



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Location: Zoom Conference Call
Date: August 28, 2020
Time: 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

To join the Zoom meeting, [click here](#).

Meeting ID: 848 8126 8274

Passcode: 880028

For audio conference, dial: +1 253 215 8782

10:00 – 10:05	Welcome and introductions Approval of July minutes	Alan Clark, Chair
10:05 – 10:20	Committee reports Executive Committee External Relations Committee Science Advisory Committee	
10:20 – 10:25	Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission/ Tribal update	Cecilia Gobin, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
10:25 – 10:30	Business Updates MRC Symposium feedback	Staff
10:30 – 10:35	County budgets discussion	Lucas
10:35 – 10:50	Puget Sound Partnership update Partnership Social Approaches	Jennifer Grimm, Puget Sound Partnership
10:50 – 10:55	NWS Foundation update	Don Hunger, NWS Foundation
10:55 – 11:35	Environmental Benefits and Risks of Kelp Aquaculture	Nicole Naar, NOAA
11:35 – 11:40	*Stretch and Bathroom Break*	



agenda

11:40 – 12:30	Communications Audit + Plan	Consultant team from Maul, Foster and Alongi
12:30 – 12:50	MRC Reports	MRC Representatives
12:50 – 12:55	Round table	All
12:55 – 1:00	Public comment	All

30 minute post-meeting open discussion – join if you'd like.



July 31, 2020 • 10:00 AM-1:00 PM
Zoom – Conference call
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Alan Clark (Clallam-Chair), Elsa Schwartz (Island-Vice Chair), Pete Haase (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Tom Cowan, Chris Castner, Sarah Brown (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Nan McKay, Ron Thom, Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership- Alternate)

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Katie Harris, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Allie Simpson

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger (Northwest Straits Foundation), Caroline Gibson (Northwest Straits Foundation), Kate Elliott (Maul Foster and Alongi), Sidney Counts (Maul Foster and Alongi), Ann Prusha (Island)

Absent: Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal)

Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the June Northwest Straits (NWS) Commission meeting were approved by consensus.

Communications Audit + Plan

Kate Elliott from Maul, Foster and Alongi (MFA) explained the overall scope and timeline of the project and reiterated the recommendations from the June Commission meeting:

- Document clarifying roles and responsibilities
- Host more events – MRC retreats, conferences, carpools
- Streamline onboarding for new MRC members
- More clarity on the direction of the Foundation
- Organizational chart with funding info
- Clarify whether it's important to understand the Foundation's history

The Commissioners were presented with five draft elevator pitches, and broke into small groups to discuss them. Those elevator pitches were:

- The Northwest Straits Initiative is a community-led _____ working to protect and restore the marine environment of Puget Sound.
 - Organization
 - Vision
 - Alliance
 - Collaborative



Commissioners voted through Mentimeter for their ranked choice options. Kate Elliott will integrate the top choice into the communications plan.

The Commissioners discussed removing the geographical reference at the end of the elevator pitch, since Northwest Straits is in the name. Commissioners reinforced that the pitch should be short, concise, and accurate.

NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Elsa reported that the Executive Committee resolved the liability insurance questions related to kayak help monitoring. The committee will meet with the Foundation's executive committee in early September. Elsa reported that the committee is drafting a policy to address the steps MRCs should take when considering the use of Commission funds for match on third-party grants. Elsa explained that the Executive Committee asked the Science Advisory Committee to develop recommendations for the Commission in regards to joining the Ocean Acidification Alliance.

External Relations Committee

Tom Cowan reported that the committee did not meet in July. The committee has been tracking state funding. Commission staff continue to identify opportunities that could be eligible for stimulus funding.

Science Advisory Committee

Ron Thom reported that the Committee is focused on developing a framework for Actions-to-Impacts that can be scalable to the MRC level. Ron reported that the committee discussed possible association with the Ocean Acidification Alliance, and how the MRCs work ties into the Alliance's work.

Business items

Restore America's Estuaries grant submissions

Dana Oster reported that the Commission is submitting a grant proposal to expand the eelgrass protection zone program, based on the model in Port Townsend.

European green crab update

Allie Simpson is working with WDFW and Washington SeaGrant on European green crab management in Drayton Harbor. The team has caught 91 green crab so far. She reiterated how important organizational partnerships are in the work to trap and remove green crab. Allie announced the Whatcom MRC-hosted webinar on Aug. 12 that will be about green crab management in northern Whatcom County.

