

April 2008

Welcome to our first e-newsletter!

Hello and welcome to the first issue of the Northwest Straits Initiative newsletter! This will be a monthly publication, with distribution by email only. You've been added to our mailing list as a member of a Marine Resources Committee or the Northwest Straits Commission. The purpose is to provide some much needed internal communication, so that the entire Initiative community is informed about timely issues, events, and interesting accomplishments. MRCs are welcome to submit items to share, which we'll include in our "bulletin board". Comments and suggestions are welcome!

In this issue:

- **Featured Project**
- **News Items**
- **Marine Resources Committee Happenings**
- **Northwest Straits Commission Happenings**
- **On the Horizon**
- **Upcoming Events**

Featured Project

Laying the Groundwork for a Potential Marine Stewardship Area in Port Susan Bay



Snohomish and Island MRCs together with the Northwest Straits Initiative, Tulalip Tribes, Stillaguamish Tribes, and multiple other partners are collecting information to inform a potential Marine Stewardship Area in Port Susan Bay. With funding provided by the Harder Foundation, the Northwest Straits Foundation has hired a contractor to conduct targeted stakeholder interviews to gain an understanding of community attitudes and marine conservation goals in the bay. Marine Stewardship Areas have proven to be effective tools in Island and San Juan counties for focusing community attention on marine resources issues and prioritizing

conservation strategies. A community-based Marine Stewardship Area planning process could help protect Port Susan Bay's high biodiversity, transcend complex jurisdictional boundaries, and address potential conflicts between diverse user groups. For more information, [click here](#).

News Items

Tribal Gear Loss Forum

BP Cherry Point Refinery recently funded a Northwest Straits Foundation project to address tribal fishing gear loss due to shipping lane traffic. The forum brought together maritime operators, regulators, tribal natural resources representatives and fishermen, and resulted in some excellent outcomes that will reduce the loss of gear and the associated marine resources. A full [project report](#) is available.

Farewell to Andrea

On March 28 the Northwest Straits Commission and some old friends gathered to thank Dr. Andrea Copping for her many years of service on behalf of the Northwest Straits Initiative. The Commission presented Andrea with a special commemorative Pendleton blanket in the Lummi Nation's "Return of the Potlatch" pattern. [Click here](#) to read Andrea's memories of that time. As the first chair of the Commission and an active member of the Initiative for ten years, the highlights give a wonderful look into the history of the organization.



Governor Signs Bill to Support Development of Outer Coast MRCs

On March 28, Governor Gregoire signed Senate Bill 6227 creating the "outer coast MRC program", which provides staff support and grant funding for future outer coast MRCs. The Department of Fish and Wildlife will direct this new program. Outer coast MRCs were first authorized in 2007 but have not had a source of funding and support. With SB6227 set to take effect in June of this year, outer coast counties will have new resources at their disposal. [Click here](#) for more information on SB6227.

Marine Resources Committee Happenings



Sea Level Rise Assessment to Inform Restoration at Kayak Point

With funding from the Northwest Straits Commission, Snohomish MRC is busy designing shoreline restoration strategies for Kayak Point Park. The MRC is currently developing a scope of work for a study of the likely impacts of sea level rise at the site. This information will inform the project design and maximize the long-term benefits of restoration. It will also provide a

template to help other MRCs factor sea level rise into their restoration projects. For more information [click here](#).

Additional \$25,000 in funding

Each of the seven MRCs is eligible for an additional \$25,000 in funding for the second year of the current grants, the period from July 2008 through June 2009. The Northwest Straits Commission staff have heard from all MRCs about the intended use of those funds, and are now working on project review and preparing amendments to the grant agreements. Contact [Sasha](#) with any questions about this process or the current status of your amendment.

Northwest Straits Commission Highlights

Canoe Journey Water Quality Project

Terry Williams and Christine Woodward reported to the Commission that the Northwest Straits Commission Tribal Committee recommends that tribal funds be used to support the Canoe Journey Water Quality Project. This project brings tradition and science together to collect water quality data during the annual Coast Salish Canoe Journey. Using a traditional canoe as a sampling platform eliminates the impacts of boat engine and exhaust disturbance that interferes with data collection and quality. A presentation on the project will be scheduled for a future Commission meeting. The total cost of the project is just over \$46,000. At the March meeting, the Northwest Straits Commission approved funding \$25,000 of the project.

Join a Committee!

Anyone with an interest in contributing can join one of the Northwest Straits Commission subcommittees. Meetings are often held by conference call for convenience. If you are interested in participating in the Science/Technical or Education/Outreach committees please contact [Sasha](#) or [Ginny](#).

Strategic Planning

At the Commission meeting on March 28 Simon Geerlofs explained the process of taking the information from the retreat and putting it into a strategic plan format with measurable results. Soon the draft of the Northwest Straits Commission's Strategic Plan will be sent to Commissioners and Marine Resources Committees for input before adopting. Stay tuned for opportunities to review the draft and make comments.

On the Horizon

Grant Due Dates

Be prepared for the upcoming due dates for MRC projects! The end of June is sneaking up on us, and with it comes the end of the fiscal year and the deadline for many of the current MRC project deliverables. The due date for those materials is very firm, so please plan ahead to ensure all project leads are aware of the schedule. If you need a copy of the grant agreement or information about a specific project schedule, please contact [Sasha](#) or your MRC lead staff.

2008 Marine Resources Committee Training Conference

Mark your calendars, the 2008 Marine Resources Training Conference will be November 7-8 at the Port Angeles Red Lion Inn. We welcome your input on designing the agenda!

Upcoming Events

Lead Staff/Chair Meeting

A meeting for the MRC chairs and lead staff is scheduled for April 24 at Padilla Bay. Those attending are encouraged to bring forward discussion topics of interest to your MRC. This meeting will be followed by a potluck barbeque at the Padilla Bay [bunkhouse](#). Please contact [Connie](#) if you'd like to join us.

Northwest Straits Commission Project Sharing Meeting

The Northwest Straits Commission will be meeting at Padilla Bay on Friday, April 25. The meeting agenda is designed to provide MRCs with an opportunity to report on current project accomplishments. MRC members are encouraged to attend and see what others are doing. [See draft agenda.](#)

[More events](#)

May 2008

In this issue:

Featured Project

- **News Items**
- **Marine Resource Committee Happenings**
- **Northwest Straits Commission Highlights**
- **Committee Happenings**
- **Northwest Straits Foundation News**
- **Bulletin Board**
- **On the Horizon**

- Events

Featured Projects

Volunteer Diver Report Triggers Removal of Net in Hood Canal

On April 16, the Northwest Straits Initiative removed another derelict gillnet from the cold, deep waters of Hood Canal, this time in Dewatto Bay. The operation was particularly noteworthy because the net was found draped over multiple colonies of cloud sponges, one of Puget Sound's rarest and longest lived animals. The success of the operation was due in large part to information provided by dedicated volunteer divers

Janna Nichols, Pete Naylor, Steve Rubin, Keith Clements, and Rob Holman. These divers are now coordinating with the Commission to monitor the site to document habitat recovery. For the full story [click here](#).



Crabbing season in the Puget Sound is around the corner

The Northwest Straits Initiative, WSU Beach Watchers and others are partnering to support an outreach campaign on the use of escape cord in crab pots. Biodegradable cotton cord is required as a fastener on crab pots to allow crab to escape if pots become lost or abandoned. Analysis completed by the Initiative in 2007 (funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation), estimated that 74.4 crabs die annually in each derelict pot and that there could be as much as 744,000 pounds of crab lost to derelict pots each year in Puget Sound. That's about 30-40% of the annual commercial catch! In the next several months, we'll be building a web site with more information about how and why to use escape cord, and WSU Beach Watchers will be hitting the marinas and boat launches as we approach the crabbing season to do some outreach to recreational crabbers. For more information, the site at www.escapecord.org will be active starting in early June.

