Year 2 (2025) of the grant. There is some value to continue crab pot removal in the same areas where it took place in 2022 and 2023. Or possibly a new area like Skagit Bay could also be beneficial. More time is needed to develop a proposal for this project. The project will be left off the grant agreement for now and added later through an amendment.
- MRC Operations: The MRC Operations budget was increased to \$10,250 (year1) and \$7,000 (year2) by reallocating funds from the Clayton Beach funding to cover staff time for managing additional contract work

for the Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment, Salish Sea School Forage Fish Surveys, and possibly Derelict Crab Pot Removal.

### Kids on the Beach Update: *Annie England, PBNERR*

- Fall 2023 Kids on the Beach Program.
  - 60 Conway 8<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in classroom curriculum and forage fish surveys at Fidalgo Bay on October 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>. Classroom preparation included education about forage fish and estuarine food webs, and preparation in hypotheses and experiment ideas. They participated in forage fish fieldwork on October 4<sup>th</sup> and returned to the classroom for two days to interpret data and create presentations.
- Spring 2024 Kids on the Beach Program- 3 schools will be participating:
  - April 15<sup>th</sup> – April 19<sup>th</sup>: Concrete - 20 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students will be participating.
  - April 29<sup>th</sup> – May 2<sup>nd</sup>: Allen Elementary - 100 4<sup>th</sup> grade students will be participating.
  - May 6<sup>th</sup> – May 10<sup>th</sup>: Evergreen Elementary - 75 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will be participating.
- There will be a good opportunity for the MRC to get more involved and help the kids, teachers, and schools understand what the MRC does.

### Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – *Darla Gay Smith*:
  - The 2024 Salish Sea Student training dates have been set: February 26<sup>th</sup> – April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. Classes will be held Tuesdays 1-5pm at Padilla Bay Reserve. There is a maximum of 25 people, and the waitlist is already half full carried over from last year's waitlist. Registration will officially open on December 1<sup>st</sup> – January 31, 2024. The Advisory Committee is currently working with Sara Brostrom to finalize the 2024 Speaker Schedule.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – *Darla Gay Smith*:
  - We were very pleased that the Samish tribal chairman was involved in 2023's Fidalgo Bay Day opening.
  - Matt reserved the Fidalgo Bay facility for Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 9-11am. Matt and Jason helping with beach seining that day. We are reaching out to Shannon Point Marine Center's touch tank as well.
  - There are only 3 people on planning committee. Anyone is welcome to help participate and plan the event!
  - Next year is Fidalgo Bay Day's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and would like to do something special. Please let Tracy know if you have any ideas for ways to make this year's Fidalgo Bay Day extra special.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:
  - The 2023 season is over. September was the last month of surveys at the sites (Coffin Rocks, Shannon Point, and Biz Point). It is now data crunch time. Jeff Witty from NWSC is scheduling our Skagit kelp team. New leads plan to meet on November 27<sup>th</sup> to talk about how to determine bed parameters, and observations important in the data collection process. Jeff also working on setting up the all-MRC end-of-season workshop. Data from these surveys get rolled up to a public website part of the Puget sound vital signs effort: <https://kelp-canopy-vital-sign-for-puget-sound-wadnr.hub.arcgis.com/>
- European Green Crab – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:
  - Skagit MRC's green crab outreach is essentially done for the year. Allie and Leah held a collaborative monitoring and removal invasive green crab presentation for Drayton and Samish bays. Good information, visuals, data, and questions and dialogue. They are happy to come in and share any information about the green crab work in Samish Bay.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:
  - Last volunteer event of the season was hosted by the NWSF and the MRC on October 12<sup>th</sup>. There were around 15 volunteers that spread mulch and compost, removed weeds, and planted tufted grass and other plants. Forage fish survey was completed simultaneously to understand integral connections in the health of our shorelines. The MRC monthly meeting also was hosted at Bowman Bay at the same time.
  - This season's plantings are incredibly successful due to weekly watering.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – *Pete Haase*:
  - The project is now complete and the 2023 Project Report has been finalized.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase & Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
  - Monthly surveys continue at the Index sites, Bowman Bay, and Fidalgo Bay.
  - We will be starting forage fish surveys at Clayton Beach tomorrow morning.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert:
  - No Update.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinne!
  - Abalone field work starts back up in January or February, which includes site monitoring, and hopefully new abalone seed outplanting. Meanwhile, hatchery work is continuing; they are maintaining brood stock and raising juvenile abalone.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinne!
  - Salish Sea Stewards, MRC members, Shannon Point Marine Center, and Community volunteers worked with Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) staff this last summer to sample Olympia oysters throughout Fidalgo Bay to generate an updated population estimate from 2018. The sampling will also inform us as to where oysters have naturally spread to new areas in the bay.
  - PSRF is finalizing the data analysis. Once received, Paul will compile the MRC report.
- Tommy Thompson Trestle Project- Tracy Alker:
  - The Trestle project’s Request for Proposals has been posted. There will be more updates in January or February.

#### Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- Swinomish is tracking a sheen reported in Fidalgo Bay near where some of the native oyster restoration beds are located. There is no active leak, but the sheen shows up after every high tide. Fortunately, the leak is small and does not appear to be an immediate threat to the native oyster population. They are moving forward with doing permitting and investigations to determine if there is some sort of historic contamination getting reactivated with the tides.
- There is opportunity for a partnership between the MRC and Swinomish to partner in a vessel turn in event. There are also derelict vessels in Sullivan Slough, one of which they will add to the derelict vessel list for removal. We can add the vessel turn in event to future agendas to talk about it more in-depth.
- Tesoro’s NPDES permit is up for renewal. Several organizations are providing comments, with a deadline of November 14<sup>th</sup>. Individuals can comment as well.
- Skagit County has an interactive map of fecal coliform bacteria [here](#).

The meeting adjourned at 10:48am. The next MRC meeting will be held in person at the Fidalgo Bay Resort on December 14<sup>th</sup>.



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **October 12, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Meeting at Bowman Bay Deception Pass State Park.

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Betsy Stevenson, Cynthia Nielsen, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Melissa Ciesielski (Catey's Alternate)
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Darla Gay Smith, Diane Hennebert, Jude Apple, Catey Ritchie, Kevin Anderson
- **Others in Attendance:** None

**Call to Order and Introductions:** Betsy called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

**Approval of Minutes:** September 14, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

**Public Comments:** None

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

*The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held September 29, 2023. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC*

- Island County presented their White Paper outlining climate needs specific to shoreline and water quality.
- Ginny Broadhurst presented on the Roberts Bank Terminal II expansion that will increase shipping traffic.
- NWSC has been working on reauthorization featured in a [new brochure](#) and a recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- No NWSC Monthly Meeting in October. The 2024 NWSC meeting calendar is now [available online](#).
- Northwest Straits Conference – November 3-4<sup>th</sup> – at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Northwest Straits Conference registration is now closed. Lots of opportunities for interactive discussions and networking. Some MRCs will be presenting, and some will have displays.

## Bowman Bay Beach Seining Proposal Revisions: *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*

- Bowman Bay Beach Seining: Lynne worked with Jason to revise the proposal to address comments received from the NWSC Staff and Technical Committee to better clarify Skagit MRC's role in the Bowman Bay Beach Seining project so that it fits the NWSC funding criteria:
  - SMRC Project Lead will work with NWSF Lead Scientist to plan, schedule, coordinate, promote, and recruit volunteers to conduct beach seining surveys.
  - SMRC Project Lead will work with SFEG and NWSF to plan and coordinate education and outreach materials and activities during beach seining events with the help of volunteers.
  - SMRC Project Lead will get monthly updates from the NWSF Lead Scientist that will be shared with the SMRC and Northwest Straits Commission at monthly meetings.
  - SMRC volunteers will take the lead on maintaining beach seining equipment.
- Skagit MRC Members voted by consensus to approve the revised Bowman Bay Beach Seining proposal.

## Clayton Beach Restoration Proposal Discussion: *Cynthia Nielsen*

- Clayton Beach Restoration: Skagit MRC's current proposal would allocate \$50k directly to the Northwest Straits Foundation to continue the feasibility study, permitting, and design phase for the removal of riprap structures and pilings from the old rail line, expanding eelgrass beds, improving forage fish spawning habitat, and related activities. Herrera is currently under contract with the NWSF to do the work. However, this proposal does not meet the NWSC's funding criteria because Skagit MRC would not have a clear role in this project. Skagit MRC could potentially take on an education and outreach role in the project, but it would not be part of the feasibility

study which is what we would be seeking funding for. The Committee also discussed the possibility of taking the lead on a separate piece of the feasibility study that is not currently under the NWSF's feasibility scope that would focus on the depression area out past the old rail trestle that was dredged out when the structure was originally built. If feasible, this large area could be filled in, possibly with riprap to be removed from the shoreline, along with some clean dredged material, and then replanted with eelgrass. However, it was determined that the NWSF already has plans to add the depression area to their current feasibility scope as funding permits and is not something the SMRC should take on separately.

- Skagit MRC Members voted by consensus to wait until the NWSF's feasibility study is completed and redirect the \$50k Elsewhere. Once the feasibility study is completed, we would work with NWSF to try to identify a piece of the work that Skagit MRC could take the lead on, possibly in partnership with Whatcom MRC.

#### SMRC Diversity Equity Inclusion Subcommittee Update: *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*

- The Skagit MRC DEI Subcommittee held a brainstorming session on October 5<sup>th</sup> to identify goals and strategy for filling diversity and representation gaps in Skagit MRC's work and in expanding our MRC membership.
- Lynne drafted a proposed plan that was shared with the Committee for feedback. The Proposed Plan includes goals, tasks, timeline, and deliverables. It also lists Skagit MRC's current membership structure/ representation to see where the gaps are.

#### Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – *Darla Gay Smith*:
  - Lynne and several Salish Sea Stewards volunteers hosted the Skagit MRC display at the Festival Family of Farms at Taylor Shellfish on October 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> to share information about the upcoming 2024 Salish Sea Stewards training program. They handed out flyers and save the date cards. There seemed to be a lot of interest.
  - The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee will hold the Annual 2023-2024 Training Plan Kickoff meeting in-person at Padilla Bay on October 25<sup>th</sup> from 10am to noon.
  - 2024 Salish Sea Stewards training will likely be held Tuesdays, 1-5pm at Padilla Bay February – April.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – *Darla Gay Smith*:
  - The 19th Fidalgo Bay Day was held on Saturday, August 26, 2023, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. A large crowd of over 300 attended. The event was a huge success! The 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day Final Report is now complete.
  - The Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Committee held a 2023 event debrief meeting on October 10<sup>th</sup> and started making plans for the 2024 event.
  - The date for the 2024 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort has been reserved. Matt Castle and Jason Morgan are on board for leading the beach seining demonstration in the afternoon.
- Kids on the Beach – *Pete Haase*:
  - 40 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from Conway Middle School participated in the Fall 2023 Kids on the Beach program October 2<sup>nd</sup>-October 6<sup>th</sup>.
  - 15 Volunteers and 5 Padilla Bay staff helped with the field day on October 4<sup>th</sup> at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
  - Students collected and analyzed data from forage fish egg samples to investigate forage fish egg abundance as an indicator of habitat health and nearshore fish seining data to investigate fish abundance and diversity as an indicator of habitat health.
  - Classroom presentations were held October 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:
  - 2023 season includes: Coffin Rocks (Steve Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead) and Shannon Point east/west (Lynne W. - Lead). September was the final month for 2023 monitoring. Surveys ended for the season in September. Updates for the last month are as follows:
  - **Shannon Point** survey completed – September 1<sup>st</sup> – Team led by Hal. They have found that late in the season, the currents are nothing close to what the current station says. With higher currents, they can't hold position long enough to take readings, and can't see the kelp well. They made a slight change in

protocol and decided to use the Green Point current station in addition to their usual station, and it worked perfectly. They found two new kelp beds – one forming on the west bed, and another forming on the northwest corner of the east bed. Beds were healthy, and sargassum near the shoreline had thinned out.

- **Biz Point** survey was completed – September 27 – Team led by John Freeto along with Phil Latendress, and Denby Lloyd. Because kelp beds to the North and to the South have grown into the Biz Point kelp bed, we included them in our G.P.S. Track. The northern portion of the original Biz Point bed was less dense than the Central and Southern portion. Even though it was late in the season, most of the kelp was still vigorous and healthy showing no damage. Observed a variety of wildlife.
- **Coffin Rocks** survey was completed – August 15<sup>th</sup> – Team led by Steve. Kelp beds were very dense, with blades fully intact. There were many single bulbs around the larger bed. They saw various wildlife including harbor seals. Last survey scheduled for September 26<sup>th</sup> was cancelled due to poor weather.

- European Green Crab – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

- Letters were sent in July to 505 landowners, focusing on areas where green crab was present in the 2022 green crab detection map.
- Skagit MRC co-hosted a European Green Crab outreach booth at Fidalgo Bay Day with the NWSC and WDFW. NWSC also hosted a EGC outreach booth at the Festival Family of Farms at Taylor Shellfish on October 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> with Skagit MRC's EGC Plinko game.
- Paul conducted monthly monitoring with Salish Sea Steward volunteers of crabs and fish at the trestle in Fidalgo Bay in July, August and September. He forwarded data and catch photos to Washington Sea Grant folks. No live green crabs have been caught at our trestle monitoring site but one small molt was found during a molt survey in September 2022. This brings the total molts found in Fidalgo Bay to two, with one live green crab also being found near Little Crandall Spit by another agency monitoring crew.

- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

- As of September 8, NWSF staff and volunteers have worked over 132 hours this summer weeding and watering the beach restoration area. Increasing the frequency of watering appears to be working! The conifers are coming back and looking healthy.
- On September 22, NWSF lead a celebration and stewardship event at Bowman Bay recognizing the hard work of the volunteers and success of the maintenance program. Volunteers and staff spread mulch and compost and then enjoyed a nice lunch provided by NWSF.
- Next event at Bowman Bay, will be today, October 12, to weed, spread mulch and add more native plants. Forage Fish surveys will also simultaneously be conducted as well as a brief MRC meeting.

- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase:

- The project is now complete and the 2023 Project Report has been finalized.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:

- Monthly Forage fish surveys continue at the Index sites, Bowman Bay, and Fidalgo Bay.

- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert:

- No Update.

- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:

- The 2023 Final Report for the pinto abalone project was submitted to Skagit MRC at the end of September 2023. This report details all of the monitoring and out planting activities carried out in Skagit County waters during late 2022 and 2023. Laboratory culturing and spawning activities are continuing at the Manchester Chew Laboratory.

- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:

- Salish Sea Stewards, MRC, Shannon Point Marine Center and Community volunteers worked with Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) staff this last summer to sample Olympia oysters throughout Fidalgo Bay in order to generate an updated (from 2018) population estimate. The sampling will also inform us as to where oysters have naturally spread to new areas in the bay. PSRF is now analyzing the data and will forward a data report to the MRC by early November. Paul Dinnel will then incorporate their findings into an MRC project report covering the years 2019-2023.