Commission meeting schedule



The remaining 2020 meeting dates are August 28, Sept. 24 (this has been updated since the July meeting), October 29, and December 11.

Puget Sound Partnership update

Jenn Grimm reported that The House Appropriations bill contains an additional \$5M for the Puget Sound Geographic Program. If the Senate passes that bill, the Partnership funding for the NEP will have increased by \$10M over two years.

Jenn reported that the Partnership wrapped up the Virtual Puget Sound Days on the Hill events on July 10. 100-200 people participated in each virtual event. Senator Murray and staff from Senator Cantwell's office participated, along with Congressmen Kilmer, Heck, Schrier, Jayapal, DelBene, Larsen, and McMorris Rodgers, and staff from Rep. Smith's office. The Partnership is considering more virtual events in August and October.

Jenn reported that the Leadership Council adopted the vision for the 2022-2026 Action Agenda at its June meeting. The Leadership Council also adopted revisions to our Vital Signs and indicators.

The Puget Sound Leadership Council adopted an updated set of Vital Signs and indicators for the biophysical parts of the ecosystem, and the proposed approach to developing the 2022-2026 Action Agenda, at their meeting on June 10.

Northwest Straits Foundation update

Caroline Gibson reported that the Foundation started their new fiscal year on July 1. Caroline announced the release of the second episode of Salish SeaFresh, the Foundation's video series. Caroline said that the Orca Forums have been postponed until October. Caroline is collaborating with Skagit and Jefferson MRCs on two grant proposals.

MRC Reports

Clallam –

Alan Clark reported that the MRC has confirmed three new alternates. The MRC's smolt trap interns, mentors and Lower Elwha project biologist did an outfall survey at the lower 1 mile of Tumwater Creek, and shared the information with the City of Port Angeles. In partnership with SeaDoc Society the Clallam MRC is compiling an educational outreach package centered on the book "Salish Sea" to be given to 275 students in the Boys & Girls Club Lunchbox program.

Island –

Elsa reported that they have a new MRC member, Andi Kopit. Elsa reported that the feasibility studies are complete for both Hoypus Point and Possession Point, and conceptual design is complete for Hoypus



Point. Elsa said the Foundation is applying for funding for permitting, final design, and construction at Hoypus Point, and the MRC will continue to support and partner on this work. Elsa reported that the MRC has distributed “Catch More Crab” handouts to hardware stores and marinas. Handouts, crab gauges, and rot cord are available at the County offices and by contacting MRC members or staff.

Jefferson –

Jeff Taylor reported that the MRC is discussing ways to assess boater compliance with the navigational buoys since the Wooden Boat Festival (the busy weekend when this assessment has been conducted in the past) will be held virtually this year. Jeff reported that the first kelp monitoring survey of the summer season occurred on June 26 with three MRC. The second survey took place on July 18 with the help of four MRC volunteers. The MRC is working with the Foundation on a coastal watersheds grant, to fund the installation of two additional rain gardens in collaboration with the City of Port Townsend

San Juan-

Christina reported that the upcoming budget for San Juan County has no budget for natural resources. Christina announced that the Plastic Free Salish Sea initiative officially launched on July 20, 2020 during Plastic Free July. Outreach efforts to boaters continue in earnest throughout the County and region in partnership with Be Whale Wise. The MRC partnered with UW Friday Harbor Labs and residents of False Bay Biological Preserve to conduct a visitors-use survey.

Skagit-

Pete Haase reported that volunteers are resuming forage fish surveys. Pete said that Skagit MRC provided a letter supporting the trestle/causeway removal and replacement proposal. Skagit MRC member Paul Dinnel is featured in the Northwest Straits Foundation’s latest episode of the Salish Sea Fresh video series highlighting Olympia oysters.

Snohomish-

Sarah Brown reported that the crabber outreach video (which replaced the in-person events) has been viewed more than 18,000 times. Sarah reported that all pilings in the Snohomish Estuary have been mapped and field verified as part of the pilings project, and analysis is currently underway to prioritize pilings for future removal. The MRC will issue a draft report to stakeholders for review from July 22 – August 17th. A final report will be available to the public mid-September. The MRC has collected their yearly kelp monitoring data at Edmonds, Meadowdale, and Mukilteo. Additional monitoring is scheduled at Hat Islands and another round at Edmonds for August.