News Items

Mussel Watch Program Support

The Northwest Straits Commission recently [sent a letter](#) to Senator Cantwell to express concern about a proposed budget cut to NOAA's mussel watch program. Senator Cantwell is chair of the Senate Commerce Committee which oversees NOAA's budget. Mussel watch has provided important monitoring data in Puget Sound, in some areas showing extremely high levels of urban pollution. The Snohomish MRC has been working in coordination with NOAA to expand the

mussel watch sites in Snohomish County and several other MRCs have expressed an interest in similar work.

Derelict Fishing Gear Presentations

The Commission has set a goal of removing 90% of Puget Sound's derelict nets and crab pots from high priority areas by 2012. Achieving this goal will require support—both new sources of funding and new partners. Ginny Broadhurst, Simon Geerlofs and contractor Jeff June have been busy sharing the derelict gear story. Jeff and Ginny have concentrated their time on meeting with the state legislature, congressional staff, agency managers, Foundations and professional societies. Simon has worked to spread the word at Beach Watchers trainings. Derelict gear in Puget Sound is a compelling story and getting the word out will help to make the 2012 goal a reality. For a list of recent derelict gear presentations, [click here](#).

Low Impact Development Workshops

Interest in and use of low impact development (LID) stormwater management is increasing. The Northwest Straits Commission is co-sponsoring a series of four new LID technical workshops at the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center in Sequim. These two-day workshops, with instruction by regional and national experts in the field, will provide the technical details necessary to properly design, build and maintain LID practices. [Click here](#) for dates and locations. The same series of workshops will be held in Bellingham this fall, dates and locations to be announced.

Marine Resources Committee Happenings



Summary of grant application projects

At the Commission meeting in February of this year, there was a decision to increase funding to each MRC for fiscal year 2007-08 by \$25,000. Since then, all seven MRCs have submitted project proposals and most are near the end of the process to amend the existing grant agreement with those funds. MRCs proposed a range of projects, including boosting funding to some existing projects and adding new

projects. [Click here](#) for a list of projects funded by this process.

Joint Meeting Skagit and Whatcom

On Friday, May 9, the Whatcom and Skagit Marine Resources Committees held a potluck lunch and joint meeting at Padilla Bay reserve in Mount Vernon. The agenda included discussion of potential joint projects of the two MRCs, such as rockfish surveys and invasive species

monitoring, as well as the exchange of project technical information. Whatcom MRC science representative and NWSC alternate Mark Herrenkohl reported that the meeting had a good turnout and that the project leads are planning to continue corresponding on common issues. Minutes from the meeting will be available soon.

Northwest Straits Commission Highlights

Congratulations Scott and Jonathan!

At its April 25 meeting, the Northwest Straits Commission elected Scott McCreery to serve as chair for 2008-2009. Scott is a governor's appointee to the Commission representing industry, and is a Senior Engineer at BP Cherry Point Refinery in Ferndale, Whatcom County.



At the same meeting, Jonathan White of Orcas Island was elected as vice-chair of the Commission. Representing the San Juan Marine Resources Committee, he is a home builder and has previously served on the San Juan County planning commission and the San Juan Preservation Trust.

Marine Resources Project Presentations

At this month's Commission meeting each Marine Resources Committee gave a presentation on one or two of their projects. [See agenda](#). If you are interested in a copy of any of the PowerPoint presentations or have questions about a project please contact [Connie](#).

Committee Happenings

Science and Technical Committee targeting ecosystem projects

The Northwest Straits Commission budget has \$85,000 for projects that contribute to our understanding, protection, or restoration of the Puget Sound ecosystem. Historically, this "ecosystem fund" has been used to tackle regional projects that might be outside of the capacity of one MRC or larger in geographic scope. Use of these funds tended to be somewhat opportunistic—the realities of an uncertain budget made strategic spending difficult.

Over the last couple of years there has been increased attention to using the ecosystem fund strategically to tackle pressing projects. In 2005 the former Technical Committee chair, Andrea Copping, led an effort to envision candidate projects, which were discussed and pared down by the Commission. This year, new Science and Technical Committee chair Joe Gaydos is revisiting those projects and others suggested by MRCs and Commissioners. A ranking system has been developed so that projects will be considered based on objective criteria.

In the future, the ranking system will help the Commission target these dollars where they can

provide the most benefit. Stay tuned for more on this process in June. See the [final report](#) on the Puget Sound hydrodynamic model funded by 2006 ecosystem fund dollars.

Northwest Straits Foundation News

Escape Cord Education project receives funding

SeaWorld Busch Gardens Conservation Fund has awarded the Northwest Straits Foundation \$10,000 to support the Foundation's Escape Cord Education Project. The project is a partnership with WSU Beach Watcher Programs throughout the Northwest Straits counties and builds on the model project begun by the



Snohomish Marine Resources Committee in 2005. This summer, Beach Watcher volunteers will fan out to boat launches and marinas to educate sport crab fishermen about the impacts of derelict crab pots and the need to use biodegradable escape cord on their pots. The goal of the project is to increase the use of escape cord by sport crab fishermen and reduce the harm done to marine species by derelict crab pots. Other funding for this project comes from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation/NOAA Marine Debris Grant Program.

Bulletin Board

Puget Sound Partnership Shifting Baselines

The Puget Sound Partnership produced a five-minute video called Shifting Baselines in Puget Sound. The [video](#) helps people understand that, although the waters of Puget Sound look perfect and even pristine, the truth is much wildlife has vanished and the quality of the marine environment has been substantially compromised. The term "shifting baselines" refers to the idea of losing track of standards (or baselines) and failing to realize how much has changed.

New! Quick access to our Bibliography

Check out our new link to our bibliography on our home page. We are continually adding more Marine Resources Committee project materials and it is worth checking out.

Three reasons to contact the Commission Staff

- Marine Resources Committee events to be posted on our website.
- To provide contact information on new committee members so they can get Commission communications.

- Press releases, publicity or news articles. We keep these in our records and have a list on our website. [See list.](#)

On The Horizon

Tracking the value of our volunteers

Last month at our meeting of MRC chairs and lead staff, we introduced the group to a system that will help us gather information about the volunteer effort that goes into the Northwest Straits Initiative. Having information about the value of our volunteer effort will help support the Initiative by 1) showing the economic value of this group 2) showing the local citizen support for the effort, and 3) help leverage funding for grants through the in-kind donation of time. More information and a demonstration of the system will be coming soon!

EVENTS



Northwest Aquatic and Marine Educators Conference

The [Northwest Aquatic and Marine Educators Conference](#) will be held in Friday Harbor on July 9-12. Ginny Broadhurst will be providing a keynote. They are still looking for presentations and presenters - please contact [Glen Alexander](#) right away if you have a presentation you'd like to bring to this group.

June 2008

In this issue:

- **Featured Project**
- **New Items**
- **Northwest Straits Foundation News**
- **Northwest Straits Commission Highlights**
- **On the Horizon**
- **Events and Recent Press**

Featured Project

Northwest Straits Initiative's Derelict Gear Mortality Study

The Northwest Straits Initiative recently completed a research study to estimate how much marine life is being killed by derelict fishing nets over time and to determine how quickly animals killed in derelict fishing nets decompose. This information is critical to understanding the long-term impact of derelict fishing nets on marine species in Puget Sound. [Click here](#) for more information or to read the [final report](#), Rates of Marine Species Mortality Caused by Derelict Fishing Nets in Puget Sound, Washington.

News Items



Emerging Issue: Ocean Acidification

Senator Maria Cantwell hosted a Senate field hearing in Seattle on May 27 at the Seattle Aquarium. Representative Jay Inslee participated and asked questions of the panel of experts that included Dr. Terrie Klinger from University of Washington School of Marine Affairs and Northwest Straits Commissioner.

The hearing brought attention to the issue of carbon sequestering in the oceans which is causing an increase in acidity that is certain to have serious environmental impacts. [Read more...](#)

Combined Fund Drive

If you or someone you know is a public employee in Washington, you can now donate to the Northwest Straits Foundation through the [Combined Fund Drive](#). Click the link below to go to their web site. The Foundation is charity #1478202, or search for “Northwest Straits”. Link: <http://www.cfd.wa.gov/>. For those who aren’t a public employee, you can still make a tax deductible donation through [Network for Good](#).