- No Announcements.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:02am followed by the Bowman Bay planting and forage fish surveys. The next MRC meeting will be held via Microsoft Teams on November 9<sup>th</sup>**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Betsy Stevenson, Cynthia Nielsen, Darla Gay Smith, Diane Hennebert, Jude Apple, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Catey Ritchie, Kevin Anderson, Tracy Alker (MRC Staff)
- **Others in Attendance:** Craig Thomas, UW Professor/Researcher; Melissa Ciesielski (Catey Ritchie's Alternate); Cindy Elston, SCPW; Jenn Johnson, SCPW; Caitlyn Blair, NW Straits; Dana Oster, NW Straits; Leah Robison, NW Straits; Lisa Kaufman, NW Straits; Sasha Horst, NW Straits

**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:** August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

**Public Comments:** None

## **Collaborative Partnerships in the Puget Sound Region Study:** *Craig Thomas*

*Craig Thomas is a professor at the University of Washington's Evans School of Public Policy & Governance. He joined the meeting to give background information and legitimize a multi-year study that he is working on with Tom Koontz, another professor at the University of Washington.*

Faculty members at the University of Washington received a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to figure out challenges that partnerships face in accessing and using science to develop plans and projects. Undergrads made a catalog of organizations working in the Puget Sound basin, which will be listed on a UW website for all to see. They interviewed select individuals from these organizations, asking open-ended questions about the kinds of science used, challenges faced, and applications to decision-making. These questions helped form a survey design that will be sent to all members of all partnerships, including the Skagit MRC.

It's important that you fill out the survey if you receive it; for data legitimacy, they need everyone to complete the survey. If you receive the survey twice due to membership in multiple partnerships, only fill it out once. The survey will be sent out in October and open for a few weeks. They will analyze and share results after the new year. The goal is to turn these results into usable information for partnerships, not just in the Puget Sound region but also nationally.

## **NW Straits Derelict Vessel Removal/Takeback Update:** *Dana Oster & Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*

*The MRCs pooled original funds to form an overall derelict vessel removal plan for 2023, with an interagency agreement with DNR. They formed a workgroup with representatives from tribal partners and all MRCs to devise a process separate from the state to prioritize removals that benefit cultural resources, recreation, and the environment (as opposed to the state's process that prioritizes state-owned aquatic lands with a focus on health & safety). A first round of vessel submissions has been removed, and they are opening up a second round.*

## Budget:

- Initial costs estimated for agreement with DNR is \$1.28 million
- Spending to-date for 10 removed and soon-to-be-removed vessels is ~\$540,000
- Setting aside ~\$200,000 for Makah vessel turn-in event for Spring 2024
- Around \$500,000 remaining for a second round of vessels

Removed vessels:

- 3 boats in Island County, +1 remaining at Camano that was delayed due to forage fish spawning
- 1 boat in Snohomish County
- 1 boat in Whatcom County
- 1 boat in San Juan County
- 1 boat in Jefferson County
- 2 boats in Skagit County / Swinomish – Check out this cool video! [Windjammer Derelict Vessel Removal 2023](#)

Turn-in events are currently in the planning stage with:

- Makah Tribe
- Snohomish MRC and Port of Everett
- San Juan MRC, County, and Port of Friday Harbor
- Swinomish?

They have a connection with DTG Recycling to have people willingly turn in vessels, have them deconstructed and put in recycling bins to recycle as much of the vehicles as possible.

The second round of vessel submissions for tribal partners and MRCs was due last Friday.

Lynne spoke about the **derelict vessel near Blanchard**:

- Fishing boat reported in MyCoast on 8/30/23 by Allie Simpson
  - Located near Colony Creek and tressel tracks
  - Registration # WN2363T (someone ran through DOL database and did not find a record)
  - WA Lic sticker dated 1993
- GPS Coordinates taken on 9/12/23: N 48.59821; W 122.42606
- Vessel straddles potentially 3 parcel owners:
  - Roger Wechsler (landside)
  - PSE (easement)
  - Alfred Perthou III (tidelands)
- Skagit iMap Aerial overlay onto parcels – appears to be in the middle of the PSE owned easement parcel

*Skagit MRC voted unanimously to submit this derelect vessel to Northwest Straits. There were no objections as there are funding and opportunity remaining to continue removing vessels.*

There may be opportunities for the Skagit MRC to get involved in turn-in events. DNR has interest in continuing this work, so if not right now, they can partner in the future for a turn-in event. We can wait and see how some of these turn-in events go and get a better sense for what it requires.

**Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report:** [Diane Hennebert & NWSC Staff](#)

*The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC and shared at the September 14<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting.*

- The NW Straits Commission will present a new annual award in honor of Senator Patty Murray. An ad-hoc committee will be formed to develop criteria and a nomination process for future recipient selection. The first recipient will be Senator Patty Murray.
- NW Straits Commission staff are working on hiring a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion consultant to assess DEI needs within the Commission and NW Straits Initiative. The first phase will be to create a needs assessment to identify next steps in DEI at the Initiative.
- NW Straits Commission staff are looking for speed date topics for “Speed Date with a Scientist” presentations at our monthly Commission meetings. If you have topics that you are interested in learning more about, please reach out to Dana (oster@nwstraits.org).
- The NW Straits Commission approved the 2023-2025 MRC grant proposals for the Washington state general fund and EPA-funded award, with a start date of October 1, 2023.
- Representative Debra Lekanoff joined the meeting and gave a great talk. She is working on creating a salmon commission that includes people of many different backgrounds to discuss all aspects of saving salmon, from habitat restoration to water laws.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting – September 29** - Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

- Northwest Straits Conference – November 3-4<sup>th</sup> – at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Northwest Straits Conference registration is opening at the end of August! Travel and lodging costs for MRC members and staff can be covered through their MRC grants. If you have questions about lodging, travel, or general conference inquiries, please contact Caitlyn (blair@nwstraits.org). For displays, MRCs should get back to Caitlyn by October 2<sup>nd</sup> with information about what materials needed, space for a table, etc.

### Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee Meeting: *Jude Apple*

The MRC agreed unanimously to create a subcommittee to reflect on what voices are represented on MRC, and review goals for recruitment and membership. On this committee, Melissa, Lynne, Tracy, Betsy, and Jude met initially and talked about key things to work on:

1. Review current guidelines for membership. Begin doing assessment as to whether scope of membership is representative of all the voices impacted by coastal resources who would want to weigh in on decisions about their management.
2. Get together and talk about next steps. Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 5<sup>th</sup> sometime between 2-5pm.

They are looking for feedback from the MRC for additional agenda items or topics for the first subcommittee meeting, and will also check in with NWSC about other things to consider. Folks mentioned:

- A lot of organizations are expanding EDI to DEIJA, which includes Justice and Accessibility. This is important to consider even if NWSC doesn't include it.
- Skagit MRC may need more technical expertise on the committee or as support in the future – this may be an area to chat about the larger picture.
- We are welcome to branch off of NWSC. The MRC can do things internally, but rely on NWSC for larger strategies across MRCs, and to provide tools / resources / consultant reports. NWSC can aggregate and provide tools and templates that can be deployed at different MRCs.

### Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
  - “The Wave”, the Stewards online listing of volunteer opportunities, has been full of great listings & workshops all Summer long. Volunteers have been busy. As of August 18, 2023, a total of 47,476 service hours have been recorded in Volgistics by Volunteers.
  - The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee does not meet in July, August & September. We resume in October, 2023 to plan for the 2024 Salish Sea Stewards Training commencing in early February of 2024 and running through late April of 2024 at Padilla Bay NERR.
  - If you know an interested Stewards candidate, they may wish to contact the Stewards (on the SMRC website) to reserve a spot in the class of 25 trainees; the waiting list from last year puts the class at approximately one third full. The Salish Sea Stewards training is an excellent program giving an overview of many (15-18) areas of research in our area of the Salish Sea, at no cost to attendees.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith:
  - Continuing the event's tradition since 2004, the 19th Fidalgo Bay Day was held on Saturday, August 26, 2023 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. A large crowd of over 300 attended, despite the poor air quality from wildfires. We had extra ice water at many stations.
  - Fidalgo Bay Resort donated their beautiful Lodge and Beach; of special note: Samish Indian Nation Chairman, Tom Wooten, delivered an opening song to drumming & Rosie Cayou James gave a tribute to killer whale Tokatie. The Samish Beach Seining Team had a good set & much to display. The Samish Librarian held a story circle. Friends of Skagit Beaches ran the Passport Activity & youth coloring contest. Shannon Point Marine Center was present with their Touch Tank. Deception Pass Rangers were there with their whale skull. The SMRC hosted 38 groups with educational booths both in & outdoors. Salish Sea focused crafts (15 offerings) were highly popular. Taylor Shellfish Farm donated oysters & blue mussels which were grilled on the patio. Eco-friendly Selkie Corra educated youth & actually swam in the Salish Sea. Bob's Chowder Bar & Secret Cove served samples of their clam chowder. Door Prizes for

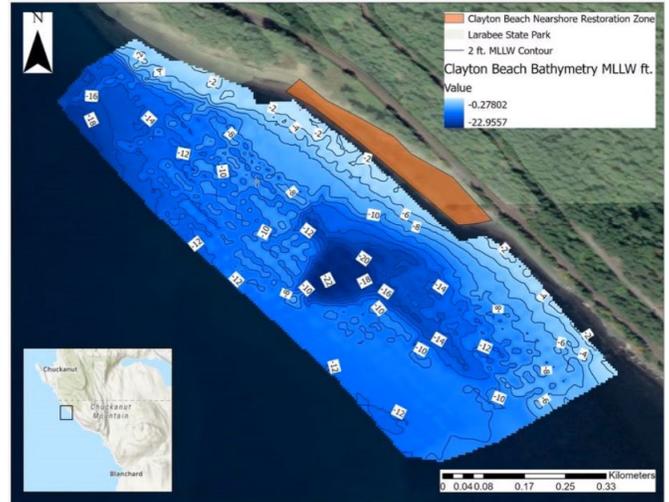
restaurant certificates were drawn (Anthonys, Bob's Chowder & Secret Cove). Rosie Cayou James & her family prepared their Salmon BBQ and fry bread. This was a Zero Waste event with the assistance of Skagit Soils. GoSkagit had a good newspaper article the following day highlighting the value of the event to our Community & to the Salish Sea.

- The event pulls together donations from many businesses & organizations in the Community & involves the SMRC Planning Committee, the Salish Sea Stewards & Friends of Skagit Beaches. The Day's success is credited to over 42 organizations and businesses, plus seasoned volunteers that offer their gifts of expertise, time & donation of materials.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
  - They are wrapping up summer and getting things ramped up for the fall. Two programs have committed: Conway's 7-8<sup>th</sup> grades on October 2-6<sup>th</sup>, and Concrete's 9-12<sup>th</sup> grades sometime in late October to mid-November. The program will focus on forage fish at Fidalgo Bay, and will include a combination of field site visits and classwork.
  - In the spring, they hope to involve Sedro-Woolley. The school needs funding for buses, but the Padilla Bay Foundation often helps cover transportation for school groups, so they can probably support it. They would like to get one other school involved in the spring. Anacortes schools are interested but have an "all-or-none" approach, and Padilla Bay can't handle large volumes of kids and chaperones.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
  - September is last month of the season for surveys.
  - **Shannon Point survey completed – September 1<sup>st</sup>** – Team led by Hal. They have found that late in the season, the currents are nothing close to what the current station says. With higher currents, they can't hold position long enough to take readings, and can't see the kelp well. After lots of discussion, they decided to use the Green Point current station in addition to their usual station, and it worked perfectly. They found two new kelp beds – one forming on the west bed, and another forming on the northwest corner of the east bed. Beds were healthy, and sargassum near the shoreline had thinned out.
  - **Biz Point survey was completed – August 13<sup>th</sup>** – Team led by John. They also had similar problems at Biz Point where currents are off, but they are not sure how to remedy this. Someone from a different MRC has been modelling currents for their surveys, so it's a common issue. Beds were healthy and expanding, with no epiphytes. They found a new bed, but it was so close to the original that they included it with the original bed. Saw lots of wildlife, including harbor seals, sea lions, harbor porpoises, and tons of fish and birds. Last survey is scheduled for September 27<sup>th</sup>.
  - **Coffin Rocks survey was completed – August 15<sup>th</sup>** – Team led by Steve. Kelp beds were very dense, with blades fully intact. There were many single bulbs around the larger bed. They saw various wildlife including harbor seals. Last survey is scheduled for September 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Green Crab Outreach – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
  - Letters were sent in July to 505 landowners, focusing on areas where green crab was present in the 2022 green crab detection map. This year, there has been a slow uptick in green crab in Padilla Bay and large uptick in Samish Bay: Allie has found 125, and Taylor Shellfish has found 80.
  - Nobody has reached out to Allie, but Washington Conservation Corps has run into people who said they had received the letter, and people on the beach seem to be more aware of green crab.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
  - NW Straits Foundation is managing the project for the MRC this year. They are out there almost every Thursday morning watering and weeding with the help of a few volunteers (a total of 10 volunteers culminating 38 volunteer hours so far). Increasing the frequency of watering appears to be working! The conifers are coming back and looking healthy.
  - They are preparing for a NW Straits Foundation recognition event from 11-2pm on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. It will include an hour of volunteer work, lunch, discussions, and mulching. All volunteers, friends, and community members are welcome!
  - A planting party is tentatively scheduled for October 12<sup>th</sup>, which will be combined with or in lieu of Skagit MRC's monthly meeting. This is also the final watering day.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase:

- Dana Flerchinger and four students are wrapping up their summer sampling activities soon along the 3 locations at Fidalgo Bay. After sampling, they will create some way to report their findings; as soon as we get details on when and how, hopefully there will be an invitation to an online program from them. More to report next month.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
  - Forage fish surveys continue. They plan on sampling at Bowman Bay on September 22<sup>nd</sup> at the NW Straits Foundation recognition event. At Bowman Bay previously, they would collect 4-5 samples along the beach and go to restroom facility for water, but it's far away from the beach and where the crowd is. The last couple of months, they set up processing by the boat launch and used buckets of water instead of the hose. Michelle and Mike have been there with their outreach interpretation stand. Lots of people typically come watch and learn about the project.
  - Last month, there were very few eggs in all samples, including the index site. It was not clear whether eggs spawned on the beach or had floated in from somewhere else.
  - More forage fish news related to Clayton Beach is located in the Clayton Beach Discussion below.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert:
  - Diane has been focused on the Mount Erie rain garden. The rain garden work party was just Diane, but she recruited a coworker to help get it ready for the first day of school. The garden is low-maintenance during the winter, so she will send out a listing for Salish Sea Stewards in March to get more volunteers.
  - More attention will shift to the La Conner rain garden in the fall.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
  - Josh Bouma is working on an annual report, which should be submitted at the end of the month.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
  - Brian Allen and Hilary Hayford led the effort to get a new population estimate, and are working on data analysis and summaries. Paul will get that information from Brian and put it into a report due at end of the year.
- Clayton beach – Paul Dinnel & Lisa Kaufman:
  - Snorkel surveys are over for the season due to tides. The last survey they completed in August, they saw a bunch of juvenile chinook along the shoreline. This is unusual, as groups typically see salmon earlier in the spring and summer. They didn't see a ton of fish, but they are just getting feet wet on how to do things. Haley is working on data. Surveys will pick up again in late winter or early spring.
  - Other monitoring will be volunteer-dependent in the next season. They are hoping to host a gathering in the spring to get everything on-track and ready to go.
  - BNSF provided permission to allow the NWS Foundation to move forward with the project, but it's vague and may not provide the approvals we need to go ahead.
  - They gave a tour with Congressman Rick Larsen on August 18<sup>th</sup> and other aids to help keep it in their sites so when large sums of funding come around, they see it as an opportunity.
  - They made it past the pre-proposal for NFWF and are working on a proposal due in October.
  - Pete has reached out to Jason about starting forage fish surveys in the fall. The largest challenge is getting materials up the beach along a long trail. They will poke at Jason to have him speak next week with Pete about doing a scouting expedition with folks who want to participate. There's also opportunity for collaboration with Whatcom MRC.
  - DNR did initial surveys of eelgrass beds a few weeks ago. Dana showed photos of preliminary results that they provided:



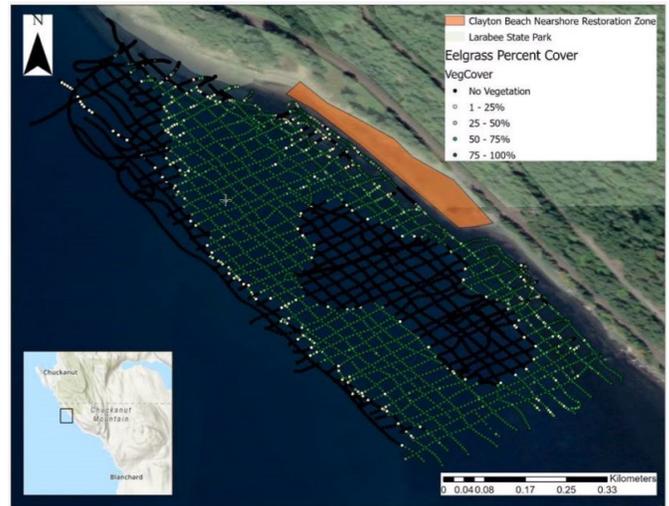
Boundaries of survey and eelgrass



Bathymetry



Eelgrass blade length



Percent cover

In the meantime, Herrera produced alternatives:

1. Full debris removal and adding beach nourishment.
2. Debris removal with 3 groins to produce pocket beaches.
3. Debris removal and 2 pocket beaches.