Whatcom-

Bob Cecile reported that The MRC will host a virtual European Green Crab forum on August 12. The intent is to provide a general background on green crab, why they are a problem, how to identify them, what to do if you find one and current information about green crab found in Drayton Harbor. Bob reported that the Whatcom MRC hosted a Drought Contingency Forum to share information about



minutes

drought vulnerability and preparedness in Whatcom County, and drought contingency planning at the federal, state, and local levels on July 23. The MRC provided a letter of support for the Port of Bellingham's grant applications to the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account and Washington Wildlife Recreation Program, for a small watercraft dock in Fairhaven, and potential to create a small pocket beach. Bob reported that there is potential for the MRC to do some forage fish monitoring in the area of the project.

Emerging issues breakout session

Participants broke out into small groups and discussed emerging issues that the commission should address. Topics included:

- COVID impacts on county budgets. How are counties responding to the economic downturn and how will it affect conservation efforts in each county?
- Advisory role of MRCs: How can we increase engagement with elected officials?
- Role of gubernatorial appointees: How can these Commissioners be more effective in their roles and responsibilities?

Round table

Pete Haase reported that the Washington Sea Grant Crab Team has instituted strong safety precautions that allow them to get volunteers into the field and keep people safe.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

* The next regular Commission meeting will be on August 28.*



Executive Committee Meeting: August 3, 2020, 11:00-11:30am

Attendees: Elsa Schwartz, Ron Thom, Alan Clark, Tom Cowan

Commission Staff/Support: Sasha Horst, Lucas Hart

Joint Executive Committee Meeting

Katie is working on scheduling a Zoom meeting for September and sent an email soliciting availability on a range of dates. The committee reviewed the draft list of proposed topics. Suggestions included:

- A "state of the Foundation and state of the Commission" topic should be added to the agenda.
- Consider using breakout groups during meeting but don't let it detract from the larger group conversation.
- Executive committee chairs will lead the meeting.

Match Policy

Lucas reviewed the draft match policy that had been prepared last month, with additions based on input from the July meeting. The committee liked the policy overall with a few recommendations:

- Break out the background section, and add "since inception Commission use of match has been necessary because....," "Recently, MRCs have been looking to third party grants.....," "we encourage MRCs to seek third party grants...."
- Under criteria, add "MRCs should reach out to the Commission as early as possible..."
- Send revised version back to Executive Committee by email before bringing to the Commission for approval.
- After approval, committee recommended doing outreach calls to MRC staff to discuss the new policy.

Lucas will work with Sasha to implement the above actions.

Upcoming Commission meetings

After a brief discussion the Committee recommends that the September meeting be held virtually. A decision on the October Commission meeting will be made at the September Executive Committee meeting.

Next Executive Committee meeting

The next Executive Committee meeting will be changed from September 7th to September 14th. A debrief on the joint Executive Committee meeting should be included in the agenda.



Draft NWSC Match Policy

For review at the August 28 2020 Commission Meeting

Background

The NWS Commission secures funding that is distributed to Marine Resources Committees (MRC) and used to maintain staff who support MRCs. Some funding sources, such as federal base funding received from EPA's National Estuary Program, require a 1:1 match with non-federal dollars. Federal funding is only reimbursed up to the amount matched, so any expenses without matching funds will be unpaid by our federal award.

To meet these match obligations, the Commission documents volunteer hours, in-kind support, state funds and county contributions to MRCs. It is necessary for the Commission to use all of these combined sources in order to meet the federal funding match requirement.

Policy

MRCs are highly encouraged to seek third-party grants to support their work. In cases where these grants require match, MRCs should not use funding provided through the Commission, or the associated volunteer hours, in-kind support or direct support provided by any entity as available match without prior review and written approval by the Commission operations manager or director.

MRCs needing match for third-party grant applications should contact the operations manager or director as early as possible to allow adequate time for review.

Criteria

Approval for MRCs to use volunteer hours, in-kind support, state funds, county contributions or other sources associated with Commission support to MRCs for match on third-party grants will be determined by the following criteria:

- Total federal funding, or other funds requiring match, awarded to the Commission for the given year will be compared to the total amount of available match. If unused match is available, the operations manager or director will work with MRCs to determine the amount that can be applied to third-party grants.

**Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
(NWIFC)
Monthly Report**

Month/Year: August 21, 2020

Project updates:

- *Tribal/ NWIFC Presentation to NW Straits Commission:* Planning is currently underway by NWIFC staff and Lucas Hart to schedule a presentation on Hatcheries to the NW Straits Commission. The presentation is likely to take place during one of the fall meetings.
- *2020 State of Our Watersheds Report:* NWIFC continues to work with tribes to update the Tribes' State of Our Watershed Reports. The last report was completed in 2016, this is an update to that. A final draft is now being prepared for NWIFC tribal review in September. The projected timeline for this report finalization is late fall 2020.