Northwest Straits Foundation News

Northwest Straits Foundation receives grant from Conoco Phillips

The [Northwest Straits Foundation](#) recently was awarded a grant from the Conoco Phillips Spirit of Conservation Migratory Bird Fund to remove [derelict fishing gear](#) from marine waters of the San Juan Islands. The project will include 30 days of gear removal operations. The grant program is a partnership between Conoco Phillips and the [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#). The local Ferndale Conoco Phillips refinery played an important role in helping the Northwest Straits Foundation obtain this funding.

Northwest Straits Commission Highlights

Plastics in the Marine Environment

At the May 30 Commission meeting Anne Murphy gave a presentation on [Plastics in the Marine Environment](#). Anne explained that in 2004 she and her staff discovered tiny plastic balls on the beach that looked like they could be mistaken for fish eggs. They began to research them, working with Charles Moore, founder of the [Algalita Marine Research Foundation](#) in Long Beach, CA. Charles was doing research on what he called ‘nurdles’ and plastics in the marine environment. They use Algalita’s protocols to collect samples that can then be sent to Dr. Hideshige Takada as part of the [International Pellet Watch](#) to identify their source.



Thank you to Phyllis



Each year in April the Northwest Straits Commission elects officers to serve as the chair and vice-chair. It is customary for the vice chair to move on to the position of chair, making this a two-year commitment. [Island MRC](#) representative Phyllis Kind has just completed her term as chair, and we would like offer sincere thanks for her outstanding leadership. Phyllis personifies the bottom-up nature of the Initiative. As a leader and spokesperson, she served the MRCs and the Commission well. As Commission chair in a year when the [Puget Sound Partnership](#) was established and tasked with reaching the local citizens, Phyllis let the Leadership Council know that “we are the people!” The Commission could not ask for a better representative of the power of local communities to accomplish great things. Thanks, Phyllis, for all you have done on behalf of the Northwest Straits Initiative!

Field Trip

The Commission took a short walk for a site visit to the [Port Townsend Marine Science Center](#) pier, the location of a [Jefferson MRC](#) project to restore drift cell function by removal of creosote pilings and a redesigned boat ramp. The MRC will complete a feasibility study in the coming year for this project.



KOMO News Clip

See the [KOMO News story](#) on Derelict Fishing Gear.

On the Horizon

MRC Conference Session Ideas

At the Northwest Straits Commission meeting on June 26, we'll spend some time brainstorming session ideas for the November 7-8 MRC Conference in 2008. The conference is all about [MRCs](#), so help us to design what you'd most like to see. Please send your ideas directly to [Commission staff](#) or pass them along to your MRC representative.

Events and News Articles

Recent Press

[Everett Herald](#) - Lost crab pots killing off resource

[South Whidbey Record](#) - Whidbey, Camano couples work to shape up their islands

The SeaDoc Society and REEF's underwater photo contest - See [details](#)

Please send us you [upcoming events](#) or articles.



July 2008

In this issue:

- **Featured Project**
- **New Items**
- **Northwest Straits Foundation News**
- **Northwest Straits Commission Highlights**
- **Member Spotlight**
- **On the Horizon**
- **Bulletin Board**

Featured Project/Program

Canoe Journey Water Quality Monitoring Project is up and Paddling!

2008 marks the 19th anniversary of the annual Intertribal Canoe Journey. On July 28, more than 100 traditional Salish canoes will be greeted by cheering crowds at Cowichan Bay in British Columbia. The Canoe Journey brings tribes together from as far north as Alaska and as far south as Oregon, each crew tracing ancestral routes across the Salish Sea. This year, four canoes—two from Puget Sound and two from British Columbia—will participate in a groundbreaking pilot project to sample water quality along their Canoe Journey routes. The Northwest Straits Commission provided funds to support the use of these water quality monitoring probes, which sample every 20 seconds and record location data, temperature, pH, conductivity, salinity, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity. Data is uploaded at the end of the day when the canoes come to shore. [Read more...](#)

News Items

Murray calls for \$1.6 Million budget for Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative

U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) announced that she has included \$1.6 million in funding to help protect and restore the marine waters, habitats and species of the Northwest Straits region. The funding will support local project priorities in Clallam, Island, Jefferson, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties. The funding was included in the Fiscal Year 2009 Senate Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) Appropriations bill. Senator Murray is a senior member of the Appropriations Committee. [Read more...](#)



Deadly Net Removed from Port Susan, Everett

In June, following a report from Tulalip Tribes biologist Cathy Stanley, the Commission's Derelict Gear Team removed a 600 foot derelict gill net from Port Susan Bay. The net was one of the deadliest removed to date, containing more than 64 seabirds, thousands of crab, and hundreds of fish. The net had gone undetected for more than a year, causing untold damage. According to a [recent report](#) released by the Northwest Straits Foundation, animals entangled in derelict nets rapidly decompose or are consumed by marine scavengers. The marine life found in this derelict net likely represents less than a two-week catch. Derelict gear removal team lead, Jeff June surmised the net had been in the water indiscriminately fishing for about a year. Based on this information, this one derelict net was likely responsible for the needless death of tens of thousands of animals, many of them protected or important commercial species. [Read more...](#)

Marine Resources Committee Happenings

Thank You MRCs

The first year of the two-year grants to MRCs ended on June 30, and we'd like to extend our thanks to all of the MRC members and staff who contributed to meeting this deadline. We received an amazing collection of materials documenting the work done by all of the MRCs in the past reporting period. We'll be bringing them along to upcoming Commission meetings for those attending to take a look. It is impressive to see what can be accomplished – great work!

Northwest Straits Commission Highlights

Thanks to Harriet Spanel

Senator Harriet Spanel is retiring from the Washington State Legislature having represented the 40th district for 22 years. She has been a strong supporter of the Northwest Straits Commission and understands the need to involve local citizens in marine conservation and restoration. Her leadership on marine conservation and fisheries recovery has helped to provide funding for the Initiative's derelict fishing gear program and the rescue tug at Neah Bay, in addition to many other successes. The Commission presented her with a hand-carved paddle to thank her for all of her hard work and support over the years. Best Wishes to Senator Spanel, we'll miss her.



MRC Conference Planning

We are now in the process of gathering input for the 2008 MRC Conference. MRC members who have not already taken the short online survey can do so [here](#).

Northwest Straits Commission Supports Pinto Abalone Outreach



The native pinto abalone population is in a state of serious decline in the Northwest Straits—with some scientists worried that extinction is just around the corner. Throughout human history, abalone have been highly valued as a tasty and nutritious food source. While there has never been a legal commercial fishing industry for abalone in Washington state and the recreational fishery has been closed since 1996, poaching remains a problem. The Northwest Straits Commission is teaming up with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the University of Washington, and independent abalone expert Jordan Watson to raise awareness about the decline of pinto abalone and put a stop to poaching. In June, the Commission paid

printing costs for posters designed by Watson and launched a new informational [website](#). Posters are being distributed to dive shops, ferries, and across the sound, directing people to the website for more information.

Northwest Straits Foundation News

New Funding for Derelict Fishing Gear Removal

The Northwest Straits Foundation recently received funding from the Lucky Seven Foundation for derelict fishing gear removal in Puget Sound. The Lucky Seven Foundation is a family foundation devoted to the betterment of life in the Puget Sound region.

Member Spotlight

Don Meehan

Island MRC member and lead staff Don Meehan calls himself a “simple country boy from Montana” and his favorite view of Puget Sound is from 4,000 feet up in his airplane, so it’s interesting that his work has led him to such deep involvement in the marine environment. Don established the Beach Watcher program and built it into a powerful group of local citizens who are educated and working to protect resources and habitat. [Read more...](#)



Bulletin Board

MRC Deliverables in Reference Database

Many MRC reports, documents, and materials have now been added into our reference database. This database gives the advantage of sorting the materials by project, year, benchmark, location, and other variables. Please contact [Connie](#) if you are interested in getting a list of the materials available.