#### Clayton Beach Project – MRC’s Role Discussion: All

*The MRC discussed the Clayton Beach project and what the MRC’s role would need to be in order for the project to fit the NW Straits Funding criteria. If we cannot come up with a clear role or a piece of the project the MRC can take ownership of, it won’t likely get funded and we will need to drop this project.*

- When competing internal prioritization, the MRC was interested but there were questions internally about it being a little out of scope. However, this is a very special area and it would be amazing for the MRC to have a meaningful role, and could be a good opportunity for collaboration with MRCs. NWSC gave feedback that echoed that. We need to make it the MRC’s own, while still fitting into the Northwest Straits project. Lisa will do everything she can to increase MRC involvement and have defined roles, but currently the work is in the hands of the consultants.
- Whatcom is doing eelgrass surveys, and are interested in getting involved in forage fish and other monitoring as well. There is opportunity for collaboration.
- Cynthia Nielsen is interested in getting involved and has expertise that may help with this project. She will speak with Lisa & Paul in the beginning of October.

- As the project is currently in feasibility study phase, the consultants are doing most of the work. As we get further, there will be more opportunities for Skagit and Whatcom MRCs to get involved. This can involve beach walks, interpretive trail planning, attending project meetings, and forage fish surveys.
- Can start on interpretive trail planning now by starting conversations and flushing out ideas. This would involve talking to Amber and the interpretive staff about ideas. Nothing concrete has happened about interpretive signage yet. Ideas included starting from the uplands and talk about geology or historic use, and farther down the trail they can interpret other things such as vegetation. Betsy is willing to help Cynthia with this.
- Beach walks could not happen last summer due to the trail closure, but the MRC can lead beach walks next spring and summer.
- All-team meetings will start up again as we get further into the process, but they can begin quarterly meetings now.
- We have Clayton Beach tentatively funded starting in January 2024. 2024 funding would be used to move design to a point where it is ready for permitting. 2025 funding would help to finalize designs and permits, and apply to grants to fund the actual project construction. Also, supporting outreach roles for community involvement.

#### Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- **NWSI GoSkagit Article:** Betsy was quoted in a GoSkagit article about the [Northwest Straits Initiative may be up for federal reauthorization](#).
- **Shore-Friendly Updates:** Shore-friendly funds are close to releasing the next video about trees and views. It's a short video, about 6 minutes long, talking about how landowners can maintain their views while encouraging people to not top trees or cut them down. The next videos, including topics such as drainage and invasives, will be released in random order depending on when they get the footage. Also, Haley, Brook, and Evan are penciling together a curriculum for a contractors workshop.
- **Northwest Straits Conference:** The conference will focus on interactions between MRC members, with two main issues to facilitate interactions: kelp, and climate change & resiliency. There won't be many lectures, but there will be some facilitated sessions by a professional facilitator. Skagit MRC will need to be prepared to have **an issue from our MRC that can be used in those facilitation sessions**. Next meeting we can decide what issue to take to the conference and set forward for the facilitation.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day Success:** There were more young people there than previous years. Perhaps it was due to crafts, or just word-of-mouth and demographics. It drew families from Mount Vernon and the surrounding area with the goal of education.

**The meeting adjourned at 11:02am. The next MRC meeting will be held at Bowman Bay for a Planting Work Party on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Bring gloves and anything else you might need.**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **August 10, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Diane Hennebert, Cynthia Nielsen, Catey Ritchie
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Lynne Wenberg-Davidson; Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Yuki Reiss, SFEG; Melissa Ciesielski (Catey Ritchie's Alternate)

**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:** July 13, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

**Public Comments:** None

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held July 28th, 2023. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC and shared at the August 10<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting.

- Presentations at the NWC meeting:
  - **Eyes On Kelp-** Puget Sound Restoration Fund presented on the decline of bull kelp and the efforts to protect and restore it ([Link to presentation](#)).
  - **Mt. Erie Elementary School Rain Garden-** presented by Diane Hennebert
  - **Derelict crab Pot Removal Story Map-** presented by Jefferson MRC and Sea Dragons ([Link to Story Map](#))
- **Derelict Vessel Removal:** The "Windjammer", a derelict vessel was recently removed from Similk Bay as part of a collaborative effort with the NWSC, DNR, and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Committee. ([Link to Press Release](#)) ([Link to Video](#))
- **Senator Patty Murray's visit- August 7:** The NWSC in partnership with the Skagit MRC and Swinomish Indian Tribal Committee hosted a site visit at Lone Tree Point with Senator Murray on August 7<sup>th</sup>. Everything went smoothly and it was a successful visit! The presenters did an excellent job showcasing our projects and collaborations. A huge thanks to NWSC staff, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Catey Ritchie, and Pete Haase!! Links to the press release and photos and the handout were shared with the MRC.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting – Aug 25** - Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- **Northwest Straits Conference – November 3-4<sup>th</sup>** – at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. All MRC members are invited and encouraged to attend- save the date!

## NWSC Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Planning: Allie Simpson

- Last month Skagit MRC formed a subcommittee to develop a strategic plan for expanding our MRC membership and filling diversity and representation gaps and invited Allie to share information about what the Commission is doing to address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).
  - **DEI Goals:** Based off the Northwest Straits Initiative's Strategic Plan which specifically states that the Initiative serves everyone who inhabits the Northwest Straits.
  - **DEI Vision:** A broad diverse and inclusive group of individuals engaged in the health of their local ecosystems to ensure a thriving, resilient, and healthy Salish Sea. Pursuing an equitable approach to marine conservation will engage, empower, and benefit all who inhabit the Northwest straits.

- What Can We Do Better: What can we do better within our entire organization both internally and externally such as: Recruiting MRC members, hiring practices for staff and consultants, ensuring those projects that we're working on are benefiting a diverse group of community members, etc.
  - Next Steps: Currently working on the Request for Proposals through a lengthy non-competitive bid process to hire a consultant to complete an assessment that will help us better understand the current state of DEI within the NWSI, both internally and externally. They are narrowing down the long list of potential consultants.
  - Anticipated Outcome: This will be a multiple phased process that will result in documents with action items to help provide guidance in meeting our DEI goals.

➤ **Skagit MRC DEI Subcommittee Action Item:**

Schedule a meeting in October to discuss what our growth plan might be in terms of voices that sit on the MRC. Who is at the table and should be at the table? Where are the gaps? How do we connect with the voices that are missing? What actions can we take while waiting on the results from the consultant?

## Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
  - We now have over 360 trained Salish Sea Steward volunteers.
  - Over 800 hours recorded in July.
  - The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee does not meet July-Sept. We will resume in October to plan for the 2024 SSS Training Program commencing in early February.
  - Erin Merklein, our part time SSS Volunteer Coordinator, continues to work on outreach. She is organizing a field trip to Washington Park in late August to explore tide pools and to socialize. The outing is open to all Salish Sea Stewards.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
  - Planning for the fall program will start soon.
  - There are several new teachers this year that might not be able to fit the KOTB into their curriculum. It will likely take a little more outreach to get the new teachers on board.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
  - The WDFW PSRF dive teams successfully outplanted 4900 juvenile abalone (1- and 2-year-old cohorts) to 6 sites in late April. 4 sites were in San Juan County and 2 new sites in Skagit County waters.
  - Collected new broodstock for spawning in the hatchery.
  - Field work is now complete, and data is currently being analyzed.
  - Inducing spawning has been difficult this year. Results produced fewer juvenile abalone than they've had in the past. They will continue working on hatchery production for future outplants.
  - The report will be finalized in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
  - The five-year bay-wide Olympia oyster population survey in Fidalgo Bay is now complete.
  - The surveys took place on June 20, Aug 2, and Aug 3 and were led by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund with the help of MRC member Paul Dinnel and several volunteers.
  - Preliminary data indicates the oyster population is doing very well.
  - After the data analysis is complete, Paul will work on the final report.
  - There was a recent article in the Skagit Valley Herald about the Olympia Oyster Restoration project.
- Clayton beach – Paul Dinnel:
  - BNSF finally signed the letter of consent allowing the NWS Foundation to move forward with the project.
  - The Northwest Straits Foundation is hosting a tour with Congressman Rick Larsen MRC on Friday, August 18<sup>th</sup>. Skagit and MRC representatives are invited to attend. Paul said that he will be unable to attend, so we are looking for another MRC member to take his place. The purpose is to explain the project and garner Congressman Larsen's support. There's no press and it's not a large tour because the project is in scoping and permitting.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

- **Shannon Point survey completed - August 4** – Team: Hal (Lead), Joan, Catherine, Elizabeth, Jeff Whitty (NWSC): East and west Kelp beds appear to be in great shape. Sargassum was present in both areas.
  - **Biz Point survey was completed - July 13** – Team: John (Lead), Phil, Denby: In June the kelp bed was only a narrow band along the cliff. However, the July survey has shown significant growth. There have always been sparse kelp bulbs that were scattered parallel along the beach south of this kelp bed. Over the last several years, the kelp along the beach at Telegraph Bite has increased density and growth into the south end of the Biz Point kelp bed. Observed 8 healthy Purple Sea Stars along the cliffs.
  - **Coffin Rocks survey was completed - July 19** – Team: Steve (Lead), Bob, Hal: Density of kelp bed has increased since the June survey. Many younger bulbs were apparent below the surface. Kelp appeared to be healthy.
  - **September surveys for all sites will be determined soon** – there are few 0.0 tides in the month of September making surveys difficult.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
  - NW Straits Foundation is managing the project for the MRC this year. They are out there every Thursday watering and weeding with the help of a few volunteers (a total of 8 volunteers culminating 18 volunteer hours so far).
  - Increasing the frequency of watering appears to be working!
  - Last Thursday the Foundation hosted a compost and mulching event with MRC Staff (Tracy Alker) and 4 volunteers helping to haul buckets of the eight yards of compost and mulch into two of the six zones where the weeds and invasive plants have been successfully removed.
  - A planting party is tentatively scheduled for October 12<sup>th</sup>, which will be combined with or in lieu of Skagit MRC's monthly meeting.
- Green Crab Outreach – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
  - Letters and rack cards were mailed to 505 Padilla Bay and Samish Bay shoreline property owners.
  - A big thank you to: Skagit MRC, NWSC, WDFW, DNR, Sea Grant, PBNERR, Taylor Shellfish, Samish Indian Nation and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community leaders for their endorsement and signature on the letter.
  - The MRC, NWSC, WDFW, and SeaGrant will be co-hosting a European Green Crab outreach booth at Fidalgo Bay Day this year with fun games and activities.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement – Tracy Alker:
  - We requested a grant extension with NOAA to better align with the project timeline, but they said it was too early to make the request. We will take another run at the request in September.
  - The City of Anacortes now has an Interlocal Agreement in place with the Samish Indian Nation and is beginning the Request for Qualifications process for the geotechnical analysis and project engineering design.
  - The City hopes to have the engineering contract in place by the end of October which will give us a more realistic timeline for the MRC's education and outreach component.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase:
  - The Intern, Dana Flerchinger, and four students (7<sup>th</sup> grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade) have been surveying forage fish once a month at 3 locations along the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort since June: shaded, partially-shaded, and full-sun sites.
  - They will continue sampling through September and compile the findings into a summary report.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
  - Surveys continue at the 3 Index sites (Ship Harbor, Samish Island, and Similk Bay), Bowman Bay restoration site, and Fidalgo Bay.
  - There haven't been any mass spawning events in Fidalgo Bay like we typically observe this time of year.
  - July was the last survey at Kukutali after completing 5 years of surveying. The surf smelt population appears to be doing well at Kukutali.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert:
  - Diane has been in touch with the Principal at the La Conner School as well as the Swinomish and has gone out to look at the site and the different options for the rain garden.
  - Construction will take place this fall.

- Continued maintenance, especially during the first two years, is important for the success of the rain garden. Recruiting one or two volunteers to steward the rain garden sites during the summer months when school is out would be ideal. Other ideas: Adopt a Rain Garden program by a club, group, or organization to maintain the rain garden, or schedule MRC work parties, etc.
- Diane will be meeting with Jefferson County MRC and the NWSF to discuss different options and resources for maintenance.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Darla Gay Smith: Fidalgo Bay Day is Saturday, **August 26, 2023**, from 11am to 3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes. Just a small group of five are currently involved in planning and coordinating this year’s event. Volunteers are all lined up and ready to go. Just a few tasks left to do before the event. Pete’s forage fish survey crew will be putting up the sign after their survey. Some of this year’s planned activities include:
  - Shannon Point Marine Center’s touch tank
  - Friends of Skagit Beaches passport activity and the coloring contest
  - 25 organizations with educational booths
  - Samish Indian Nation’s beach seining demonstration, Samish storytelling & crafts with QR codes that translate the marine animal into the Salish language (w/pronunciation)
  - Corra, the eco-friendly mermaid
  - Complimentary chowder served by 2 restaurants and Taylor Shellfish Farm’s oysters & mussels
  - Rosie Cayou James & her family will return with their Salmon BBQ, and
  - Zero Waste with the assistance of volunteers and Skagit Soils.
  - A free gift card raffle to three local restaurants

**MRC Operations Report:** *Tracy Alker*

- MRC 2023-2025 Grant- Next Steps (including EPA/ECY and NOAA funding sources): Received comments and questions back from the NWSC staff and Science Advisory Committee. The MRC Project Leads and NWSF have been asked to help provide a response. Tracy hopes to have it all wrapped up by the end of August so that we can get the grant agreement in place by October 1, 2023, when the EPA/ECY funds become available. Below are just a few of the comments and questions received for the Committee to consider:

**MRC Operations**

- Is there adequate support for project leads for some of the larger projects like SSS and Fidalgo Bay Day?
- Recommended increasing the budget for MRC operations to cover the conference and increase MRC staffing capacity.

**Fidalgo Bay Day**

- 2024 Will mark 20 years! Anything special in mind to celebrate two decades?
- To get the desired outcome to become good environmental stewards, consider asking each partner that has a booth to provide 1 action an individual can do to be a good steward and compile all actions into a cheat sheet for individuals to take home. Or ask individuals to sign a pledge with one or two actions they would take to be better stewards.

**Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Clayton Beach Restoration with the Northwest Straits Foundation:**

- As written, these projects don’t currently meet the NWSI funding criteria.
  - MRC’s role needs to be clarified.
  - Outline timeline for the Foundation to provide project updates and presenting results back to the MRC and setting routine intervals of meetings to support a more collaborative partnership.
  - A Memorandum of Understanding between the MRC and NWSF would be a good idea.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining: Suggested logging interactions with the public.
  - **Action Item:** Tracy will revise the proposal to include information about Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group partnership on this project including providing half the funding as well as a Communications Plan that will include interactions with the public during beach seining events.