Legislative updates: No real updates to report, however, like many, NWIFC and the tribes continue to watch the state budget and any forthcoming cuts or revisions due to the COVID-19 response.

Emerging issues:

- *Proposed rule: Adding a new definition of "habitat" to the Endangered Species Act.*
 - Comments are due Sept. 4, 2020. NWIFC and member tribes have requested a 60-day comment extension, but have yet to receive word that it has been granted. A 30-day comment period is not near sufficient.
 - NWIFC and tribes are preparing comments, and we highlight the following areas of concern:
 - Lack of initial tribal consultation on this issue. As resource managers with reserved treaty rights to both the resource(s) and habitat, this proposed rule has strong tribal implications.
 - The proposed definitions provided, in particular, the alternative definition has the potential to severely limit the ability to protect habitat critical to the recovery and perpetuation of species of both current and future listings. Additionally, the alternative definition also will exclude those areas where there are currently no "pre-existing features" that can support a species, thus effectively prohibiting habitat restoration initiatives and programs. This is a great concern to tribes, and to the region, who've built recovery programs on the very premise of protecting what good habitat remains, and restoring those habitats and ecologically important areas that are critical to species recovery, in particular, salmon recovery.
- As mentioned above, work is currently underway to structure presentation(s) to the NWSC on tribal priorities such as hatchery and hatchery production, and its intersection with treaty rights, treaty rights protection and salmon recovery.
 - I'd encourage members and MRCs to start thinking about the types of questions they may have; and if possible send them to me as you like. I'd like to give myself and NWIFC staff time to consider these questions ahead of time.



Additional helpful links:

- View the Federal Register Notice re: ESA Proposed Rule, adding a new definition of “Habitat” here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/08/05/2020-17002/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-regulations-for-listing-endangered-and-threatened>



Commission staff highlights- [August 2020]

Communications Audit and Plan: Lucas, Sasha and Katie met with the consultants on August 5 and debriefed the exercises and outcomes from the July Commission meeting. They provided feedback on the key messages that will be presented at the August Commission meeting.

Virtual MRC Symposium: Our seventh event in the virtual Symposium series featured Island MRC on August 6th. They presented on the feasibility assessment and design of armor removal at two sites: Hoypus Point and Possession Point. The MRC also shared their newly released communications plan. Overall the seven MRC features were well attended and brought representation from all MRCs together to share project information. Just under 150 people registered or attended at least one symposium. We are back to the drawing board to come up with more topic ideas for the series.

Green Crab: The Whatcom MRC hosted a Drayton Harbor green crab webinar featuring 5 members of the Drayton Harbor Management team including Allie, 3 WDFW staff, and 1 WA Sea Grant staff. The webinar was streamed on both Zoom and Facebook Live and recorded for future reference. Plans are in place for a NOAA Veteran's Corps Intern to join the green crab trapping effort in Drayton Harbor. As of 8/21, XX green crabs have been captured and removed from Drayton Harbor. Commission staff is exploring the addition of a green crab reporting tool for the MyCoast app.

MRC grants: The April-June payment requests and reporting have all been processed by Commission and Ecology staff. Some state funds remained unspent, which expired as of June 30. Amendments for year two projects are now in process for Island and Snohomish MRCs. Amendments for the other MRCs were completed previously.

Project database: Data entry and testing continues, with 2017-18 and 2018-19 projects added for all MRCs.

Kelp: Kelp monitoring is in full swing in all six participating counties. Many MRCs have observed a delayed emergence of kelp beds this year, and others have seen smaller beds compared with 2019. Data are being logged in the online form KoboToolBox to expedite data entry and processing.

Meetings Attended:

Dana attended: Island MRC meeting 8/4; WSU Jefferson beach naturalists 8/20, ESRP technical reviewer presentations 8/20

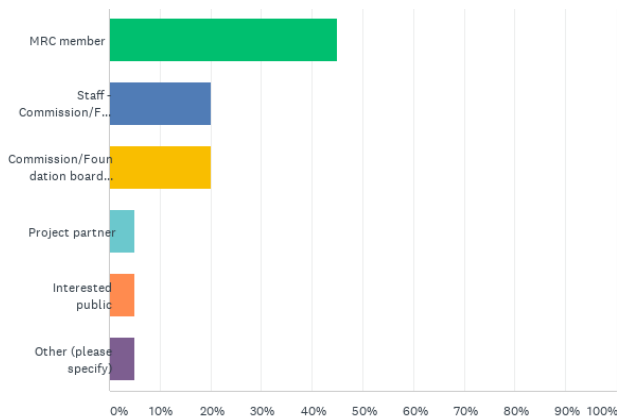
Sasha attended: Jefferson MRC meeting 08/04, Clallam Intern Celebration 08/17