On the Horizon

August Commission Meeting Location Change

Update your calendars - the location of our August Northwest Straits Commission meeting has been changed to Snohomish County. In September we will return to our traditional Friday

meeting schedule. See [Northwest Straits Commission website](#) for rest of 2008 meeting dates and more information.

August 2008

In this issue:

- **Featured News Item**
- **Other News**
- **Member Spotlight**
- **Marine Resources Committee Happenings**
- **Northwest Straits Commission Highlights**
- **Committee Happenings**
- **On the Horizon**
- **Bulletin Board**

Featured News Item

Reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Commission

On July 31, a bill to reauthorize the Northwest Straits Commission was introduced in the US Senate and House of Representative by sponsors Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Rick Larsen. The bill recognizes the existing structure of the Commission and seven Marine Resources Committees and would provide rationale and authorization for future funding of the Commission. Congress is currently on August recess and is not expected to act on the bill until sometime after elections. [Click here](#) to see the press release.

Other News

Abalone Outreach Project Gets a Boost!



The Commission has been working with WDFW, the University of Washington and other partners on a project to educate divers about declining pinto abalone populations. We have developed an informational website, pintoabalone.org, and paid the cost of printing educational posters that are up in dive shops and aboard Washington State Ferries. Jordan Watson, who designed the abalone poster, was recently hired by the [Puget Sound Restoration Fund](#) to expand abalone outreach activities. This is great news for the Commission; we're working closely with

Jordan to update web materials on pintoabalone.org and plan future projects. If you'd like to

reach Jordan to hear more about his activities, shoot him an email at Jordan.t.watson@gmail.com.

“Straits” vs. “Straights”

Would you have thought that every month someone searches online for “northwest straights”? Each month [Northwest Straits Commission](#) staff pulls a report on the usage of our web site, and sure enough – there it is under search terms every month! The tools for tracking site usage have improved greatly over the years. Some interesting trends emerge over time: our site has an almost even split between new users and returning visitors; traffic to our site is now balanced almost equally between links from other sites (referrals), direct traffic (bookmarks) and search engine traffic. We use the information gathered from these statistics to update our site to meet the needs of our users. Check out our [recent page](#) on the difference between “straits” and “straights”.

Member Spotlight

Kirby Johnson, Snohomish MRC

Kirby Johnson is a charter member of the [Snohomish MRC](#). An avid diver, he was stopping in at a dive shop on his way home from the [Edmonds Underwater Park](#) one Saturday when the flyer looking for members caught his eye.

Snohomish was the last of the seven MRCs to get started, and Kirby remembers feeling both impressed and discouraged at some of the early meetings. He could see it would take a while for the MRC to be a cohesive group that could get things done, but the other MRCs were already providing amazing examples of what could be done.



In his day job, Kirby is an engineer at Boeing who takes a day every few weeks to volunteer at the [Seattle Aquarium](#), where he enjoys teaching the next generation about the marine world. His engineering mindset gives him a collaborative approach to problem solving that he has found useful as a Marine Resources Committee member.

As a representative of recreational interests, Kirby has watched over the years as access to shoreline areas has decreased and high quality dive sites are lost. He sees opportunities to bring in engineering expertise to solve some of the problems of the railroad along the shoreline, and wants to work on keeping a good balance between protecting marine areas while still making sure that people are able to use and enjoy them.

Over the years, Snohomish MRC and the Northwest Straits Commission have benefited from

Kirby's insightful nature. Kirby's time on the MRC will come to an end this December, when his final term expires. He's still got a lot of ideas and passion for the work of the MRC and Commission, so it is likely we will continue to cross paths with him.

Marine Resources Committee Happenings

Island County up and Running with Beach Watcher Eelgrass Surveys



Earlier this year, [Island MRC](#) and [Island Beach Watchers](#) partnered on a project to purchase equipment and train volunteers to conduct state-of-the-art eelgrass video surveys. Jan Holmes, Don Meehan, Ken Urstad, and Neil Clark presented the early results of their work to the Commission during July's meeting in Coupeville.

The project so far has been a complete success—with the University of Washington and [Department of Natural Resources](#) working closely with the Beach Watchers team to provide technical support. The eelgrass survey equipment consists of a camera enclosed in a water-tight case hooked into a GPS transponder. Video is encoded with GPS data so that imagery can be geo-referenced using GIS software. This system, called “Red Hen” is also being used by Clallam MRC to conduct a vessel-based video survey of key reaches of the Clallam County shoreline.

The success of this project depends on highly dedicated Beach Watcher volunteers. Vessel time, survey time, and data processing are all accomplished by volunteers, with guidance from Department of Natural Resources and the University of Washington. With this new capability, Island MRC can now plan and execute eel grass and other benthic surveys with minimal operational costs. Large-scale projects will still require the work of skilled contractors, but the MRC and Beach Watchers can now complete work on those projects that might fall through the cracks, and on their own schedule.

For more information on this project, contact [Sarah Martin](#) at Island County Beach Watchers.

Northwest Straits Commission Highlights

Northwest Straits Strategic Plan is Approved

The Commission adopted the [strategic plan](#) at the July meeting in Coupeville. The strategic plan is a living document and will be reviewed at a Commission meeting every six months.

Committee Happenings

Taking the Next Step with Forage Fish

Marine Resource Committees have been instrumental in helping to identify and protect beaches where there is evidence of spawning by Pacific sand lance (*Ammodytes hexapterus*) and surf smelt (*Hypomesus pretiosus*), key forage fish for some Puget Sound fish, birds and mammals. In this effort, many beaches were sampled where no evidence of spawning was found, with the result that the beach could not be protected under current [Washington Hydraulic Code Rules](#). Furthermore, there are potential spawning beaches that have never been surveyed.



Identifying forage fish spawning beaches by searching for eggs can be like looking for a needle in a haystack. However, current law requires documentation that fish are spawning on a beach before the beach can be protected under Washington Hydraulic Code Rules. Therefore, it is highly likely that only a fraction of the actual spawning beaches are eligible for protection under the HCRs. Changes in habitat availability that will accompany sea level rise have not been considered.

The Northwest Straits Commission will build on existing MRC survey data and other data to 1) identify the full set of habitats currently suitable for forage fish spawning in the seven-county Northwest Straits region, and 2) identify changes in habitat availability that are likely to accompany sea level rise. Data will be used by the Commission and MRCs to assess gaps in protection for important potential forage fish habitat.

These findings will allow the Commission and Northwest Straits counties to work with the [Puget Sound Partnership](#), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Legislators and other groups to craft policies that protect the full range of forage fish spawning habitat. Additionally, it will provide MRCs with information to guide beach protection and restoration in light of changing climate and expected changes in sea level.

On the Horizon

KIRO's Puget Sound Series

On July 25 we took KIRO television reporter Chris Egert out on a derelict fishing net removal operation. Chris brought along a cameraman who is also a diver. We headed out from Shilshole marina and removed 5 nets just north of Elliot Bay and they filmed at least one net underwater before removal and then filmed the removal process from the boat. KIRO is working on a series on Puget Sound that will air this fall. Our derelict fishing gear removal project will be part of the series. We'll let you know when you can tune into the series – sounds like sometime in



November.

Island and Snohomish MRCs have Joint Meeting

Snohomish and Island county MRCs will be holding a joint meeting and potluck on August 19 at Clinton Beach.

Bulletin Board

2008 Conference Registration

Have you registered for the 2008 MRC Conference? If you did not receive an email about registration or if you have questions please contact [Connie](#) at 360-428-1064.

Recent Press

[High Tech Tool Used on Clallam Shoreline](#)

[Free Escape Cord](#)

September 2008

In this issue:

- **Featured News Item**
- **Other News**
- **Marine Resources Committee Happenings**
- **Northwest Straits Commission Highlights**
- **Member Spotlight**
- **Northwest Straits Foundation News**
- **On the Horizon**
- **Bulletin Board**

Featured News Item

Northwest Straits Ecosystem Project Drawing on In-House Expertise

In May, the [Northwest Straits Commission](#) approved funding for a regional GIS project to build on the Initiative's previous forage fish research. The Northwest Straits Commission is co-

located with the [Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve](#), which is part of the [Washington State Department of Ecology](#). The Commission benefits from this relationship in many ways, including our ability to easily work with experts like Suzanne Shull who is Padilla Bay's GIS specialist.