- Clayton Beach Restoration: Are there ways to build in opportunities for the MRC to be more engaged throughout the project with input, rather than just receive info? For example, is there an outreach component that the MRC could take ownership of?
- NWSI Conference MRC Project Sharing - decision by August 30th:  
The Committee considered the following options for showcasing Skagit MRC's work at the conference:
  1. A snapshot presentation (up to 15 minutes) showcasing a project of our MRC
  2. A poster or table display that will be displayed in the Gallery Room
  3. Contributions towards a combined slideshow

➤ **Action Item**: By consensus, the Committee selected **Options 2 and 3**. Please send Tracy photos and/or project information to highlight.
- Upcoming MRC meetings:
  - **Sept 14<sup>th</sup> MRC Meeting**: County intern Cindy Elston will be filling in for Tracy at the September 14<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting.
 

➤ **Action Item**: Please let Tracy know if there any guest speakers or discussion topics you would like to include on the September MRC meeting agenda before the end of August.
  - **October 12<sup>th</sup> MRC Meeting**: Our October 12<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting will be held at Bowman Bay as part of the Planting/ mulching event. Pete will try to coordinate a forage fish survey at the same time.
  - **Nov 9<sup>th</sup> MRC Meeting**: With the NWSI Conference happening Nov 3-4, one week before our regularly scheduled MRC meeting on Nov 9<sup>th</sup>. The Committee discussed the possibility of canceling the Nov 9<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting but decided to keep the meeting on the books.
  - **Dec 14<sup>th</sup> MRC Meeting**: Our Dec 14<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held in-person.
 

➤ **Action Item- All**: Please let Tracy know where you would like to hold the in-person meeting in December and if you have any ideas for a guest speaker or field trip.
  - **Future in-person meetings**: The MRC discussed the possibility of scheduling a few more in-person meetings in the future in combination with project site field trips and work parties.

#### Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- **European Green Crab Molt Search Training- August 23**: WSU Extension will be hosting a virtual training on August 23 to teach volunteers how to conduct a 20-minute survey for crab molts and how to report their findings using a mobile app. For more information about the upcoming training workshops go to <https://wsg.washington.edu/event/molt-search-volunteer-training-zoom/> or email [cniles@wsu.edu](mailto:cniles@wsu.edu), or [jonathan.w.robinson@wsu.edu](mailto:jonathan.w.robinson@wsu.edu)
- **Forage Fish Spawning Survey Training- August 30**: WDFW will be hosting a MRC forage fish training for interested volunteers at Padilla Bay on August 30<sup>th</sup>. Please reach out to either Leah Robison if you would like to attend the training but haven't already signed up. **Bowman Bay/Cornet Bay, and Hoypus Point Marine**
- **Stewardship Celebration- September 22<sup>nd</sup>**: The Northwest Straits Foundation is hosting a marine stewardship celebration and service day at Bowman Bay, in **Deception Pass State Park, 11 am - 3 pm, Friday, September 22**. **All MRC members are invited.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:36am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually on September 14th, via Microsoft Teams.



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the July 13, 2023, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase, Melissa Ciesielski (Catey Ritchie's Alternate)
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Diane Hennebert, Catey Ritchie
- **Others in Attendance:** Cindy Elston, SCPW; Cynthia Nielsen, prospective MRC member; Dana Flerchinger, Salish Sea School; Jason Morgan, NWSF; Jenn 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:** June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

**Public Comments:** None

## MRC – Salish Sea School Intern Update: *Dana Flerchinger*

Since June 2023, intern Dana Flerchinger and four students, grades 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, have been conducting forage fish spawning surveys at three locations along the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort: shaded, partially shaded, and full-sun sites. They found thousands of eggs at one of the sampling stations. Some were even hatching! They also found some mystery eggs they are currently trying to identify. They will continue collecting samples through September and compile finding into a summary report.

## Northwest Straits Foundation Update: *Jason Morgan*

Project updates:

- Derelict crab pot removal – We are in year 2 of the Anacortes derelict crab pot study area. In 2022 we removed 335 pots, the majority of which were commercial pots. This year, surveys showed 230 pots. The majority of crab pot loss is from vessel conflict. We are trying to figure out how to reduce loss. In the lower Samish Bay area, we found 121 derelict crab pots, and are working on removing pots now.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Project – There is a work party every Thursday from 9am to 11am, during which we water the plants using the State Park's water truck. We are trying to get through all of the weeding (there is a lot!) and are struggling to get volunteers, so spread the word!
- Similk Bay Restoration Project – We installed interpretive signage last week at the Similk Bay restoration site on the dual private-property. Pete and Lynne have started doing forage fish surveys and have found eggs.
- Clayton Beach – The restoration project is currently on hold until we get consent from the railroad. Even though none of the workers will be on the railroad property, State Parks does not want them to move forward without the railroad's consent. Pre-restoration monitoring is moving forward. We have been completing snorkel surveys of juvenile salmonids. The site is currently only accessible by boat because a footbridge is under construction, cutting off land access. However, due to windy weather conditions, it has been challenging to kayak and some surveys have been cancelled. Once we have foot access, we would like to schedule forage fish surveys.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held June 23, 2023. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC and shared at the July 13<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting.

- San Juan MRC hosted a site visit at Odlin County Park and shared information about their voluntary no-anchor zone project to protect eelgrass, and other new and ongoing projects.

- Dana presented on the floating kelp indicator in WA State. To read more about this project, visit [this link](#).
- NW Straits Commission staff finished the draft of the 2020-2023 Kelp Plan Status Report which will undergo public input.
- The Puget Sound Partnership is hiring new staff for their strategic funding team and is working on Progress Indicators in collaboration with local, state, and Tribal partners. To learn more about the Progress Indicators, visit [this link](#)
- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting – July 28<sup>th</sup> – in-person at Padilla Bay Reserve. Diane will be presenting about the school rain gardens project. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- Northwest Straits Conference – November 3-4<sup>th</sup> – at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. All MRC members are invited - save the date!

### **NWSI Conference – MRC Project Sharing Discussion:** *Tracy Alker*

The NWSI Conference will be held at the Port Townsend Maritime Center on November 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>. The Commission is interested in highlighting the MRC's work and wants to know which of the following options the MRC prefers by **August 30th**:

#### **MRC Project Sharing Options:**

1. A snapshot presentation (up to 15 minutes) showcasing a project of our MRC
2. A poster or table display that will be displayed in the Gallery Room
3. Contributions towards a combined slideshow

#### **Discussion/Comments:**

- Tracy:
  - So far, no MRC members expressed interest in a snapshot presentation showcasing a project.
  - Most are in support of contributions towards a combined slideshow and possibly a table display are posters.
  - Our MRC display is basically a large backdrop with photos of some of our work. We could also create project fact sheets for projects we want to showcase, and possibly bring our new European Green Crab plinko game.
- Jude: We need to think about what we want our presence to be and how we want to engage with this.
- Pete: Overarching feedback from previous years suggested more time needed for informal networking and learning about other MRCs. Last year, they had "tables of interest" where people would choose specific interesting topics for others to talk about.

- **Action Items:** No decisions were made at the July MRC meeting. The Committee decided to table it until the August MRC meeting to allow for more time to think about what we want our presence to be and how we want to showcase our work. Please let Tracy know if you have any ideas!

**Conference Attendance and Registration:** All MRC members are encouraged to attend the Conference! Registration information will be coming soon! MRC members can be reimbursed for travel (ie mileage, ferry, and lodging) within the government per-diem rates. The commission will send a list of lodging options within the per-diem rate. MRC members will need to make their own travel arrangements.

### **Project Status & Discussion**

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: Erin has been busy developing a new facebook page called Salish Sea Community Science, along with an Instagram account @SalishSeaStewards, and rolled out the first bi-monthly alumni newsletter called SSS News. The advisory committee is working on establishing internal rules and procedures. We do not meet in July/August/September. The kick-off meeting for the 2024 Stewards planning will be in October. About 1/3 of the stewards training spaces are filled already! Interested people should email now to reserve a spot.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Summer hibernation. No new developments.

- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Waiting for an update from Puget Sound Restoration Fund. They have finished most of the field work and are working on routine hatchery work and data analysis.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: On June 20<sup>th</sup>, four Puget Sound Restoration Staff led 7 volunteers on a successful survey of the eastern side of Fidalgo Bay. The oyster population appears to be doing well. Two more surveys will be held August 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. Volunteers also surveyed the seed plots planted at Cap Sante 5 years ago, but they did not find a single oyster.
- Clayton beach – Paul Dinnel: Jason provided information during his NWSF update earlier in this meeting.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: June and July Kelp surveys have been completed at all 3 sites: Coffin Rocks, Shannon Point, and Biz Point. The kelp bulbs at Shannon Point were sparsely spread out, but healthy. The Biz Point kelp bed condition was similar to last year’s survey. Kelp bed at Coffin Rocks appears to be very healthy.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Jason provided information during his NWSF update earlier in this meeting.
- Green Crab Outreach – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The 2023 EGC Plan is to target outreach to landowners along shorelines off Chuckanut, Edison, Samish and Padilla Bays where there has been an increased detection of EGCs. In collaboration with many co-authors, the EGC Homeowner Outreach letter, along with WDFW EGC identification rack card and wallet card, was finalized and mailed to 505 shoreline property owners. A big thank you to: Skagit MRC, NWSC, WDFW, DNR, Sea Grant, PBNERR, Taylor Shellfish, Samish Indian Nation and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community leaders for their endorsement and signature on the letter.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement – Tracy Alker: The project is on-hold while we are waiting to get the green light to extend the grant agreement to better align with the project timeline. The Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Stewardship Committee is ready to help with the education and outreach component as soon as we get the green light.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: Dana provided an update on the Salish Sea School program earlier in the meeting. One of the kids came out and completed a modified forage fish survey several years ago from Island View Elementary. Another kid is planning to attend Rice University for their biology program. It is nice to see the impacts of these projects – it makes it worth all the hard work.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Surveys continue at the 3 Index sites. Forage Fish surveys at Bowman Bay are scheduled in conjunction with Bowman Bay plant maintenance work parties. We bring the interpretation stand and do the sample processing as well. We have not found any evidence of spawning at Bowman Bay this year. July is the last survey at Kukutali.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert: No update. Work is anticipated to begin this fall.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Cindy Elston, Darla Gay Smith: Fidalgo Bay Day is Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility and Shannon Point Marine Center’s touch tank has been reserved. Friends of Skagit Beaches will be running the passport activity and the coloring contest. Around 25 organizations plan to have educational booths. There will also be beach seining, an eco-friendly mermaid, Taylor Shellfish oysters, Samish storytelling, a word scavenger hunt, and crafts with QR codes that translate the animal’s name into Samish language. 2 restaurants will be serving chowder, and there will be a gift card raffle. We’re in the final stretch, getting food permits, finishing up with preparing supplies, and getting passport questions. We are looking for a Fidalgo Bay Day event chair to give a welcome and brief agenda, the NWSI’s tribal land acknowledgement, and hand over to Samish to do their welcome.

#### MRC Membership Discussion: All

- MRC Applicant, Cynthia Nielsen: Cynthia is a retired civil engineer and architect with 30+ years of experience managing complex projects including environmental restoration as well as a lifelong interest in the environment and conservation. The MRC projects that interest her the most are the Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement and the Clayton Beach Restoration Project.
  - **Action Item**: The Committee voted by consensus to make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Cynthia as a member of the MRC.
- Questions brought up about MRC Membership:
  - Are we representing everyone who is impacted and connected to our marine communities?

- Who are the voices and communities that are not at the table that should be?
- What are the expertise and insight that we are lacking?
- How do we fill those community diversity and representation gaps?
- What is our strategic plan?
- **Action Item:** The Committee voted by consensus to form a sub-committee to address these questions and take the following actions:
  1. Seek guidance from the NWSC. The Commission is currently working with a diversity/equity consultant.
  2. MRC membership gap analysis.
  3. Look at what other MRCs are doing to recruit new members and improve inclusion, equity, and representation.
  4. Develop a strategic plan for growing the Skagit MRC membership in an intentional and meaningful way.

#### **Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All**

- Padilla Bay is acquiring 70 acres in the Samish Bay area and will likely close on the property in September with big restoration plans related to the purchase. As part of the restoration plan, Padilla Bay is submitting a proposal to NOAA for a comprehensive alternatives analysis to consider sea level rise, coastal inundation, and flooding and will be working with multiple stakeholder groups in that area.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:59am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually on August 10<sup>th</sup>, via Microsoft Teams.**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **June 8, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Catey Ritchie, Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Diane Hennebert, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Cindy Elston, SCPW; Jenn Johnson, SCPW; Melissa Ciesielski, Swinomish Outreach Specialist

**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:** May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

**Public Comments:** None

## Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report:

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held May 26, 2023. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC and shared at the June 8<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting.

- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting – June 23<sup>th</sup> – in-person on Lopez Island. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- Upcoming NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting – July 28<sup>th</sup> – in-person at Padilla Bay Reserve. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- Northwest Straits Conference – November 3-4<sup>th</sup> – at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Save the date!

## Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: The advisory committee met on May 22<sup>nd</sup> and reviewed results of the 2023 Salish Sea Stewards program survey. They had a high return around 60% with positive results. There were good scores on subjects covered, program organization, and delivery. Word of mouth is spreading, and 7 people have already requested the 2024 training. June 2<sup>nd</sup>'s edition of The Wave had over 11 listings of outdoor beach activities, ranging from trainings, restoration and maintenance work parties, and surveying opportunities. The advisory committee met on June 2<sup>nd</sup> with Padilla Bay to establish the Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee's Rules of Procedure. Jude reported that Erin Merklein will coordinate Salish Sea Stewards volunteers for 30% of the full-time position which is equivalent to 12 hrs/week. The 2023-2025 MRC grant funding (\$130,000) for the Salish Sea Stewards Training and Coordination will be routed directly to Padilla Bay rather than going directly through the county which is much more efficient. \$3,000 of those funds will be used for Salish Sea Stewards uniforms, training beverages, and volunteer activities.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: No new developments.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Over the last two months, Fish & Wildlife and the Puget Sound Restoration Fund dive teams successfully outplanted 4900 juveniles to 6 sites in late April, mostly 1 year olds. There were 2 new sites that were planted in Skagit County. They also collected new broodstock spawning in the hatchery. The first spawn produced 75,000 larvae, and the next spawn scheduled for June 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Not much to report. This month has mostly been an effort to recruit volunteers, including Cindy Elston. We have around 7-8 volunteers who will be working with Puget Sound

Restoration Fund on June 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> for the first round of surveys. The QAPP has been finalized and approved by Ecology.

- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The 2023 kelp season has begun at the 3 sites: Coffin Rocks, Shannon Point, and Biz Point. The coffin rocks lead, Bob Weathers, has asked to step back as lead, so Steve Olson is taking over. They had a shakedown cruise on May 17<sup>th</sup> at Seafarers Park to set up equipment and talk safety. The goal is to be as consistent as possible in terms of time of the month, tide, current, etc. Shannon Point east and west beds were surveyed on June 1<sup>st</sup>, and there was hardly any kelp. The west bed had 20 single kelp bulbs dispersed, with a lot of small kelp bulbs detached and floating. The east bed had 2 small clusters of kelp, 15-20 bulbs each. They also observed a lot of invasive sargassum kelp along the shoreline. There are new protocols this year: they will take 4 water parameter samples and are using new forms to submit data. June 1<sup>st</sup> is the start of all MRC kelp surveys. On June 17<sup>th</sup>, Bob Weathers will host a ground-based GPS training for volunteers. The Coffin Rocks survey is scheduled for June 17<sup>th</sup>, and Biz Point survey for June 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Lisa Kauffman and the NWSF is planning to do a weekly watering at Bowman Bay. They will mostly use staff but will have some volunteer opportunities as well. Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, is the annual kickoff for the Bowman Bay maintenance (weeding and watering) and forage fish surveys with an interpretive kiosk. Lisa has ideas to better monitor plant health: they plan to divide the shoreline into 6-8 zones and will start managing / collecting data by zone. They hope to recruit and train volunteers to become dedicated stewards for each zone.
- Green Crab Outreach – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Trapping/monitoring began in April, and there has been an increased detection in Samish Bay this year. The purpose of the letter is to educate shoreline landowners about green crab, how to identify them, know what equipment looks like, and give a heads-up that we may be asking for access to their property. The final product will be a letter, rack card, and wallet card. They met with NWSC yesterday to complete editing and are working on a final version to be reviewed by signatories (NWSC, WDFW, UW Sea Grant, Padilla Bay, and potentially Taylor Shellfish, Samish, and Swinomish Tribes). They have about 500 names and addresses and hope to get mailings out by end of June. As a side note, Erin Mercline (through Padilla Bay) is hosting a green crab molt training for the public at Padilla Bay today.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: The project is underway. Dana Flerchinger is working with Salish Sea School as the “intern”. She is overseeing a group of 5 kids from the Anacortes area, who are doing monthly forage fish surveys in Fidalgo Bay. They did their first test run last Sunday afternoon. They will be surveying 3 fixed sites near Fidalgo Bay Resort RV Park: some in the shade, some in the sun. They found a lot of forage fish eggs, many hatching or just hatched. They will end their monthly surveys in September and compile reports in October or November.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Periodic surveys are ongoing and spawning is starting up again. Several folks from the 2023 Salish Sea Stewards class are volunteering. July will be the last survey at the Kukutali / Kicket Island site, as it has been surveyed for 7 years. The Bowman Bay survey is scheduled for June 15<sup>th</sup> at the same time as the Bowman Bay maintenance work party, a large woody debris monitoring survey, and profile monitoring. On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, they hosted the Anacortes Island View Elementary students at Fidalgo Bay Resort and did a modified forage fish survey. On July 19<sup>th</sup>, they will also host a group of Salish Sea School summer camp students to complete a modified forage fish survey.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert: Diane partnered with the Skagit Watershed Council’s Drain Ranger Program to present to two different classes at the Mount Erie Rain Garden in Anacortes today, including hands-on stormwater science activities for students and a demonstration of how rain gardens work. Diane has been talking to the Between Two Worlds program and the principal of La Conner Elementary School to install a rain garden with the upcoming funding.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Cindy Elston, Darla Gay Smith: The 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event is Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility and Shannon Point Marine Center’s touch tank has been reserved. There will be beach seining, seafood samples, and this year will also include an educational mermaid, Samish indigenous-themed art, and potentially Salish storytelling. We will be sending out an official sign-up email to organizations interested in hosting booths and have begun reaching out to restaurants for chowder.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement – Tracy Alker: The Interlocal Agreement between the County and City of Anacortes is on hold while they figure out how to extend the NOAA grant by 6 months to fit the timeline of the project.

- Clayton Beach Restoration – Paul Dinnel: There is nothing new to report. Foot access to the site is currently shut down to build the foot bridge. The site is currently only accessible by kayak. The Northwest Straits Foundation staff have completed two snorkel surveys with kayaks and saw some juvenile salmon and a few other fish.

#### **Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All**

- Spread the word that the MRC is actively recruiting new MRC members.
- Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Discussion:
  - The Department of Ecology (DOE) held a local public hearing and heard from a lot of people who said there wasn't enough information about climate change or sea level rise in Skagit County's Shoreline Master Program. In response, Skagit County intends to apply for DOE grant funding for the shoreline planning process to address comments and incorporate climate change & sea level rise resiliency in the Shoreline Master Program which will also require the completion of a QAPP.
  - New Inflation Reduction Act non-competitive funding is coming to all Estuarine Research Reserves, about \$400,000 per reserve for coastal resilience. Padilla Bay NERR intends to work in collaboration with the county and other partners to address coastal resilience issues.
  - NOAA's Sea Level Rise prediction viewer: <https://coast.noaa.gov/slr/>. Shows Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding Impacts. View projected sea level rise at any coastal location up to 6 feet of inundation from flooding, hurricane storm surge, and high tides.
  - UW projection map: <https://cig.uw.edu/projects/interactive-sea-level-rise-data-visualizations/>. This is a series of Interactive Sea Level Rise Data Visualizations from the UW Climate Impacts Group. There are two interactive Tableau data visualizations where you can query, visualize, and compare the latest projections for sea level rise out to the year 2150.
  - The Skagit MRC's Shoreline Needs Assessment will incorporate climate change, sea level rise, and previous studies to address these climate resiliency questions. It is intended to be an assessment and prioritization of all shorelines in Skagit. This will be a coordinated effort to make sure we don't duplicate work. Phase 1 will catalog information through the Northwest Straits Foundation, and phase 2 will hire a consultant through the competitive bid process.
  - The Northwest Straits Foundation's Shore Friendly program offers technical site visits to shoreline landowners to look at options for addressing sea level rise and coastal resiliency on private property.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:12am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually on July 13<sup>th</sup>, via Microsoft Teams.**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **May 11, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Catey Ritchie, Jodi Bluhm, Kevin Anderson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Darla Gay Smith, Diane Hennebert, Jude Apple, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Cindy Elston, SCPW; Jenn Johnson, SCPW; Melissa Ciesielski, Swinomish Outreach Specialist; Russel Barsh, Kwiáht

**Call to Order and Introductions:** Betsy called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and opened the meeting with introductions.

**Approval of Minutes:** April 13, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

**Public Comments:** None

## Kwiáht Center for the Historical ecology of the Salish Sea, Lopez Island: *Russel Barsh*

*Russel Barsh is the director of the Kwiáht Center for the Historical Ecology of the Salish Sea and was a previous member of Skagit MRC 20 years ago.*

Marine Research Program:

- Food Web Research that supports chinook salmon
  - How is chinook diet changing?
  - How might toxicants and climate change impact food webs that support salmon, and therefore large predators in the Salish Sea?  
Preliminary Results:
    - Chinook diet primarily consists of sand lance and herring, and some crustaceans and terrestrials
    - Same-sized chinook are eating smaller-sized herring and sand lance. Blackmouth salmon are also eating smaller herring
    - Sharp drop in consumption of forage fish in terms of biomass
- Indian Island Stewardship Program on Orcas Island
  - Researching urban impacts and climate change impacts on a large eelgrass meadow and rocky reef
    - Gets about 4,000 – 5,000 visitors per year
    - East Sound stormwater goes directly into the eelgrass meadow that surrounds Indian Island
  - Preliminary Results:
    - Declines in shallow eelgrass, fish diversity, sea star diversity and abundance
    - Changes likely an effect of higher temperatures and human activity
- Marine Bioacoustics
  - Researching fish sound production and the extent of which we can use fish acoustics to measure the health of rocky reef and kelp canopy ecosystems
  - Working with Padilla Bay Reserve to record fishes and build an inventory of fish sound production
    - Only 1 fish is well-documented in terms of sound production in this region
    - Biologists estimate around 1/5 or 1/4 of all fish produce sound at some point in their life history, particularly associated with territorial or nest defense
- Community Education, Conservation, & Community Resilience Work
  - Community Clam digging
  - Building shellfish beds as coastal defenses to reduce shoreline currents and reduce erosion

## 2023-2025 MRC Project Prioritization Results: *Lynne / Tracy*

Scores and results are located on the SMRC 23-25 Project Prioritization Form. Each project was ranked by MRC members on local/regional priority, MRC role & visibility, community engagement, measurable benefits, long term success/sustainability, and funding requirements. A summary of average scores are in the table below.

Project Name	Score
Pinto Abalone Recovery	2.71
Salish Sea Stewards Training & Volunteer Coordinator	2.69
Fidalgo Bay Day	2.61
Bowman Bay	2.57
Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance	2.56
Kids on the Beach	2.52
School Rain Gardens	2.43
Clayton Beach Restoration	2.39
Skagit Needs Assessment for Restoration Projects	2.11

- **DECISION MADE BY CONSENSUS- All:** Funding sources and amounts were adjusted appropriately, reviewed, and approved by consensus:
  - \$1,000 from Salish Sea Stewards moved to Fidalgo Bay Day.
  - Funding for the Skagit Needs Assessment Phase II project was reduced to fit within the overall grant budget.
  - A potential new project to recruit and train volunteers to monitor beached seabirds with Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST), was approved to be added if it fits within budget.
    - **ACTION ITEM- Lynne:** Lynne will take the lead if there is enough funding. It would cost an estimated \$5,000 per MRC.

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

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held April 28, 2023. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC and shared at the May 11<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting.

- The Commission has elected Tim Ellis, Snohomish MRC representative, as the new Chair, as well as Alan Clark of the Clallam MRC as the new Vice Chair.
- Ginny Broadhurst has been appointed to the Commission by Governor Inslee.
- Chanda Littles presented on beneficial use of dredge materials in the Lower Columbia river.
- **Northwest Straits Conference – November 3-4** – in-person at the Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Updates will be sent via e-mail, including registration. Additional information will be added to the Conference Website. MRC Operations funding is available to reimburse MRC members for travel and lodging for the conference.
- **Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting – May 26<sup>th</sup>** – online via Zoom. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

#### Project Status & Discussion

- **Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:** On April 25<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed 24 new Salish Sea Steward graduates who finished the 11-week program. They will be committing to 40 hours of volunteering over the next year. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, Padilla Bay and the advisory committee hosted a data sharing and social event, with around 30 stewards and 5 speakers in attendance. The advisory committee has been turning over some responsibilities to Erin Merklein, the new Volunteer Coordinator, who is now leading their social media campaigns.
- **Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:** No updates.
- **Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:** Crews are finishing field work. Paul will have an update next meeting.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:** Paul Dinnel attended the Pacific Estuarine Research Society Conference in Bellingham, where they had a presentation about the transfer of oyster seed from Fidalgo Bay into Padilla Bay that he co-authored. Padilla Bay Reserve is transferring another batch of native oyster seed into 3 different locations in Padilla Bay to assess the best locations. Paul also collected half-a-dozen oyster recruitment bags from last year. It was a successful spawning year with about 2 oysters per shell and is the top 3rd highest recruitment we've seen in Fidalgo Bay. Recruitment appears to be increasing on the west side of the

bay. In late June, we will be working with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund crews to collect samples for a bay-wide population estimate completed every 5 years.

- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Survey season starts in June. There are 4 sites, and 3 teams consisting of 12 surveyors. Coffin Rocks in Bowman Bay, led by Bob Weathers; Biz Point, led by John Freeto; and Shannon Point East and West, led by Lynne Wenberg-Davidson. A shakedown cruise is scheduled for May 17<sup>th</sup> at Seafarers Park. The all-MRC kelp kick-off meeting was held on April 20<sup>th</sup>, where they rolled out a new kelp monitoring story map, introduced new kelp protocols, and provided safety trainings. On April 28<sup>th</sup>, they had a Skagit all-team kelp kayaker meeting, where 11 of the 12 kayakers were in attendance. The team discussed criteria and selected the top 2 sites to do reconnaissance and potentially add sites in the future.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Plant maintenance will be starting up soon under the management of the Northwest Straits Foundation. The plants continue to struggle at this site. State Parks has water trucks that are kept full for fire suppression that NWSF staff has been trained to use for watering the plants this summer. The Foundation plans to water heavily and host several plant maintenance work parties this summer.
- Green Crab Outreach – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The outreach plan is to send informational letters to shoreline landowners where green crab was detected in 2022 (along Chuckanut, Edison, Samish, and Padilla Bay) to increase awareness of the issue and what they can do to help. Lynne has narrowed the address list provided by the Skagit County GIS Department to 500 addresses. They have a letter drafted which will be approved and signed by NWSC, WDFW, UW SeaGrant, and potentially Padilla Bay and Taylor Shellfish. The letter provides information about green crab identification and what to do if you see them, which they hope to send in June.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: There is meeting scheduled for May 22<sup>nd</sup> to finalize plans and schedules for students doing the forage fish surveys this summer and early fall.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Several folks from the Salish Sea Stewards are helping, and some are becoming regulars.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Cindy Elston, Darla Gay Smith: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event is Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility and Shannon Point Marine Center's touch tank has been reserved. We've sent out initial "save the date" emails to booth organizations and got around 20 responses from those who said they are interested. New this year is an educational mermaid to teach kids about the wonders of the Salish Sea and what they can do to protect it! The next planning meeting is scheduled for May 15. Paul added that he has contacted Taylor Shellfish, and Dennis Parent will be taking the lead for shellfish cooking in Paul's absence.
- Clayton Beach Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Design work has begun as the Northwest Straits Foundation waits on an agreement with BNSF. The Foundation completed a snorkel survey where they saw some chum salmon.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement – Tracy Alker: The Interlocal Agreement between the County and City of Anacortes has temporarily been put on hold as the NWSC tries to get the NOAA grant extended to better fit the timeline of projects.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert: Diane has been talking to the Between Two Worlds program and the principal of La Conner Elementary School, which has a good potential site.
- Shore Friendly Workshop – Betsy Stevenson: The workshop was held on Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at Seafarers Park. The workshop focused on coastal processes, climate change/sea level rise, home relocation, and adaptations. About 15 people were in attendance. Presentations were well-received. Many attendees experienced flooding during the January high tides and heavy rains and were interested in potential options.

#### **Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All**

None.

**The meeting adjourned at 10:40am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually on June 8<sup>th</sup>, via Microsoft Teams.**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **April 13, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Darla Gay Smith, Diane Hennebert, Jodi Bluhm, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Betsy Stevenson, Catey Ritchie, Jude Apple, Kari Odden, Kevin Anderson, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Cindy Elston, SCPW; Cynthia Nielsen, possible MRC candidate; Dana Oster, NWSC; Jenn Johnson, SCPW; Sasha Horst, 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:** March 9, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

**Public Comments:** There is a City of Anacortes council member who may have access to funds that could be put towards eelgrass restoration & monitoring. If you know of any eelgrass projects or have ideas, contact Diane Hennebert at [dianeh@cityofanacortes.org](mailto:dianeh@cityofanacortes.org).

## Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report: *Lynne/Dianne*

*Lynne attended the Northwest Straits retreat that was held March 30-31 in La Conner. There was no regular NWSC meeting in March.*

- Northwest Straits Retreat Summary – There was a facilitated discussion on process improvements, ways to network, and improvements going forward. Notes will be released sometime in the next month.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting – April 28- Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.