Allie attended: Whatcom MRC 8/6, Clallam intern celebration 08/17

Katie attended: San Juan MRC 8/6, Skagit MRC 9/13

MRC Symposium Evaluation Results

1. Overview of participant's affiliation with NWS Initiative – 20 responses



2. Feedback on the length, virtual format, timing, presentation details, and Q&A format primarily ranged from Good-Great.

- Respondents suggest making the Symposiums 1 hour, 90 minutes should be the maximum length.
- Thursday afternoons worked well for most people, but there are likely people working who cannot attend. Consider scheduling in the evenings.
- A few people felt some MRCs missed the point of keeping the focus on how other MRCs can adopt the project. Some would like to know more about how the project got started.

3. Suggestions to improve interactive opportunities include:

- Zoom and breakout rooms for small group discussion
- Taking proactive next steps at the end of each symposium to help schedule follow up meetings for those interested in getting into more details and discussions for moving collaborative projects forward.

4. MRCs are considering how to adopt what they learned from a majority of the projects presented in the Symposiums. Note there were a few votes for the Communications plan in the comments, and more for Voluntary No Anchor Zones not reflected in the below table:

Is your MRC considering adopting any of the projects or strategies shared by another MRC? If so, which one(s)?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Communications needs assessment (Island)	0.00%	0
Hoypus Point armor removal (Island)	0.00%	0
Prioritization of pilings for removal (Snohomish)	0.00%	0
Pigeon Creek culvert replacement feasibility, stormwater management, education (Snohomish)	0.00%	0
Pinto abalone restoration (Skagit)	0.00%	0
Olympia oyster restoration (Whatcom)	0.00%	0
Rain gardens (Jefferson)	10.00%	1
Other (please specify)	10.00%	1
Plastic Free Salish Sea (San Juan)	30.00%	3
North Sound Stewards (Whatcom)	30.00%	3
Voluntary no anchor zones (Jefferson)	40.00%	4
Oil spill consequences (San Juan)	40.00%	4
County advisory role of MRCs (Clallam)	40.00%	4
Kids on the Beach (Skagit)	40.00%	4
Total Respondents: 10		

Additional comments:

- a. Others wrote in that they are having further discussions, but no decisions yet on what projects they might adopt.
 - b. This platform has allowed me to put names to types of actions/projects, so that I can connect with them outside the MRC Symposium
 - c. This also led to the Commission compiling a regional proposal for Voluntary No Anchor Zones.
5. Suggested next steps for the NWS Commission/Foundation to support MRC collaboration or implementation of projects includes:
 - a. Host small group discussions on specific topics and next steps
 - b. When projects span multiple MRCs then having some lead energy from Commission/Foundation is helpful
 - c. Let other MRCs know if/when other MRCs are starting to work on these Symposium projects, to see if there's opportunity for additional collaboration and/or leveraging of funds/resources.
 - d. Provide a running list of active projects, broken down by MRC. Almost like a call-tree or directory, if I have questions about a type of project that someone else has successfully done, I can contact them.

Suggestions for future symposiums:

6. Most participants wanted Symposiums to be held either twice a year or once a quarter.
 - a. Some leaned toward more often while we are isolated, and to reassess frequency and format when pandemic is a thing of the past.
7. 100% of respondents would attend additional symposiums on specific topics!
8. Participants wanted to keep the short virtual format. Some proposed complementary in person events for specific topics to not lose the in person benefits of collaboration.
9. Suggested focused topics include:

Suggested topics	# votes
outreach/communication tools w/ additional discussion on communication strategies during COVID	5
climate change/resiliency/SLR	4
kelp & eelgrass (but mostly kelp)	4
Interacting w/local and state govt	2
ocean acidification	2
salmon/orca recovery	1
restoration	1
recruiting members	1
working w/foundation	1
Methods for drones/go pros and making videos	1
collecting water chemistry data	1
plastics	1
Invite partner organizations to present on current work	1
economic stability of NWSC/NWSF/MRCs - funding strategies	1

Northwest Straits Foundation

Work Updates August 2020

Projects

Awarded Seahorse Siesta barge removal and restoration contract to Quilceda Excavation. They will do the project this fall.