Suzanne is working closely with Marine Program Coordinator [Simon Geerlofs](#) to analyze and display existing forage fish data. She is combining data from a 2002 Commission habitat characterization project with MRC spawning data and running scenarios for predicted sea level rise. When Suzanne is finished, we will have maps for each county in the Northwest Straits region that identify areas that warrant further forage fish protection.

Suzanne will host a session at the fall MRC conference and will discuss new tools for MRCs to share and use their own GIS data.

News Items



Army Diving Deep for Derelict Gear

As we reported in last month's newsletter, the Northwest Straits Commission is hosting a training event for the US Army. The Army dive team is benefiting from the opportunity to do training dives at depths generally unavailable to them and along the way, they are removing some derelict fishing gear that our own dive team can't reach.

After removing old tires from Salt Water state park in Des Moines, the Army moved north. They spent several days on pulling multiple nets hung up on an underwater seamount west of Lummi Island. The site, known as "the pinnacle," is popular with local dive charter operators, but derelict nets have made diving there too risky. Losing popular dive sites to derelict gear hits the dive industry in the wallet, so ridding the pinnacle of nets will have both economic and ecological benefits.

The team is based out of Fort Eustis, Virginia. A Navy reserve unit from Tacoma is providing vessel support for the operation.

Many participants in this exercise have recently served in Iraq, or will be serving there soon. The Northwest Straits Commission is proud to serve as a civilian host for the Army, and hopes the training divers receive while removing nets will help keep them safe in the future.

Marine Resources Committee Happenings

Skagit County Completes Drift Cell Analysis for Fidalgo Bay

[Click here](#) to download [Skagit MRC's](#) recent report that details opportunities to restore shoreline processes in Fidalgo Bay. Skagit County MRC has also completed a similar analysis for March Point. Skagit MRC has emphasized using science to prioritize shoreline restoration opportunities in county waters.

Snohomish and Island MRCs Picnic

The [Snohomish](#) and [Island](#) MRCs had a wonderful picnic together on August 19 at the Clinton Beach Park. Dick Toft, chair of the Island MRC and host for the evening welcomed everyone to the picnic. Simon Geerlofs provided an overview of the Port Susan marine stewardship area project, and both MRCs used the picnic as an opportunity for thanks and recognition to important people moving on. Alan Mearns and Heather McCartney, both long-time Snohomish MRC members whose terms had just expired, were presented with certificates and thanked for their years of dedication to the MRC. Island MRC thanked Don Meehan for his hard work and leadership by presenting him with a photo montage. Don is retiring from WSU Extension and leaving the MRC. Ginny Broadhurst also thanked Don for all of his accomplishments with the MRC and presented him with a carved, yellow cedar paddle from the Commission.



Welcoming Judy Feldman to the Island County Marine Resources Committee

Effective September 1, Judy Feldman is the new county lead for the Island County MRC, replacing Don Meehan. Judy is currently serving as interim director of WSU Extension in Island County.

Northwest Straits Commission Meeting Highlights

Governor's Hiring, Travel, and Contracting Freeze

The Governor requested that all state agencies freeze personal services contracts, hiring, out of state travel, and all but essential spending. The existing Marine Resources Committees grants will not be affected. Commission staff have curtailed travel and canceled out-of-state trips. New projects may face limitations on how they are implemented. Please contact [Ginny Broadhurst](#) if you have questions.

Introducing the Northwest Straits Reauthorization Bill

Congressmen Rick Larsen stopped by the August Commission meeting with district director Jill McKinnie and legislative assistant Mark Middaugh to share the news that the [Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization](#) Bill was introduced in the US House of Representatives on July 31. Katrina Lassiter from US Senator Murray's staff also attended the meeting and reported that the Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization Bill was also introduced the US Senate.

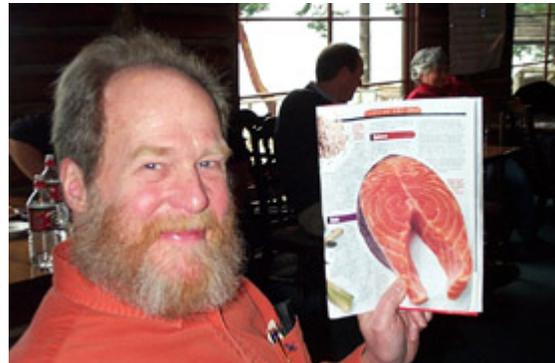
WA Supreme Court Decision on Critical Areas Ordinances

Jonathan White reported on the Washington Supreme Court decision on Critical Areas Ordinances. Jonathan said the case [Futurewise v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board](#) determined that shoreline regulations should be managed by Shoreline Master Programs and not by Critical Areas Ordinances. Washington Community Trade and Economic Development along with the Department of Ecology have filed a motion and put out [interim guidance for local governments](#). This decision poses particular concerns for current protection of shoreline areas in counties where Shoreline Master Programs have not been updated.

Member Spotlight: Buck Meloy

In our previous "member spotlights" Northwest Straits staff has written about MRC members, but this month long-time Whatcom MRC member Buck Meloy speaks for himself. After more than eight years involvement in the MRC, we think you'll appreciate hearing it from his perspective.

As a commercial fisherman, I had always been active politically to assure that measures designed to promote fishing's long-term sustainability would actually do that. But when the Whatcom County Executive contacted me nearly a decade ago about a new organization that was forming to protect the waters of northern Puget Sound, I told him I wasn't interested. I had spent too many years attending meetings that did little but sap my time and energy.



He didn't give up. This was different, he said. Ordinary citizens with an interest in the health and use of their marine resources would work together to develop proposals WE believed would help solve problems as WE understood them. [Read more...](#)

Northwest Straits Foundation News

New funding for Derelict Gear Surveys and Removal

The [Northwest Straits Foundation](#) recently received funding for derelict fishing gear surveys and removals from the [Tulalip Tribes](#) Charitable Fund and the [Washington Department of Natural Resources](#). These funds will be used to move the Initiative closer to its goal of ridding Puget

Sound of derelict fishing gear. Additional funding has also been received from the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife](#) Service Coastal Program and Recovery Program.

On the Horizon



Puget Sound/Georgia Basin Ecosystem Conference

The [Ecosystem Conference](#) steering committee is gearing up for a February 2009 conference. A call for papers has been issued and abstracts are due by October 10, 2008.

This year there is a strong interest in having presenters coordinate ahead of time and pre-organize sessions rather than send abstracts in individually. Any MRC wishing to

submit an abstract for an oral presentation is encouraged to contact [Simon Geerlofs](#) so that he can help identify companion projects and potential moderators. The Commission's Science Committee also volunteered to provide feedback on abstracts if given some lead time.

Bulletin Board

Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda

The [Puget Sound Partnership](#) expects to release their Action Agenda for a comment period in mid-October and some pieces of it may be released earlier than that. At our last Commission meeting, Northwest Straits Commissioners expressed a strong interest in developing a coordinated Commission response letter to the Partnership once we've had time to look at the Action Agenda. We invited the Partnership to host an Action Agenda discussion at our fall conference so that we can have an informed discussion and form our response. More discussion on this will occur at our September Commission meeting.

Events and or Articles

MRC Conference Registration

MRC members please send your registration for the November 7-8 conference to Connie at price@nwstraits.org before the deadline of September 15. Once your registration information is received we will send you the hotel registration information. Registration fees only apply to MRC members' guests who plan on attending sessions or meals on Saturday. Click here to see the [draft agenda](#). Please contact [Connie](#) with questions.