## Project Status & Discussion

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: 2023 SSS training runs from February 7<sup>th</sup> through April 25<sup>th</sup> at Padilla Bay. Two of this year's stewards have applied to the open volunteer MRC positions. The advisory committee met on March 17 and worked on the workflow of the Salish Sea Volunteer Coordinator, Erin Merklein. A private donation was made to the Padilla Bay Foundation for SSS graduation gear this year. The advisory committee is asking for a budget increase in the next round of MRC grant funding to cover expenses including safety vests and supplies. A data-sharing/social event is currently being planned for all Salish Sea Stewards on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Jason Morgan and Erica Bleke will share data from restoration/monitoring projects, Sue Ehlers will share heron foraging data, and Pete will be heading up forage fish survey data.
- Kids on the Beach – Pete Haase: There are 75 6<sup>th</sup>-grade students from Sedro-Woolley participating from April 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> at Bayview State Park. For intertidal monitoring, each group of 25 students have chosen a different stretch of beach that corresponds to natural, restored, and rock riprap shoreline. Afterwards, they will be analyzing data and developing graphs in the classroom.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Surveys continue at the 3 Index sites and two restoration sites. April is a slow spawning time for surf smelt in our area, so the volunteers haven't been finding much. We picked up a new restoration site to survey on the west side of Similk Bay on two private properties where bulkheads were removed through the Northwest Straits Foundation's Shore Friendly program. There have been reports of a huge herring spawning event that recently occurred in Similk Bay near the Swinomish shellfish farm. A High School Biology teacher is currently working on a genetic study with shiner perch and wants to do something similar with forage fish. He is interested in getting some live surf smelt eggs from the forage fish survey team

to preserve in alcohol to look for genetic signatures. The forage fish survey team hosted an outreach booth at the Mount Vernon High School Science night. One of the new Salish Sea Stewards class participants expressed interest in joining the MRC and taking the lead on forage fish surveys. Pete will be teaching him the ropes.

- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinne!: It's been a busy month. Crews are doing field work. Eight sites were seeded last year, and all have been surveyed, but none in Skagit County waters; they found a range of survival between <1% to 10%, which is normal. They will likely drop low-percentage sites and focus on sites with higher survival in the future. They have found 2 new potential outplant locations in Skagit County that will be seeded this year. They have also spent time looking for wild aggregations of adult abalone, and collecting some for broodstock and establishing new index stations around those aggregations. This year, they have about 3500 juvenile abalone from the hatchery, and hope to seed 6 sites, 2 of which will be in Skagit County. Joe Gaydos is interested in doing an episode of Salish Sea Wild on the abalone recovery program, which will include a day of filming abalone loading at the hatchery and a day in the field with SeaDoc
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been set for Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility and Shannon Point Marine Center's touch tank has been reserved. The FBD Planning Committee is requesting a budget increase in the next round of MRC grant funding to help cover growing costs of supplies and food permits.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: This is the quiet time of the year. The MRC kelp survey kick-off meeting for the 2023 season is scheduled for April 20<sup>th</sup> via Zoom, hosted by Jeff Witty of NWSC. The agenda will include the MRC kayak monitoring story map, networking, season planning, safety trainings & protocols, and tool reviews. They have a new kayaker who has signed up from the 2023 Salish Sea Stewards. Later this month, there will be a Skagit all-team kelp kayaker in-person meeting at a kayaker's house, which includes a meet-and-greet and a discussion of selection criteria and prioritization of potential kelp bed project expansions.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: The Salish Sea School is busy working on a wide spectrum of programs and activities. Coming up with a good plan for our Intern program hasn't gone as smoothly as we had hoped. The time commitment and coordination of the interns and students to do the work has been difficult. The current plan is to have an intern do some forage fish survey work with young students this summer. They should be close to having an intern selected.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinne!: Paul plans to collect and re-distribute oyster shell bags at Fidalgo Bay sometime in May to monitor oyster spawning and settlement. Paul worked with Sylvia Yang from Padilla Bay NERR and capstone students from the Shannon Point Marine Center to collect data on the oysters transplanted in Padilla Bay last year. The oysters appear to have done well overall. There was some oyster mortality due to non-native oyster drills and cold winter temperatures during low tide events. We will be conducting a large bay-wide native oyster population survey with NOAA Congressional funding in partnership with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund starting in June 2023. Paul is working on the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for the bay-wide oyster monitoring project. The QAPP is currently being reviewed by PSRF staff before it is finalized and sent to Ecology for approval and signatures to begin work. Paul presented on the oyster restoration work to the Salish Sea Stewards trainees and will be recruiting volunteers to help with monitoring this summer.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Plant maintenance will likely start back up in May under the management of the Northwest Straits Foundation. The plants continue to struggle at this site. State Parks has water trucks that they keep full for fire suppression that we can use for watering the plants this summer. The Foundation plans to water heavily and host several volunteer work parties to weed and maintain the plants at the Bowman Bay site this summer.
- School Rain Garden – Diane Hennebert: Diane has reached out to the Between Two Worlds program as a potential site. They have drafted a proposal for the tribe and the school board for a native plant food and medicine garden on-campus, with an integrated outdoor learning space and fish pit. They have identified a location on the high school campus. It is likely that the proposal will pass and they will begin the project in a few weeks. There is a focus on native plants and integrating aspects of how plants effect water movement above and below the ground's surface into the education and design.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement – Tracy Alker: The Interlocal Agreement between the County and City of Anacortes has been drafted and is still being negotiated. They are also waiting on some additional grant funding from the Samish to send out a request for qualifications for the engineering work. A meeting to develop the education/outreach plan will be held after the Agreement gets signed.

- Green Crab Outreach – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The [2022 Green Crab Detection Map](#) shows green crabs have been detected along Chuckanut, Edison, Samish, and Padilla Bay. The outreach plan is to send informational letters and outreach materials to educate landowners along shorelines of Padilla and Samish Bays about green crab identification, what to do if you see them, and potentially asking for access along their property to reach the shoreline. The Skagit County GIS Department completed a data pull to get almost 700 names and addresses for landowners along those shorelines. Lynne is working on removing duplicates and government parcels. This outreach effort is in collaboration with NWSC, WDFW, and Sea Grant, and Lynne plans to reach out to other local organizations involved in green crab monitoring and trapping to be cosigners, such as Padilla Bay and Taylor Shellfish.
- Shore Friendly Workshop – Catey Ritchie: The workshop will be held on Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at Seafarers Park, from 10am-1pm with a beach walk. The workshop will focus on coastal processes, climate change/sea level rise, home relocation, and adaptations.
- Clayton Beach Restoration – Paul Dinnel: The Foundation was awarded a \$700,000 grant from Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead for the Clayton Beach project. The funding would primarily be for feasibility and design of the eelgrass restoration of the dredge hole where sediment was taken out to aid the railroad trestle. DNR will begin monitoring this summer to map the 13-acre dredge hole and survey for eelgrass around the boundary of the hole, sample sediments, and map the bathymetry. The initial work will tie into the monitoring of the eelgrass within the intertidal area. Sediment samples will help determine composition and chemistry required to plant eelgrass once the hole is filled. A feasibility study will be developed to identify sediment sources to fill the hole from other dredge projects. WWU/Shannon Point will propagate eelgrass at their labs for eventual transplanting.

#### **2023-2025 MRC Project Prioritization: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson & Project Leads**

Draft project proposals will be prepared by project leads and uploaded to a shared file online. A link to the shared file will be sent to the committee. Although some projects have been dropped from the list, we are still about \$19,000 over budget. Therefore, the next step is project prioritization. MRC members are asked to rank the projects based on the 6 strategic priorities using the evaluation form that Lynne will provide. The evaluation forms are due two weeks from today. The results will help determine which projects will get top priority for funding under the 2023-2025 MRC grant cycle and if any adjustments need to be made with project budgets, scope, schedules, etc. The final MRC Grant Application is due May 25, 2023.

9 projects are asking for funding that will need to be evaluated and prioritized:

- Clayton Beach Restoration
- Salish Sea Stewards Training and PT Volunteer Coordinator
- School Rain Garden
- Bowman Bay Restoration & Plant Maintenance
- Fidalgo Bay Day
- Kids on the Beach
- Pinto Abalone Recovery
- Skagit Needs Assessment to identify and prioritize potential restoration projects
- Bowman Bay Nearshore Beach Seining

No funding needed but still “go” projects:

- No Anchor Zone/Eelgrass Protection
- Shoreline Landowner Workshops
- European Green Crab Outreach

More information about each of these projects was emailed via the Skagit MRC Projects Go-No Go Spreadsheet and shared during the April 13<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting.

#### **Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All**

- Skagit Children's Museum Earth Day Event: Skagit Children's Museum is looking for environmental organizations to participate in their Earth Day event in Burlington that could be a good tabling opportunity.
- Skagit Land Trust Events: Skagit Land Trust has some upcoming walks and work parties at their Samish Island conservation area. More information is located here: <https://www.skagitlandtrust.org/events.aspx>

**The meeting adjourned at 10:56am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually on May 11, via Microsoft Teams.**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **March 9, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Catey Ritchie, Darla Gay Smith, Jodi Bluhm, Jude Apple, Kari Odden, Kevin Anderson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Betsy Stevenson, Diane Hennebert, Matt Castle
- **Others in Attendance:** Caitlyn Blair, NWSC; Cindy Elston, SCPW; Dana Oster, NWSC; Holli Watne, Skagit Watershed Council; Leah Robison, NWSC; Sasha Horst, NWSC; Tessa Francis, Puget Sound Institute

**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:** February 9, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

**Public Comments:** No comments

## Shoreline Restoration for Nearshore Fishes: Tessa Francis, Puget Sound Institute

*Researchers completed a project evaluating the effectiveness of shoreline restoration for nearshore fishes.*

## Project information:

- Selected sites where there were natural, restored, and armored habitats present to understand how local-scale restoration fits in with broader landscape patterns.
- Gathered nearshore fish surveys from other projects
- Sampled at 6 sites across Puget Sound for 4 fish species: Chinook, chum, herring, and surf smelt
- Sampled fish at 3 different distances away from the shore
- Evaluated patterns between nearshore fish and environmental characteristics
- Compared to a model that used shoreline structure, eelgrass presence, season, and site location as predictors

## Conclusions:

- Positive benefits for removing shoreline armoring include:
  - Increased connectivity between terrestrial and marine ecosystems
  - Increased invertebrate diversity
  - Increased habitat for beach spawning forage fish
  - More gradual beach slope and finer sediment composition
- Actions for protection and restoration depend on what species of fish it is:
  - Herring are more abundant where there are natural shorelines (as opposed to restored and armored sites)
  - Chinook are more abundant at shorelines near their spawning rivers
  - Chum are most abundant in eelgrass habitats
  - Surf smelt had no major patterns, but the data for smelt was patchy and unclear. Their abundance may depend more on substrate

## Looking forward:

- Historically, shoreline restoration has mostly been opportunistic, but we may need a more strategic approach to restore shorelines.
- Distribution of armoring and habitat connectivity may impact nearshore fishes: is low connectivity or high connectivity better to support nearshore habitat of fishes?
- New project looks at where to focus restoration efforts along shorelines:

- Goal is to develop a predictive sound-wide model that shows high- or low-end quality areas for different species
- Site selection is ongoing. They are focused on Port Susan and Saratoga Passage to link with other ongoing projects and are open to suggestions
- Beach seining data will be collected
- What MRC members can do: contribute fish survey data and/or beach survey data

#### **Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Report:** *Sasha Horst*

The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held February 24, 2023, in-person. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC and shared at the March 9<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting.

- Puget Sound Day on the Hill - May 8-11 – in-person in Washington, D.C. More information is available on the website: <https://www.psdonth.org/>
- Skagit MRC will be asked to do a presentation on one of our MRC projects when there is an in-person NWSC meeting in Skagit County
- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting - April 28 – online via Zoom. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- Northwest Straits Retreat – March 30-31 - in-person at La Conner Country Inn for members of the Commission and Foundation board. Lynne will be representing Skagit MRC at the retreat.

#### **NWSC Conference Planning:** *Pete Haase*

Pete has joined the NWSC Conference Planning Team. He participated in one planning meeting already.

- NWSC Conference - November 3-4 – in Port Townsend at the Northwest Maritime Center.
- MRC members were encouraged to fill out the survey to rank potential conference topics. They are compiling the results.
- They are looking for ideas for the keynote speaker

#### **Project Status & Discussion**

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith, Cindy Elston: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been set for Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility and Shannon Point Marine Center’s touch tank has been reserved. MRC member Darla Gay Smith and the Skagit County intern, Cindy Elston, will co-lead the event this year. The first planning meeting was February 23. One of last year’s volunteers and Salish Sea Stewards grad, Bev Mowrer, has agreed to do much of the organizing and hard work this year. Skagit County recently hired a new Education/Outreach person who will help develop new promotional materials for FBD.
- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: 2023 SSS training runs from February 7th through April 25th. Salish Sea Stewards each receive a t-shirt and a button name tag. The SSS Advisory Committee is still working on locating funds for the gear for this year. In previous years, they were able to secure funding from a private donor. The advisory committee met on February 17. A former MRC member, Morty Cohen, joined them in a February meeting, and had some ideas to engage existing stewards. They are working to incorporate his ideas for educational activities, special presentations, and updates on projects. They are also working on coordinating the full-time volunteer coordinator, Erin Merklein who was hired in late February and will work 3 days per week for Padilla Bay and 2 days per week for Skagit MRC.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue at the index and restoration sites. They will be picking up a restoration site at Similk Bay off Reservation Rd on the east side near Turner Bay, which has prolific spawning results in the summer. They are also doing surveys in Fidalgo Bay for DNR, which is a productive site all-year round and has particularly good survival rates in the winter.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: Planning is underway for this year’s program.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Conway & Concrete participated in the program in the fall. There was a new concrete middle school teacher who was still getting settled, so high-school students participated in the program instead. For the spring program, there will be 75 6<sup>th</sup>-grade students from Sedro-Woolley participating

from April 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> at Bayview State Park. There will be front-end and back-end activities in the classroom and 3 field days, which includes a tour of aquarium, collecting fish data through seining and taking fish counts, developing graphs, and thinking about results and presentations.

- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel: The crew is out doing field work while the kelp and algae levels are at a minimum, so the abalone are easier to see. There should be more to report next month.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: They are gearing up for summer bay-wide sampling. Paul is working on preparing the QAPP Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for sampling this summer in conjunction with Puget Sound Restoration Fund.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Because kelp has become a floating indicator in the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda process, there has been an increased effort in state-level kelp teams (DNR, Samish, NWSC, etc) and a series of kelp workshops. A kelp plan action workshop was most recently held at the beginning of March, where they reviewed a robust kelp plan. Although Lynne was unable to attend, Jeff Whitty shared lots of great information from the workshop. The [interactive kelp indicator map](#), shows that Skagit MRC's Shannon Point kelp bed monitoring sites are in one of DNR's Puget Sound sub-basins that is listed as having insufficient data. The Skagit kelp monitoring team met with DNR to discuss what the 'insufficient data' means and if there is anything we can do to change that status. The insufficient data is based on historic geographic data of where kelp beds used to be, but there isn't much data available for Skagit County waters. The Skagit kelp team will help with research on historical kelp bed locations and extent. Skagit does not need to add more sites, but we can if we want to. As a long-term goal, SMRC's kelp kayak team are talking about recruiting more leads for more projects in the future. A kelp surveyor volunteer, Steve Olson, is very familiar with the kelp beds in the region so he put together a list of potential sites. DNR is doing aerial surveys in some of those locations, but due to issues with aerial photography, like the wing of the airplane blocking visibility, they can't always see the kelp. To confirm the presence or absence of kelp, kayak volunteers will check out those sites, evaluate feasibility for surveying, and prioritize which new sites to add to the kayak surveys.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Plant maintenance will likely start back up in May under the management of the Northwest Straits Foundation (NWSF). Don and Lisa with NWSF had a very productive meeting with the Park Manager, Jason Armstrong to discuss watering and vegetation maintenance. Parks has water trucks of varying sizes that they keep full for fire suppression but need to empty periodically that we could use for watering the plants once we establish a plant maintenance schedule this summer. Access to the water trucks will help stretch the grant funds further for more mulch, trees, etc. There has been a lot of beach erosion at the restoration site. Jason Armstrong seems open to pulling the restoration area back a bit to increase the survivability of plants and trees. There will be more discussions about what this could look like in the future.
- Green Crab Outreach – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Lynne met with Allie Simpson and Leah from NWSC to develop an outreach plan. The primary focus of the green crab outreach effort in Skagit County is Padilla Bay and Samish Bay shoreline landowners. The program is modeled after Whatcom County's program. The goal is to help make them aware of the green crab issue and how to identify them and encourage them to allow us access for monitoring and trapping if green crabs are present. We will also provide green crab outreach materials at community events like Skagit Water Weeks and Fidalgo Bay Day.
- School Rain Garden – Dianne Hennebert: No updates.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement – Tracy Alker, Jude Apple, Pete Haase: The Interlocal Agreement between the County and City of Anacortes has been drafted and is still being negotiated. A meeting to develop the education/outreach plan will be held after the Agreement gets signed.
- Shore Friendly Workshop – Catey Ritchie, Betsy Stevenson: Catey has delegated the shore friendly workshop project to a shoreline specialist with the Swinomish Tribe, Jason Thompson. The date has been tentatively set for Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at Seafarers Park, from 10am-2pm with a beach walk. The workshop will focus on coastal processes, climate change/sea level rise and adaptations. We are still considering where to do a beach walk and would like input for locations. Some ideas that have been discussed include: the Samish RV Park, Rosario beach, and Snee-oosh Beach as possible options, but ideally would like to keep the drive short from Seafares to the beach walk. The Foundation received additional Shore Friendly funding to continue with more videos and workshops for influencers such as contractors, land managers, and planners (in addition to those being funded with CDS funds). The registration has gone live, and postcards will be sent 5 weeks before the event. The event is limited to 40 people.