Produced a *Shore Friendly* video with Hugh Shipman at Semiahmoo spit, describing shoreline erosion and benefits. This will stream on our website, social media platforms and be shared with partners. This is the first video in a series to supplement traditional outreach/workshops that are on hold due to Covid-19.

Partnerships

The Conservation Districts will partner with the Northwest Straits Foundation in Orca Recovery Day 2020 activities. The NWSF Orca Forum is scheduled for Wednesday, October 14, time to be announced shortly.

Grant Writing

We submitted two pre-proposals to the EPA National Estuary Program Coastal Watersheds grant (CWG) program. One project will build rain gardens to address stormwater treatment and reduce the outflow of toxins and pollutants. Partners include Jefferson MRC; Skagit MRC; Whatcom MRC; WSU; cities of Anacortes; Bellingham; Port Townsend; and, Mt. Erie Elementary School (Anacortes).

The other is for Polnell Point shoreline armor removal and restoration. If awarded, we'll remove approximately 1400 linear feet of riprap and road fill to restore Polnell Point forage fish spawning habitat. This will also improve coastal resilience in the face of sea level rise.

We also submitted grant applications for "Building Sea Level Rise Resilience through Education, Adaptation, Restoration & Conservation". This will be a planning and outreach project to assess opportunities where managed retreat (house elevation/relocation) is the best option for shoreline landowners to lessen impacts from shoreline armoring. Focus areas include Island and Jefferson counties, and Port Susan Bay, where we have existing armor and setback data. Proposing this as a pilot study that can be expanded region-wide with additional data collection.

Board Recruiting

The Foundation executive committee has initiated outreach to potential board candidates. We are seeking individuals with experience in fundraising, communications and marketing. Knowledge of the NWSI and marine conservation are key. People interested in learning more should contact Nan or Don.

Advancement

We've contracted with Samish Indian Nation/Natural Resources division to build a StoryMap of our project history throughout the region. The goal is to create an interactive GIS map of restoration and stewardship sites. The StoryMap will be hosted on the Foundation website and related social platforms including Facebook.

We submitted a grant proposal for Salish SeaFresh episode #3, highlighting crabbing best practices, and the connection between local seafood, conservation and stewardship.

Our big first quarter (FY21) push is on new donor cultivation. The process includes generating new prospect lists using fundraising software, composing a "drip campaign" of engaging stories and pictures, and engaging audience members in the Initiative's work. The challenge is, of course, COVID-19. We can't host in-person events, so we're developing fun, self-guided activities that people can do while adhering to WA safety protocols.

Elevator Pitch

The purpose of an elevator pitch is to provide a quick overview of the organization while answering essential questions including who, what, where, when, and why.

The Northwest Straits Initiative is a community-led collaboration working to protect and restore the marine environment of northwest Washington.

Key Messages

Key messages should answer the question, "If there is one thing I want my audience to know, what would that be?" There should be no more than 3 or 4 key messages and they should be clear and concise.

Example concepts to aid our discussion:

- Regional environmental health and the NWSI's impact within the conservation effort
- Shared goal between the Commission, MRCs, and Foundation
- Uniquely positioned within the county government to help inform decision

Discussion Question

What concepts do we want to get across in our key messages?
What are your top priorities?

Internal Learning Tools

What tools would you use to learn these messages?

- Onboarding materials
- Communications matrix
- Fact sheet
- MRC Symposium
- Northwest Straits Initiative Conference
- Monthly Commission Meetings
- MRC Lead Staff Meeting

Discussion Question

What other tools would be helpful?

Evaluation Strategies

How will you measure success of your measurable goals? How often will you check in on status? If you go off-course, how will you redirect your strategies.

Goal #1: People **inside** of the organization will demonstrate knowledge of our mission, programs, and impact.

- Review and discuss Communications Plan annually
- Take the Baseline Awareness Survey, retake annually
- Review social media for consistent messaging

Goal #2: People **outside** of the organization will demonstrate knowledge and the importance of our mission, programs, and impact within the larger environmental restoration effort.