Recent Articles

[Oak Harbor's Freund Marsh Trail Dedication](#)

[Army Dive Team Removes Derelict Gear](#)

October 2008

In this issue:

- **Release of the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda**
- **Washington/British Columbia Transboundary Workshop a Success**
- **MRCs Making Headway on Strategic Plans**
- **Mussel Watch Providing Data on Snohomish County Water Quality**
- **ConocoPhillips Grant Awarded**
- **Foundation Finishes up Creosote Removal Project**
- **Hand-held Global Positioning System Units Available for Checkout**

News Items

Release of the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda

The Puget Sound Partnership is scheduled to release the draft Action Agenda on November 6 just in time for our annual fall conference. Martha Neuman, lead staff for the Action Agenda will present the document and discuss it at the conference on November 8. The Commission will then have less than two weeks to develop comments and get them to Partnership staff. We will be working closely with MRCs immediately following the conference for feedback on the Action Agenda so that we can provide one coordinated comment letter. We encourage all MRC members to stay connected to the work of the Partnership at this critical time. A draft list of the [Puget Sound Partnership's strategic priorities and candidate initiatives](#) was distributed at the October 1 Ecosystem Coordination Board meeting and will be updated for the October 22-23 Leadership Council meeting. Go to the [Puget Sound Partnership's web site](#) for information.

Washington/British Columbia Transboundary Workshop a Success



Over the last six years, we've learned firsthand the magnitude of the problem that derelict gear poses in Puget Sound. Officials in British Columbia expect that they also, unfortunately, face a similar problem with derelict gear. Because British Columbia and Washington state share the Salish Sea ecosystem, it's important for our two governments to coordinate activities and learn from one another.

Washington Governor Christine Gregoire and British Columbia

Premier Gordon Campbell have made regional collaboration on marine issues a priority of their two administrations. They've identified two initial areas of focus for this collaboration: Derelict fishing gear removal and marine managed areas. Because of the success of its derelict gear program, the Northwest Straits Initiative was tapped by the Governor's office to host the event.

On October 8 and 9, the Commission hosted representatives from Canadian provincial and federal agencies and First Nations along with representatives from Washington state, US Federal government, and tribes at a two-day derelict gear workshop. Funding for the workshop was provided by the Governor's office and the Environmental Protection Agency. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife was a key collaborator in workshop planning.

Following a full day classroom session and a field trip on the second day, Canadian and US officials both left with a better understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and techniques of derelict gear removal work. Workshop findings will be presented at the [Puget Sound Georgia Basin Conference](#) and workshop participants are already discussing a possible transboundary crab pot survey and removal project in [Boundary Bay](#). A link to the proceedings of the workshop will be provided in next month's newsletter.

MRC Conference

Over 88 people are registered! This is a great opportunity to meet and talk with MRC members from around the region, and learn about some of the most important issues around the Sound. Clallam MRC is hosting a field trip starting at 12:30pm on Friday, and the conference will wrap up by 4:00 pm Saturday afternoon. An updated [agenda](#) is now available. Late registration will be accepted through October 27 but room rates can no longer be guaranteed. Please contact [Connie Price](#) for more information.

SharePoint

A new tool for collaborative work is now being unveiled for the Port Susan Bay marine stewardship area working group. Northwest Straits has a [SharePoint](#) site through the Department of Ecology servers. This online tool is a great fit for the Port Susan group since it allows shared files, online discussion, and the ability to work closely with a group of people who may not be easy to get together in one room. If you have an ongoing or long-term project that could benefit from a shared system for communicating among team members, contact [Sasha](#) for a site tour.

Marine Resources Committee Happenings

MRCs Making Headway on Strategic Plans

Writing a strategic plan is hard work—especially when there is so much to do to protect and restore our marine environment. But given limited budgets and hectic schedules, strategic planning can really help prioritize action. The MRC strategic plans that have been completed to date all embody the spirit, focus, and unique attributes of each MRC. And the Commission’s strategic plan represents the collective ideas and ideals of the entire Northwest Straits community—the MRCs, the Commission, and the Foundation.

If you would like to download completed strategic plans, please follow the links below. And if you’d like another set of eyes to review your draft strategic plan, please feel free to contact [Simon](#) at the Northwest Straits Commission.

[Island MRC](#)

[Jefferson MRC](#)

[Skagit MRC](#)

[Northwest Straits Commission](#)



Mussel Watch Providing Data on Snohomish County Water Quality

Since 1986, [NOAA has analyzed mussels](#) collected from the nation’s coasts and bays in order to monitor for chemical contaminants in the marine environment.

Washington state has been included in the Mussel Watch program for many years, and recently Snohomish MRC has partnered with NOAA to add additional sites in county waters. Beach Watcher volunteers are collecting mussel samples and the MRC is picking up the tab for chemical analysis.

On September 29, NOAA Scientist and former Snohomish MRC member Alan Mearns presented data and findings from the Snohomish County Mussel Watch program. The Snohomish county data are yielding important information on contaminants like PAHs, PCBs, PBDEs, and heavy metals. [Click here](#) for more information about Snohomish County Mussel Watch project.

Northwest Straits Commission Highlights

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Management Plan Review Process

The [Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Management Plan Review](#) is now open and there is an opportunity for participation and comments. The Olympic Coast Marine Sanctuary is required to review and revise its plan every five years and it has been the early 1990's since the last review. There will be seven public meetings intended to reach out to the communities near the sanctuary. The goal of these meetings is to get thoughts and ideas from the public on sanctuary management priorities.

[Northwest Straits Commission Meeting Minutes](#)

Northwest Straits Foundation News

ConocoPhillips Grant Awarded

The Northwest Straits Foundation announced a \$20,375 grant from ConocoPhillips to remove derelict gillnets, focusing removal operations on the marine waters in and around the [Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex](#), created to protect marine birds and mammals by protecting nesting and haul out sites.

“Through our Spirit of Conservation partnership with the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, ConocoPhillips is working to preserve and restore habitat for migratory birds throughout North America and other parts of the world,” said Jeff Callender, regional public affairs director for ConocoPhillips. “We are excited about the opportunity to improve our local marine environment and protect wildlife here in northwest Washington.”

The ConocoPhillips donation will be leveraged by funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and other sources to increase the scope of the project, allowing the Northwest Straits Foundation to remove 45 acres of derelict fishing nets.

Foundation Finishes Creosote Removal Project



The Northwest Straits Foundation finished its Creosote Beach Debris Removal Project, the first project it has completed that was funded through NOAA's Marine Debris Removal and Prevention Grant Program. Washington Department of Natural Resources was the project partner, mobilizing its staff and crews to coordinate with land managers and implement on-the-ground removal. Washington State University Beach

Watchers coordinators and volunteers played a role as well helping to survey and tag debris on

the beach prior to removal.

Using helicopters, barges and ‘good old’ hand hauling, 720 tons of contaminated debris were removed from beaches and nearshore areas at Lake Hancock, Dungeness Spit National Wildlife Refuge, Fort Flagler State Park, Fort Worden State Park, Fort Ebey State Park, Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, Monroe’s Landing Island County Park, and American Camp National Historic Park.

One hundred forty-four volunteers donated 384 hours to this project, either by surveying and tagging, assisting with removal operations, or training for future surveying activity. One hundred eighty miles of shoreline in the Northwest Straits were surveyed for contaminated debris as part of this project.

This project is a great example of the power of Marine Resources Committees. It was inspired by the initial work of the Whatcom MRC and also by the removal efforts in Skagit County by MRC members there. The project was featured on NOAA’s Restoration Center website and is currently being replicated in British Columbia.

Hand-held Global Positioning System Units Available for Checkout

The Foundation has a dozen hand-held GPS units available for MRCs to check out. They were used during the Creosote Beach Debris Removal Project to document locations of contaminated logs on beaches throughout the Northwest Straits. They come with their own carrying cases. Just call Joan Drinkwin, at 360-820-3323, if your MRC has a use for a GPS unit and she will make sure it gets to you.

On the Horizon

2009 Northwest Straits Commission Meetings

Northwest Straits Commission [2009 meeting dates](#) have now been scheduled. The annual planning retreat date is to be determined. All meetings will fall on Fridays in 2009.