- Clayton Beach Restoration – Paul Dinnel: For the feasibility study, NWSF met with BNSF. They have no concerns with the project at this time and have agreed that there are benefits to their infrastructure because it reduces the need to continually reinforce the area of the slope that continue to slough. The Foundation is waiting on a letter of agreement from BNSF before they can continue the approval process with State Parks. DNR will begin monitoring this summer to map the eelgrass, sample sediments, and map the bathymetry. The Foundation was recently awarded the HSIL grant for feasibility and design of the eelgrass restoration of the dredge hole. The initial work will tie into the monitoring of the eelgrass within the intertidal area. DNR will map the dredge hole and survey for eelgrass around the boundary of the hole. Sediment samples will help determine composition and chemistry required to plant eelgrass once the hole is filled. A feasibility study will be developed to identify sediment sources to fill the hole from other dredge projects. WWU/Shannon Point will propagate eelgrass at their labs for eventual transplanting.

**NWSC 2023-2025 Request for Proposals:** *Tracy Alker, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*

The NWSC issued the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the next round of MRC grant funding. The RFP is different this year as it combines two grants that are funded from three different sources and different funding timelines. MRC Project Leads were asked to provide a brief project description, timeline, and cost estimates for the initial “Go No-Go” screening process. The Executive Project Planning Committee will determine which projects meet all the requirements to make it to the “Go” phase. For the projects that make it to the “Go” phase, the Project Leads will be asked to develop full project proposals using the template in the RFP and present project information at the April 13<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting. If we are within budget, we can move on with the grant application process, but if not, we would need to complete a prioritization process. Project consultations with the NWSC will be held in April. Project proposals must be finalized before the May 11<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting where the Committee will vote on the final grant packet. Grant applications must be completed and uploaded to EAGL by May 25<sup>th</sup>.

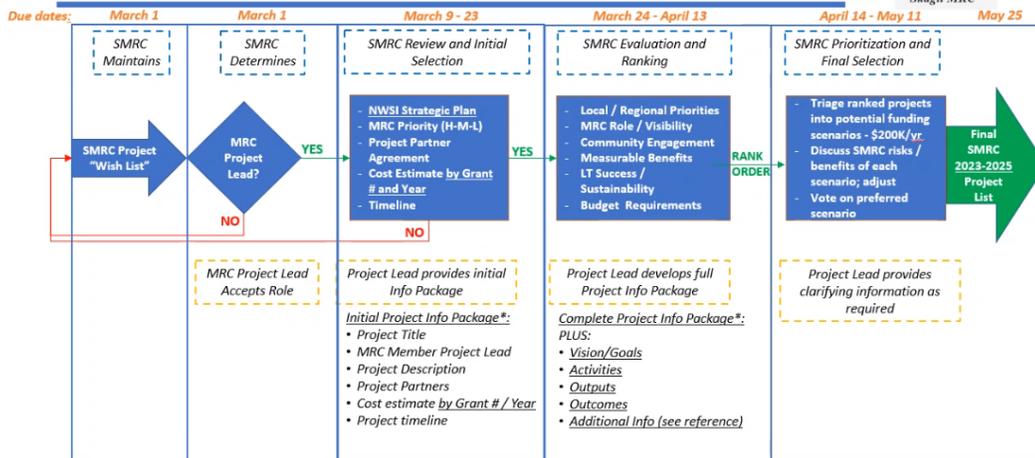
Projects for the “Go No-Go” Initial Screening Process:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fidalgo Bay Day</li> <li>• Kids on the Beach</li> <li>• MRC Salish Sea School Intern</li> <li>• Salish Sea Stewards Training Program</li> <li>• Salish Sea Stewards PT Volunteer Coordinator</li> <li>• Pinto Abalone Recovery</li> <li>• School Rain Garden</li> <li>• Bowman Bay Restoration &amp; Plant Maintenance</li> <li>• Bowman Bay Nearshore Seining</li> <li>• Shore Friendly-Shoreline Landowner Workshops</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clayton Beach Restoration</li> <li>• European Green Crab Outreach</li> <li>• Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement</li> <li>• Olympia Oyster Restoration/Monitoring</li> <li>• Derelict Crab Pot Removal</li> <li>• Voluntary No Anchor Zone/Eelgrass Protection</li> <li>• Derelict Vessel Removal</li> <li>• Skagit Needs Assessment to identify and prioritize potential restoration projects</li> <li>• Project Coordinator</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

# Skagit MRC

## PROJECT EVALUATION AND PRIORITIZATION PROCESS (2023-2025)

March 9-16 Project Leads  
March 16-23 Exec Committee



### Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- **Skagit Water Weeks:** A month-long event in May. Skagit Conservation Education Alliance will be reaching out to organizations with more information soon.
- **Mount Vernon Parks & Enrichment Group:** They are creating an environmental education curriculum, volunteer naturalist programs, and summer programs. They are also hosting an Earth Day event that could be a good tabling opportunity for the MRC if interested.
- **Skagit Land Trust Appoints New Rep to MRC:** Lynne was recently appointed as a Skagit Land Trust board member and was asked to be the new representative of Skagit Land Trust on the Skagit MRC. Congratulations, Lynne! Kari will serve as the Alternate Rep on the MRC.
- **Skagit Land Trust Events:** Skagit Land Trust has some upcoming walks and work parties at their Samish Island conservation area. More information is located here: <https://www.skagitlandtrust.org/events.aspx>
- **Samish Island Community Meeting:** There have been dike breaches along Alice Bay. There was a town meeting at Samish Island, where many organizations are involved in working with the community to look at short and long-term solutions. There is a collective effort to come up with a solution. A newspaper article in the Skagit Valley Herald about the meeting will soon be published.

The meeting adjourned at 10:58am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually April 13, via Microsoft Teams.



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **February 9, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Catey Ritchie, Darla Gay Smith, Diane Hennebert, Jude Apple, Kevin Anderson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Betsy Stevenson, Kari Odden
- **Others in Attendance:** Allie Simpson, NW Straits commission; Cindy Elston, SCPW; Holli Watne, Skagit Watershed Council; Jason Morgan, NW Straits Foundation; Jenn Johnson, SCPW

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

**Approval of Minutes:** January 12, 2023, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

**Public Comments:** No comments

## **Derelict Crab Pot Removal Update:** *Jason Morgan, NWSF*

Year 2 of the derelict crab pot removal project has been completed. In 2018, 614 crab pots were identified. Of those, 480 were removed or disabled. In 2022, 343 crab pots were identified, and 335 of those were removed. The substrate of the bottom is mucky with poor visibility, and some of the crab pots were stuck in the sediment, so they were not able to recover all identified pots. 73% of pots removed were commercial crab pots. The distribution of identified pots was similar between 2018 and 2022, except for the southeast portion near Hatt Island, which is no longer a high-density area.

The high percentage of commercial pots provides an opportunity to switch focuses from recreational to commercial groups. Many commercial crabbers are also commercial divers. The NWS Foundation is considering employing them to do the work so they can see the issue first-hand and gain skills to do the work on their own.

In 2016, they produced the Puget Sound Lost Crab Pot Prevention Plan. This year they will be holding 2 workshops to update the plan, with various stakeholders including commercial crabbers. Derelict crab pot surveys will begin in early March but is weather-dependent. They will be extending the removals to the lower Samish Bay. The removals will hopefully be done before the start of recreational crabbing season in mid-July. They will continue working with the commercial crabbing fleet to develop different types of communication plans to bring awareness to the issue.

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

*The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held January 27, 2023, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC and shared at the February 9<sup>th</sup> MRC meeting.*

- The Commission has passed a budget plan for 2023-2025, which will include funding for MRCs in the next grant cycle in the amount of approximately \$192,500 per MRC annually for the next two years if the proposed 2023-2025 state budget passes.
- The Northwest Straits Commission conference will be held on November 3-4, 2023, at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. The Commission is seeking members interested in participating in the Conference Planning Committee. Contact Caitlyn (blair@nwstraits.org) for more information about the committee or to join the group.
- The PUGET SOS bill was passed by Congress as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. The bill creates a Puget Sound recovery program office at the EPA and puts Puget Sound on the same level as other nationally significant water bodies, such as Chesapeake Bay. The bill also codifies the Puget Sound Task Force, which is made up of 13 federal agencies operating under a Memorandum of Understanding, working together on the Puget Sound Action Agenda.

- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting - February 24 – in-person in Snohomish County. Meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>.
- Northwest Straits Retreat – March 30-31 - in-person at La Conner Country Inn for members of the Commission and Foundation board. Lynne Wenberg-Davidson will be attending the retreat as the Skagit MRC representative.

## **Project Status & Discussion**

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Cindy Elston: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been set for Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility and Shannon Point Marine Center’s touch tank has been reserved. MRC member Darla Gay Smith and the Skagit County intern, Cindy Elston, will co-lead the event this year. Skagit County recently hired a new Education/Outreach person who will help develop new promotional materials for FBD. The first planning meeting is scheduled for February 23.
- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: 2023 SSS training runs from February 7th through April 25th. Classes are held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. There was a recent article about the Salish Sea Stewards training program in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#). The speaker schedule is available on the [Skagit MRC website](#). On the first day of class MRC Members of the SSS Advisory Committee presented an overview of the Salish Sea Stewards program and Lucas Hart gave a presentation on the Northwest Straits Initiative. The SSS Advisory Committee developed a new ‘Volunteer Buddy System’ to help support the new Salish Sea Stewards volunteers after they complete the training and introduce them to some amazing volunteer opportunities. Erin Merklein was recently hired by PBNERR as their Education / Outreach coordinator for 3 days a week and the new PT Volunteer Coordinator for the Salish Sea Stewards program for 2 days a week starting in March.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue at the 3 index sites and 2 restoration sites.
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: Planning is underway for this year’s program.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Planning is underway for the spring program. There are 75 6<sup>th</sup> graders from Sedro-Woolley who will be participating, with 3 field days at Bayview State Park and an in-class visit. Concrete has participated in the past but likely won’t participate this year because there is a new teacher. They are working on different creative ways to include Anacortes schools such as partnering with the Salish Sea School, because if one class signs up, all classes must participate, and we currently don’t have capacity and manpower to do this.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Hatchery maintenance is ongoing. Puget Sound Restoration Fund is on-schedule to begin field work this month. The Environmental Reporter from the Skagit Valley Herald wrote an article about the abalone: [Chance of survival is looking good for Washington's only abalone | Marine Biology | goskagit.com](#)
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Field work will begin in April or May. Paul is working on preparing the QAPP Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for sampling to be done this summer in conjunction with Puget Sound Restoration Fund.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Lynne has attended the series of kelp workshops that were held in January. WDNR has developed an [interactive map](#) showing the 172 sites with up to 30 years of data across the state. Skagit MRC’s Shannon Point kelp bed monitoring sites are in one of Washington Department of Natural Resources’ (WDNR) Puget Sound sub-basins that has insufficient data. Skagit MRC’s kelp team will be meeting with WDNR next week to talk about what insufficient data means and how they can resolve it. The upcoming Puget Sound Kelp Restoration Recovery Plan Development Workshop is scheduled for March 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> which Lynne plans to attend.
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Plant maintenance will start in the spring under the leadership of the NWS Foundation.
- Green Crab Outreach – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: The green crab outreach is a small project focusing on educating shoreline landowners in areas where green crab could be found. We plan to do direct outreach to shoreline owners, and will have a meeting with NWS staff at the end of this month.
- School Rain Garden – Dianne Hennebert: There is potential for partnership with La Conner Schools and the Between Two Worlds program. Diane will start reaching out to the schools to talk about potential sites and aim for fall construction, which is the ideal time for planting.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement – Tracy Alker: The Interlocal Agreement between the County and City of Anacortes has been drafted and is currently under review. A meeting to develop the education/outreach plan will be held with the MRC project leads and the City of Anacortes after the Agreement gets signed.

- Shore Friendly Workshop – Catey Ritchie: The NWS Foundation will be hosting a meeting later this afternoon to start planning the Shore-Friendly Workshop for shoreline landowners in Skagit County in partnership with Skagit MRC and the Swinomish Tribe. Jason Thomson is the shore-friendly lead with the Swinomish Tribe. We will be discussing different possible workshop dates, facility locations, agenda topics and speakers in coordination. The landowner workshop will likely be held in the end of April or early May.
- Clayton Beach Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Clayton Beach access is currently closed due to pedestrian overpass construction. The NWSF is moving forward with the project design. WDNR will do an eelgrass survey there this summer.

#### **Opportunities to Connect with High School Students: *Pete Haase***

The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee is interested in looking for ways to get high school students more engaged in programs like the Salish Sea Stewards and other volunteer opportunities in the marine environment. It is difficult for students to carve out time for anything because they have such busy schedules. The SSS committee decided to keep it on the backburner and revisit the problem periodically, while watching what other organizations are doing to get more young people engaged. Various ideas were brought up during the discussion, including:

- Students simply don't know that these opportunities exist
- We could reach out to groups of students such as in Earth/Green/Science/Key clubs, AP Environmental Science classes, etc. because they are always looking for projects to get involved in
- Barriers to participating, such as transportation, other commitments, and opportunities occurring during school hours. Potential to create a mini version of the SSS training program to bring to clubs and classes
- Offer potential scholarships towards educational expenses
- Promote how it helps their education, such as offering a good letter of recommendation or getting mentorship and experience
- Students could use the SSS program as a base to create a new project
- Put recordings from past years of Salish Sea Stewards on the website, YouTube, or social media. Recordings take up a lot of bandwidth, so they are eventually deleted
- Don't have the resources and time to do connecting and recruiting

#### **2023-2025 MRC Project List Discussion: *All***

Current Skagit MRC projects that the Committee would like to continue to get funded in 2023-2025

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • Fidalgo Bay Day                              | • Bowman Bay Restoration                       |
| • Kids on the Beach                            | • Shore Friendly-Shoreline Landowner Workshops |
| • MRC Salish Sea School Intern                 | • Clayton Beach Restoration                    |
| • Salish Sea Stewards Training Program         | • European Green Crab Outreach                 |
| • Salish Sea Stewards PT Volunteer Coordinator | • Fidalgo Bay Trestle Replacement              |
| • Pinto Abalone Recovery                       | • Olympia Oyster Restoration/Monitoring        |
| • School Rain Garden                           | • Derelict Crab Pot Removal                    |

New projects that Skagit MRC would like to get funded in 2023-2025:

- Voluntary No Anchor Zone/Eelgrass Protection
- Derelict Vessel Removal
- Skagit Needs Assessment to identify and prioritize potential restoration projects
- Project Coordinator
- Bowman Bay Nearshore Monitoring

The preliminary MRC project list is due to the NWS Commission March 1<sup>st</sup>. After the NWS Commission releases the Request for Proposals in March, the MRC Project Leads will be asked to develop proposals in more detail which will be evaluated and prioritized by the Committee. The MRC project priority proposals will be submitted to the NWS Commission science technical committee for review and approval. The final grant application will be due in May. Funding starts October 1, 2023.