- Track anecdotal feedback from public audiences
- Monitor MailChimp newsletter analytics to track signups
- Monitor Google Analytics and social media analytics to track website traffic and new followers

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: August 2020

Submitted by: Helle Andersen

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- Intern celebration held online August 17th
- Educational outreach to Boys & Girls Club in Port Angeles
- Meeting with Commissioner Randy Johnson August 14th

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): None

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

The Clallam MRC's online Intern Celebration August 17th was a success! A total of 34 MRC members and local residents logged on to hear the presentations by [Angelina Woods](#), Anika Avelino and [Alissa Lofstrom](#). Angelina spoke about the green crab capture and removal project in Neah Bay and Anika and Alissa spoke about the smolt trap project on Tumwater Creek. Click on the names and you will see the intern's presentation. The audience also saw the draft of the first video about the Clallam MRC produced by interns Tyler Diltz and Malleck Braun. The video will be posted on the MRC website and other social media once it has been finalized.

In partnership with SeaDoc Society the Clallam MRC compiled 275 educational outreach packages focused on the book *Explore the Salish Sea*. The packages include the book (donated by SeaDoc Society), a coloring book, crayons, stickers and fake tattoos and a letter encouraging the students to sign up to be a junior SeaDoc and to submit a story and drawing to the Clallam MRC. The best five submittals will receive a T-shirt with a print of the drawing. In the week of August 17th 200 packages were handed out to students through the Port Angeles Club and another 75 to students through the Sequim Club.

Four Clallam MRC members met with Commissioner Randy Johnson to discuss climate change impacts and adaptation strategies. Afterwards the members stated that the meeting was interesting, enjoyable and productive.

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): None

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

Kelp bed monitoring: the three beds in Clallam Bay and Freshwater Bay have been surveyed. The team deployed the Hobos in the large Freshwater Bay kelp bed and plan to retrieve them in September. Next is the motorized survey along the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

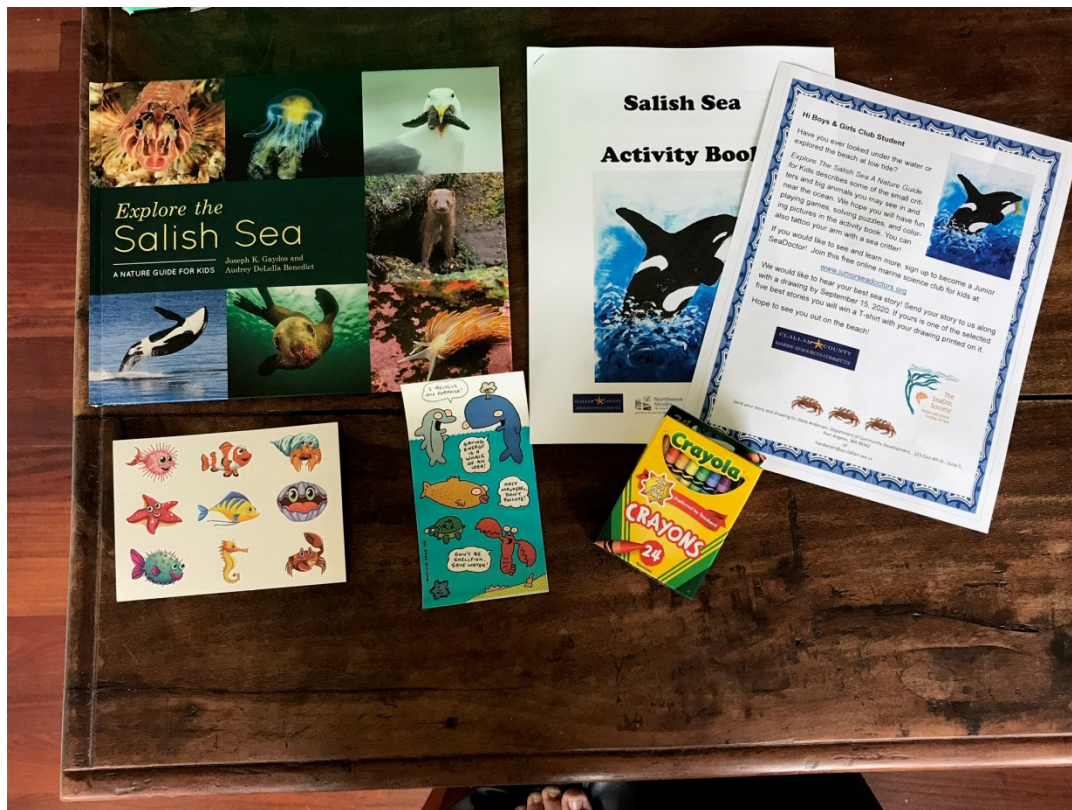
Pigeon guillemot surveys are almost completed after 10 weeks. Just a few remaining colonies are still active.