2009-2011 MRC Grants

It’s time to start planning for the next round of grants to MRCs. Existing grants will end on June 30, 2009 with a complete close-out: no extensions of time or funds are possible. The new grants will begin on July 1, 2009. A draft schedule was proposed at the last meeting of the Commission, and MRCs are encouraged to begin developing ideas for a final proposal that will be due in March.



Commission staff will work with MRCs in the first months of 2009 to discuss ideas in the pre-proposal stage. A full request for proposals will be sent out at the first of the year. Until a final budget is appropriated for the Commission for 2009, MRCs will need to prioritize or phase projects to allow for some budget flexibility based on the final amount. Please contact [Sasha](#) if you have questions.

Events Calendar

MRC Chairs/Lead Staff Meeting

The next meeting of MRC chairs and lead staff will be held at Padilla Bay on Monday, December 8. These meetings are a great opportunity to work through the nuts and bolts of running a Marine Resources Committee: what are the challenges your MRC faces, what works well, how can the MRC run more smoothly and how can the Commission best support the MRCs. This meeting will be particularly important to discuss budget and staffing issues. Please forward additional ideas to [Sasha](#) by no later than November 14.

November 2008

In this issue:

- **2008 MRC Fall Conference**
- **Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda Release**
- **Member Spotlight - Anne Murphy**
- **Northwest Straits Commission Highlights**
- **Pinto Abalone Outreach**
- **KIRO New Story on Derelict Gear**



2008 NWS MRC Conference a Success!

It's mid November and for the staff at the Northwest Straits Commission that can mean only one thing (and it's not that Thanksgiving is around the corner): Another MRC conference has come and gone! While we're all ready to turn our attention to other pressing work, it's useful to reflect on this our ninth fall conference.

More than 130 people made the long journey to the Port Angeles Red Lion for the two day event. This is the first year that Clallam County MRC played host to the conference and from the start they did an amazing job making other MRC members and guests feel welcome. The MRC planned and organized a terrific field trip to key sites along Port Angeles Harbor. And later on in the evening Lower Elwha Klallam Tribal Chair Frances Charles and Clallam County Commissioner Mike Doherty kicked off the opening plenary with a gracious welcome.

Another bonus of the Port Angeles location was that it allowed a number of guests to easily attend from the outer coast. Outer coastal counties, tribes, cities, and lead entities are working together with WDFW to form outer coast MRCs and the conference marked an opportunity to share ideas and lesson learned. Our outer coast guests participated in a panel discussion on the Northwest Straits and outer coast MRC processes and added new energy to the rest of the conference.

Plenary sessions this year were marked by an outstanding keynote presentation by Anne Murphy on plastics in the marine environment. Following Anne's presentation, Northwest Straits Kleen Kanteen metal water bottles flew off the shelves...

We heard from Charlie O'Hara on this year's tribal project to fund water quality monitoring testing during the annual tribal canoe journey. This groundbreaking project represents an important nexus between traditional ecological knowledge and cutting edge science. We look forward to hearing about an expansion of the program in the future.

Amy Windrope and Doug Peters led the crowd through a fascinating whirlwind presentation on shoreline protection. Doug went into great detail on the Growth Management Act, Shoreline Management Act, and the future of critical areas ordinances. Amy presented hot-off-the-press findings from the San Juan Initiative. Her presentation energized the crowd and got us all thinking about taking a closer look at permitting, enforcement, and land owner relationships in our own counties.

Concurrent sessions this year were marked by enthusiastic audience involvement and the generous contribution of time by each of our speakers. Speakers came from far afield and battled tough travelling weather to talk to us about new GIS tools, ecosystem goods and services, communications techniques, and the impacts of ocean acidification.

And finally, we worked together to provide input to the Puget Sound Partnership on the Action Agenda. Given that the Action Agenda had been released just two days prior, we generated an impressive amount of dialog and comments that we're working to communicate to the Partnership. Thank you to all of you who stuck around to participate in this important session!

We'd like to extend our gratitude to all of you who made this year's conference happen: our generous conference sponsors, the Clallam MRC, MRC members and guests, tribal representatives, elected officials and their representatives, Commissioners (especially our intrepid Chairman, Scott McCreery), the derelict gear team, presenters, WDFW staff, Sea Grant Staff, and potential future outer coast MRC members. This was truly a community effort and the staff here at the Northwest Straits certainly enjoyed our time with you. And from the looks of the

four empty martini glasses we saw sitting a table near the back of the room on Saturday at 1:00 pm, it looks like you had a good time too!

Looking forward to seeing you all next year!

For those who were unable to attend, agenda presentation materials and session summaries are available [online](#).

Conference Evaluation

A link to a short post-conference survey was sent out and has had a good response. If you attended the event but have not yet completed the survey, please take a few minutes to do so as it is the best way for us to gather information to help in follow up and planning for future events. [Click here](#) to take the survey.

News Items

Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda Release

The Puget Sound Partnership released the draft Action Agenda on November 6. Comments were due November 20. Click on the links to see the comments submitted by the [Jefferson MRC](#), [San Juan MRC](#) and the [Commission](#). Thanks to all for the time spent looking through the document and providing your insightful comments

Member Spotlight

Anne Murphy, Jefferson MRC



A true “watershed” moment started Anne Murphy off on her journey that would eventually land her on Puget Sound at the head of the Port Townsend Marine Science Center. Having taken a drink from the local creek, her dad explained how watersheds work...and that the horses upstream may not make for very good drinking water.

Anne has learned a lot about water since then, through experiences driven by her passion for fish and water that shaped her career and how she spends her personal time. Well-rounded experience, from hands on time working as a gillnetter in the strait and snorkeling in kelp beds to her work as an educator and a charter member of the

Jefferson MRC.

Being part of the start-up process for the MRC was a time of great creativity and energy for

Anne, who immediately volunteered to participate when the opportunity came up. Naturally hoping to work with a group of like-minded environmentalists, she quickly found that one of the most important skills needed for a successful MRC is to be a good listener. Hearing the many perspectives that members brought to the table helped her understand that others value the environment equally but differently. As the Jefferson MRC representative to the Northwest Straits Commission, she broadened her own perspective and came to appreciate how local communities were shaping the projects that emerged around the region.

Anne's favorite projects are those that reflect the community and build on the momentum created by that community support. In Jefferson, the eelgrass protection zone is a perfect example of a project that demonstrates positive change and builds on many years of effort by people and organizations working individually and in partnership.

Though she sees that the MRCs are no longer the startup enterprises of the past, she continues to see a way for MRCs to evolve and be relevant by staying in touch with the needs of the local communities, being open to creating collaborative partnerships and allowing people to follow their passion to move projects forward.

Northwest Straits Commission Meeting Highlights

Northwest Commission Budget

A request for proposals has been sent to the MRCs based on a \$100,000/year budget. It is important for MRCs to be optimistic when putting together project lists, but have projects prioritized. There are some MRC projects that might be good candidates for funding from other funding sources.



2009 Retreat Planning

It is time to start planning the 2009 Commission retreat. The Commission set the date to January 29-30. Commissioners and alternates are invited to attend. MRC representatives who are new as of January will hopefully be able to attend with the former MRC representative to provide some carryover of knowledge.

[Click here](#) for a draft of the November meeting minutes.

Northwest Straits Foundation News

Funding for Derelict Gear Program

The Foundation recently received funding from the Coastal Protection Fund Oil Spill Account to remove derelict fishing gear from Puget Sound.

On the Horizon

Lead Staff and Chair Meeting in December

The next meeting of MRC chairs and lead staff will be held at Padilla Bay on Monday, December 8. These meetings are a great opportunity to work through the nuts and bolts of running a Marine Resources Committee: what are the challenges your MRC faces, what works well, how can the MRC run more smoothly and how can the Commission best support the MRCs.

Bulletin Board

Pinto Abalone Outreach

Earlier this year, the Northwest Straits Commission teamed up with local abalone aficionado Jordan Watson to get an outreach effort started on the problem of declining pinto abalone. A new web site is now up and running, with lots of great information about abalone and its status in Puget Sound. There is still a lot to be learned about how to help abalone populations recover, but you can learn more about what you can do at www.pintoabalone.org.