#### **Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: *All***

- Salmon: Told With Love: The 2023 Smith Aguero Lecture with FisherPoet Tele Aadsen will be held on Saturday, March 11, 1:00 – 2:30 pm at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Stevens Center. More information and registration is available on the [Padilla Bay Foundation website](#).
- Padilla Bay submitted a request to acquire parcels for restoration planning and scoping in the Samish neck area of Padilla Bay. This would be a great opportunity for restoration and intertidal habitat expansion.
- MRC Executive Planning Committee: At our January MRC meeting we discussed forming an Executive Sub-Committee to help identify and develop new MRC project ideas and prioritization and recruit new MRC members to become Project Leads, etc. It would be great to have at least 3 MRC members on the team. Please consider joining!
- Virtual “Northwest Straits Initiative 101” Session: Don Hunger with the NWS Foundation and Lucas Hart with the NWS Commission are hosting a virtual “Northwest Straits Initiative 101” session on **Wednesday, February 15th** from 3-4:30 PM. This virtual session fills in the important details about how and why the Initiative "works", the rationale behind the organizational structure, and how the Northwest Straits Commission and Foundation complement each other in supporting the MRCs and the goals of the Initiative. [Click here to join the meeting](#). Please feel free to share this invitation
- European Green Crab Public Update Webinar: February 21st, 2pm-3:15pm-  
<https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/event/european-green-crab-public-update/>
- Jan 24th MRC Forage Fish Meeting Notes, Presentation, and Recording:  
<https://app.box.com/s/7supoj4hxqxes4tdbsjdajbq8q0jymil>
- 2022 Technical Report: “Effects of the 2021 Heatwave on Intertidal Clam and Oyster Populations in Washington State”: Skagit MRC’s Paul Dinnel was a contributor of data for this Technical Report. The report is available at [this link](#).
- What’s In My Neighborhood MTCA Map: Ecology created a map that shows where all the MTCA (Model Toxics Control Act) sites are located that some of you might be interested in:  
<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/neighborhood>.

**The meeting adjourned at 11:10am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually March 9, via Microsoft Teams.**



# SKAGIT COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Summary of the **January 12, 2023**, Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Microsoft Teams Meeting

## Attendees:

- **MRC Members:** Tracy Alker (MRC Staff), Betsy Stevenson, Catey Ritchie, Diane Hennebert, Kari Odden, Kevin Anderson, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Matt Castle, Paul Dinnel, Pete Haase
  - **MRC Members Absent:** Brian Robson, Darla Gay Smith, Jude Apple
- **Others in Attendance:** Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council; Cindy Elston, SCPW; Dana Oster, NW Straits; John Lunsford, City of Anacortes; Myrriah Crowley, SFEG; Sasha Horst, NW Straits

**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:** December 8, 2022, MRC meeting minutes were approved by consensus as written.

**Public Comments:** No comments

## Fidalgo Bay Trestle Update: *Jonn Lunsford, City of Anacortes*

There are two main parts:

- **Rebuilding after the fire:** The City secured permits from the Corps to remove some of the derelict pilings in the burn zone. They hope to start rebuilding the trestle towards the end of January.
- **Long-term planning:** The Samish secured federal funds, which may be delayed up to 12 months, and are also working on securing additional money through Skagit County. The City has \$50,000 in-kind with a match from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant, in addition to money from the Samish Tribe, which could bring it to full allotment. However, it is likely the City will need to request a grant extension from RCO office because the grant expires this biennium. Skagit MRC also recently received \$58,000 of NOAA congressional funding for the trestle project that will go towards education and outreach as well as the preliminary conceptual design components of the trestle project. Tracy is currently working on an Interlocal Agreement with the City of Anacortes. Skagit MRC's funding would be used for the match to help with the project research that would be used to develop the Community Education and Outreach Plan for communicating the project to the public.
  - **Cultural Resources Survey:** The Samish Indian Nation is currently working on the cultural resources survey. This must be completed before we can do anything else.
  - **Surveys and Geotechnical Work:** The City plans on doing a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) to satisfy federal guidelines for the geotechnical work.
  - **Community Education and Outreach:** The focus will be to educate the public on impacts of creosote, the marine ecosystem, and the flushing and removal of riprap and what it can do to enhance the bay and return it to its natural state.

Ship Harbor:

- A portion of the beach and boardwalk was lost due to the recent king tides, and the area is slowly moving towards being a tidally influenced wetland. People are excited to see the changes and improvements as the habitat returns to its natural state. The community's enthusiasm for the transformation of habitats returning to its natural state could potentially carry over to the trestle project in Fidalgo Bay as the habitat returns to its natural state with the removal of the riprap causeway.

## 2023 Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) Funding Update: *Sasha Horst*

The NWSC staff hosted a series of drop-in sessions with MRCs to share information about NWSC/MRC funding projections for the next couple of years. It is anticipated that the NWSC and MRCs will continue to get around the same level EPA/State funding starting October 2023 through December 2025, as well as a second round of NOAA Congressionally-directed spending starting January 2024 – December 2025. A single Request for Proposals will be sent to the MRCs that will be split into 2 rewards for the different funding sources and timelines. For now, MRC's are being asked to provide a simple list of ongoing, planned, and new MRC projects by **March 1<sup>st</sup>**. The list should also include MRC projects that would be managed under the Northwest Straits Foundation and Padilla Bay. Skagit MRC members agreed to brainstorm a list of project ideas prior to the February Skagit MRC meeting. At the February meeting, we will discuss the project list and decide if we need to have a Project Planning and Prioritization retreat in March or April. The final project proposals and grant application will be due in May.

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

*The last NWSC/ NWSF meeting was held December 9, 2022, via Zoom conference call. NWSC Meeting Highlights were emailed to the MRC and shared at the January 12 MRC meeting.*

- The NWSC Science Advisory Committee (SAC) is seeking new members. MRC members are encouraged to suggest names for potential members. The SAC primarily supports MRC project development and proposal process and contributes to the Annual Conference planning.
- NWSC Retreat: March 30-31<sup>st</sup> in La Conner. Diane will be unable to attend and is looking for someone to take her place as the representative of Skagit MRC.
- The Commission approved a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) vision and goals statement. The next step is to establish a process for creating action items for each of the DEI goals. Stay tuned for more information.
- The NW Straits Foundation is starting a [Salish Sea Conservation Corps program](#) for 10 interns. The Foundation is looking for mentors for the interns as well as projects.
- [Tessa Francis](#) from the Puget Sound Institute gave an interesting presentation on nearshore habitats, bulkheads, and restoration impacts on nearshore fish populations. Tracy will invite Tessa to present at a future Skagit MRC meeting.
- Next NWSC/NWSF Monthly Meeting via Zoom- January 27 (10:00am-12:00pm) - meeting information is posted on the NWSC Events Page on the NWSC website: <https://www.nwstraits.org/get-involved/events/>. Starting in 2023, the meetings will be held in-person every other meeting. The February 24<sup>th</sup> NWSC meeting will be held in-person in Snohomish County!

### **Project Status & Discussion**

- Fidalgo Bay Day – Darla Gay Smith: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been set for **Saturday, August 26, 2023**, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility has been reserved. The Shannon Point Marine Center confirmed their participation with the portable Touch Tank. Darla is seeking an MRC member to take over as Project Lead. The Committee is interested in recruiting a new MRC member with experience in Education and Outreach to be the lead for Fidalgo Bay Day and other education and outreach events. Jude is reaching out to Shannon Point Marine Center to try to recruit someone to fill that role. Cindy Elston, Skagit County Public Works intern, has offered to lead the Fidalgo Bay Day Planning team through July 31<sup>st</sup>, but someone else will need to take over as lead starting in August.
- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith: 2023 SSS training will start February 7<sup>th</sup> through April 25<sup>th</sup>. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. The earlier start date is to accommodate spring volunteer opportunities. MRC members are welcome to attend. The class is now FULL, with 26 registrants! It only took 39 days to fill the class. There is now a waiting list. The speaker schedule has been drafted and posted on the [MRC website](#).
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase: Forage fish surveys continue. The forage fish surveys at our March's Point restoration site has ended because we have reached beyond the 5-year post-construction monitoring requirement. Forage Fish surveys will also likely end in July at the Kukatali nearshore restoration site after collecting 5 years' worth of data. However, forage fish surveys will likely continue at the Bowman Bay nearshore restoration site. The forage fish Index Site surveys at Ship Harbor, Samish Island, and Similk Bay will continue to occur monthly. The forage fish survey team is considering petitioning the NWSC and WDFW to add one or two new Index Sites and possibly decommission one or two of the sites that haven't been very good sampling sites.

They are also reducing the surveys at Fidalgo Bay on behalf of the WDNR Aquatic Reserve, which is currently in-the-works.

- MRC Forage Fish Project Check-in with WDFW: January 24th 10am-11am, via Zoom
- MRC Intern project at the Salish Sea School – Pete Haase: The intern and STaRS student finished collecting forage fish data at March's Point in November. The STaRS students presented their projects virtually via Zoom on January 7<sup>th</sup>. The presentations are available on YouTube at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhppJ8nHiKQ>. The Year 1 Final Report is available on the [Skagit MRC Website](#). Due to scheduling conflicts with public schools, field activities, and the MRC grant timeline, the MRC Intern Program Plan will be taking a slightly different approach in 2023. The 2023 MRC intern forage fish project will be integrated into classrooms and the classrooms will be brought to beaches to learn how, when, where, and why forage fish lay their eggs, with one or two paid interns as teaching assistants. There are ongoing conversations with Fiddlehead Montessori, Acton Academy, and Island View Elementary to create a lesson plan for local classrooms.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple: Planning is underway for the spring program.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Not much happening right now except for hatchery maintenance. Puget Sound Restoration Fund will start field work in February or March 2023. The Environmental Reporter from the Skagit Valley Herald is interested in writing an article about the pinto abalone work in Skagit waters and reached out to Paul, Tracy, and Josh Bouma for more information about the work that is being done.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel: Not much happening right now. We will be conducting a large bay-wide native oyster population survey in partnership with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund starting in April or May 2023, with NOAA Congressional funding. Bay-wide surveys will only occur at 5-year intervals as funding allows. The last bay-wide survey was completed in 2018.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Kayak volunteers are gearing up for the 2023 kelp survey season. Lynne attended WDNR's Puget Sound Floating Kelp Vital Sign Indicator Workshop on January 10<sup>th</sup>. They are collecting data from 172 locations from multiple sources, including the MRCs, to create an [interactive map](#) to help tell the story. There is currently insufficient data in the north Puget Sound subbasin (just 8%) to establish any trends including Skagit County. Skagit MRC currently has 14 experienced kayakers involved in surveying 4 kelp beds (Biz Point, Coffin Rocks, Shannon Point East, and Shannon Point West) since 2017. So far Skagit MRC kelp bed survey sites appear to be remaining stable with some seasonal variations.
  - The MRC Kelp Data Review Workshop will be held January 19<sup>th</sup>, 3pm-5pm via zoom. All MRC members are welcome to attend: <https://waecy-wa.gov.zoom.us/j/89783947787?pwd=ajFLb0VPaE5sNGtsVWh3ejNNaWJyUT09>
  - The [Kelp and Eelgrass Engagement Plan](#) Workshop will be hosted by DNR on January 31<sup>st</sup>
- Bowman Bay Restoration Plant Maintenance – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson: Skagit MRC's NOAA Congressional funds will be used to continue plant maintenance activities at Bowman Bay in 2023 in partnership with NWSF. Some erosion occurred at the site due to king tides and high winds that we will continue to monitor. This includes erosion near the interpretive sign and along the shoreline.
- Sharpes Corner Round-About Stormwater Sampling – Diane Hennebert: There was not enough time to complete the full QAPP required by the Department of Ecology, so the Committee decided to put the project on hold until the next round of MRC grant funds that will start October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2025.

#### NOAA Grant Update & 2023 Workplan: Tracy Alker

- 2023 NOAA Grant: The grant is expected to get signed next week or the following week. Funding became available starting January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023.
- MRC Grant Amendment: Our current MRC Grant must be amended because there were some changes to the projects, deliverables, and budget. The amendment will be routed soon for signatures.
- MRC Grant Deliverables Due- January 13<sup>th</sup>: The MRC grant deliverables, including the 2023 MRC Workplan, quarterly progress reports, and volunteer hours are due next Friday, January 13<sup>th</sup>.
- DRAFT 2023 MRC Workplan: The 2023 workplan includes projects for year 2 of our base MRC funding through the Puget Sound Partnership/EPA and Ecology. The second half of the Workplan is for the new NOAA grant funded projects. The workplan also includes some of our ongoing projects that are not currently grant funded such as forage fish surveys, kayak-based bull kelp surveys, recreational crabber outreach, and the voluntary no anchor zone at Seafarer's Memorial Park. Dana said the buoy permits were recently retracted due to tribal

concerns about restricting fishing access, so the Voluntary No Anchor Zone project has temporarily been put on hold. More information to come.

- MRC Project Presentations to the NWSC: Each year the MRC's are asked to present one or two projects at one of the NWSC meetings. The Skagit MRC will likely be asked to present at the NWSC meeting that will be held in-person at Padilla Bay. The exact date TBD.

#### Miscellaneous Discussions and Announcements: All

- New MRC Executive Planning Sub-Committee: The MRC discussed forming an Executive Planning Sub-Committee to help identify and develop new MRC project ideas and prioritization, recruit new MRC members to become Project Leads, and provide guidance for overall MRC operations. Lynne volunteered to participate on the committee and encouraged others to join. Please contact Tracy or Lynne if you are interested.
- New MRC Membership Recruitment: The county has a new process for recruiting Advisory Committee board members where the Board of County Commissioners will issue a public notification including a description of the committee and specific skills we are looking for, like education and outreach.
- Mount Vernon High School Science Night: Will be held in person this year on Thursday, April 20, 2023, 5-8pm! Skagit MRC has been invited to host a booth. Tracy is seeking ideas for fun educational activities for the MRC booth and volunteers to host the booth. Recreational crabber outreach and/or European green crab outreach were two ideas that were discussed. Betsy volunteered to host the MRC booth unless someone else is interested.
- European Green Crab Co-Managers and Partners Meeting and ESA Permit Discussion- February 1. In person at the Lacey Community Center, with an option of attending virtually, 9am-3pm.
- Storming the Sound- Thursday, January 19 at Maple Hall in La Conner. Registration fee is \$15. Register online at Eventbrite. The Agenda is available on the [Storming the Sound website](#). Storming the Sound is a conference for environmental educators in the north Puget Sound region.
- Salish Sea Magazine Call for Content: The Salish Sea Magazine is currently seeking articles, poetry, art, music, photos, and videos for their Spring 2023 issue of the Salish Magazine. The theme of the issue is: Movement. How are different types of movement involved in the stories of how our ecosystems work? For example: Currents/tides, erosion/sediment transport, and obstructions such as bulkheads. Brief proposals are due **January 15<sup>th</sup>**.

**The meeting adjourned at 11:00am. The next MRC meeting will be held virtually February 9, via Microsoft Teams.**