Recent Articles

KIRO Launches Series on Puget Sound



Check out a new series on KIRO documenting the importance of Puget Sound, including a segment on the Northwest Straits derelict fishing gear removal program. [Click here](#) to go to their site.

November 2008

In this issue:

- **Washington-British Columbia Coastal and Ocean Task Force Workshop**
- **Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda Adopted**
- **West Coast Governors' Agreement**
- **Snohomish MRC Mussel Watch Program Manual Released**
- **Member Spotlight - Phyllis Kind**
- **Forage Fish Project**
- **Northwest Straits Foundation Fundraiser**

News Items

North of the Border, Marine Protected Areas used as Collaborative Conservation Planning Tools



On November 12 and 13, the [Washington-British Columbia Coastal and Ocean task Force](#) held a workshop in Victoria, British Columbia focused on marine protected area (MPA) planning. The workshop was an opportunity for Washington state and Canada to share ideas about MPAs and for Canada to showcase their recent work.

Snohomish MRC member and Tulalip Tribes Environmental Liaison Daryl Williams, Northwest Straits Commissioner Terrie Klinger, and Northwest Straits Marine Program Coordinator Simon Geerlofs participated with representatives from the Governor's office, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks, and the Puget Sound Partnership.

Over the past decade, the Canadian federal government, British Columbia, and First Nations have worked with stakeholder groups and technical experts to establish MPAs at multiple scales. The workshop included a strong focus on First Nations' perspectives and roles in Canadian MPA planning, and featured the proposed [Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area Reserve](#).

Canadian managers and First Nations are also working together to establish new types of parks in Canada called "[Conservancies](#)". Conservancies balance environmental protection, visitor access, economic development, and allow continued traditional use by First Nations.

Here in Washington state, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has formed an MPA workgroup to inventory existing MPAs. The work group was authorized by the legislature last

year in [SB 6231](#). Northwest Straits and MRC staff are invited to participate. Contact [Brie Van Cleve](#) at Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife if you'd like to learn more.

Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda Adopted

The Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda was released on December 1 at a large public event at the Seattle Aquarium. The Action Agenda and a new video that helps explain some of the problems occurring with the health of Puget Sound are available to download on the Partnership's website at www.psp.wa.gov. The Northwest Straits Commission's derelict fishing gear program is recognized as a priority near-term action to restore ecosystem processes, structures and functions (page 46). Comments letters on the draft Action Agenda from the San Juan MRC, Jefferson MRC and the Commission were submitted to the Partnership and can be viewed by clicking [here](#).

West Coast Governors' Agreement

The Northwest Straits Commission is participating in the development of a marine debris action plan as part of the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health. The Agreement, which was released in July 2008, addresses the multitude of problems affecting ocean health. The marine debris action plan being drafted by a multi-state workgroup will focus on more specific actions to be taken and will reference the Commission's derelict fishing gear project as a model. More information about the West Coast Governors' Agreement is at www.westcoastoceans.gov

Marine Resources Committee Happenings

Snohomish County MRC Releases New Mussel Watch Program Manual

Over the last several years, Snohomish MRC has partnered with NOAA to boost the number of sampling sites within county waters for NOAA's long-running Mussel Watch water quality monitoring program. MRC and Beach Watcher volunteers have worked with NOAA to collect mussels from the beaches, jetties, and piers of Snohomish County (six sites in Snohomish County and one on Camano Island in Island County). Tissue samples are sent to a lab to be analyzed for more than 100 chemical contaminants. Because mussels pass contaminants through their systems in about 30 days, mussel watch data gives an accurate water quality snapshot for a given site. This information is useful in establishing baseline conditions or assessing water quality following a spill event. [Click here](#) to see a copy of the Snohomish MRC Mussel Watch Program Manual.



MRC Chairs and Staff Work Day

On Monday, December 8 an enthusiastic group of MRC chairs and staff met at Padilla Bay for a day of discussing the “nuts and bolts” of running an MRC. These occasional meetings have proven to be an excellent way for those leading MRCs to connect and find solutions to common issues and share successes.

Topics on the agenda included how MRCs can use the Northwest Straits Foundation as a resource for funding projects, internal and external communications, MRC grants and a range of topics brought forward from the MRCs. Along with renewed inspiration, everyone left with a few new tasks to follow up on. Commission staff will soon be working on ways to provide MRCs with additional training on communications and designing project evaluation.

Member Spotlight

Phyllis Kind, Island MRC



Phyllis Kind had spent time in many different areas of the country – Montana, Michigan, Colorado and Washington, DC among them – but knew she wanted to head west when she was ready to retire. At the recommendation of family living in the area, she checked out Whidbey Island and found it suited her very well. One of the first steps she took upon arrival was to enroll in the Beach Watchers training program, which led her to the Island MRC.

Phyllis is a perfect example of the sort of person that it was hoped would be attracted to the idea of joining a local Marine Resources Committee. Coming from a science background, the skills she acquired and used during her years working in immunology at George Washington University brought valuable expertise to the Island MRC. Equally important are her passion for exploring the world - both on a small scale tidepooling around the Sound, or traveling around the globe for new experiences – and her strong belief in the bottom-up process that drives the Northwest Straits Initiative.

An avid birder, Phyllis is ready with her bird identification guide and binoculars at a moment's notice. She has contributed many hours to the Pigeon Guillemot survey work in Island County, and is a member of the Whidbey Audubon Society. Exploring the area by kayak is her favorite way to get up close, taking care not to disturb migrating birds in need of a rest.

Phyllis is in her third and final term on the Island MRC, and served as their representative to the Northwest Straits Commission for several years, including terms as vice-chair and chair of the Commission. As someone with a great capacity and interest in learning, she continues to explore new ideas for work to be done locally and regionally. Although she'll be greatly missed once her time has ended on the MRC, it is clear that she's committed to continuing to do good work for the environment and will bring new energy to another fortunate group.

Northwest Straits Commission Highlights

New Forage Fish Spawning Maps Available on Northwest Straits Website

Northwest Straits staff are working with Suzanne Shull, GIS specialist at Padilla Bay, to build a GIS database for forage fish spawning and habitat suitability data. Marine Program Coordinator Simon Geerlofs presented progress on the project to the Commission on December 5 and is planning to present findings to MRCs in the coming months. To download maps, please visit the [Commission's website](#). If you have questions or would like to discuss the maps, contact [Simon](#).



Northwest Straits Foundation News

Northwest Straits Foundation Annual Workplan Approved

The Northwest Straits Foundation board of directors adopted an annual workplan at their November 7 meeting. The workplan outlines the strategies employed to raise funds for the Foundation and lists the projects approved for fundraising for the next year. Approved projects include any MRC project that is supported in an MRC's workplan or strategic plan and for which an MRC commits either funding or project coordination. An example of an MRC project the Foundation is currently looking for funding for is the Jefferson MRC Voluntary No-Anchor Eelgrass Protection Zone. [Click here](#) to see a copy of the workplan.

On the Horizon

Sasha on Maternity Leave

Sasha will be taking family leave time early in 2009, with exact dates to be determined by baby's arrival. An email auto responder and updated voice mail message will be in place when she is out to indicate dates and who to contact. While Sasha is on leave, Simon will be taking over as the primary contact for MRC grants and deliverables. For other questions or assistance, please contact Connie. We are wishing Sasha all the best in bringing this new family member into the world.

2009 Meeting Dates revised

The Northwest Straits Commission retreat has been scheduled for January 29-30 in Port Hadlock. [Click here](#) for the revised 2009 dates and locations.

Bulletin Board

Fundraiser

The Northwest Straits Foundation is raising funds by offering [Klean Kanteens, t-shirts, hats, and sweatshirts](#) with the Northwest Straits Commission logo. If you would like to contribute to the fundraiser please contact [Connie](#).

Recent News Articles

[Click here](#) and see page 7 of the Padilla Bay Newsletter for the recent article on Pinto Abalone.