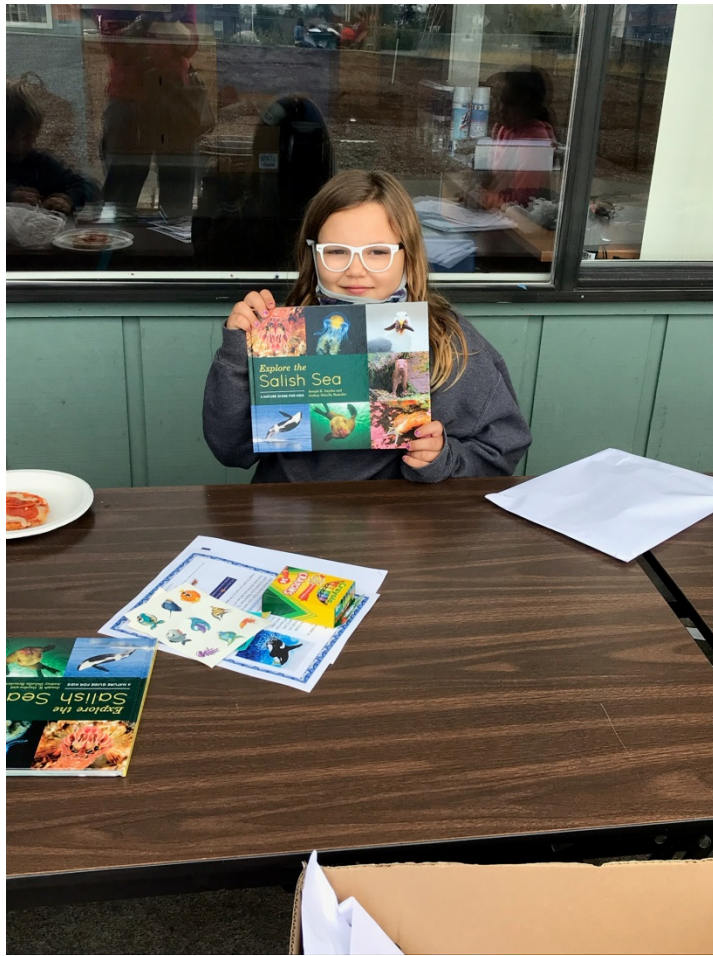
Olympia Oyster Restoration: the population surveys at the two restoration sites were performed in early August. The effort was led by Liz Tobin, shellfish biologist at Jamestown, and several MRC members participated in the surveys.

Forage fish sampling and shellfish biotoxin sampling are on-going. The delivery line to WDFW lab in Olympia is slowly starting up again.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):









MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: August 2020

Submitted by: Anna Toledo

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- **Art contest winners:** We announced the winners of the Design Your Own Salish Sea Creature art contest, in partnership with Sound Water Stewards. The winning entries are posted on the [MRC website](#).
- **Kelp videos:** Our volunteers documented Pacific sand lance feeding in a kelp bed. This video and many more are available on our [kelp webpage](#).
- **Outreach needs assessment:** We are planning an outreach needs assessment to understand how the MRC can help address the needs of the community in regards to outreach about marine resources.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): None.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

Past Meetings/Events:

- August 4: MRC meeting via WebEx. Topics: Kelp, Outreach Needs Assessment.
- August 6: MRC Virtual Symposium – Island MRC. Presentations on IC MRC, Hoypus Point and Possession Point restoration feasibility study, and communications.

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- September 1: MRC meeting via WebEx. Topic: Ecosystem Services Valuation.

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): None.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

Forage Fish: Monitoring continues at Cornet Bay, Ala Spit, Hidden Beach, and Glendale. New volunteers at Hidden Beach are getting up to speed. We are exploring options with WDFW to provide training to new volunteers. Staff member Ann Prusha will be helping coordinate forage fish volunteers.

Bull Kelp: Volunteers have been conducting surveys at Possession Point, Ebey's Landing, and Polnell Point. For the first time in six years of monitoring, we were able to document Pacific sand lance feeding in one of the kelp beds. A video of these fish, as well as additional videos of life in bull kelp beds, are available on the [kelp webpage](#).

Outreach – Art Contest: The MRC and Sound Water Stewards (SWS) partnered on an art contest, with the theme "Design Your Own Salish Sea Creature." The winners were announced on the [MRC website](#).

Outreach Needs Assessment: The MRC formed a subcommittee to plan for an outreach needs assessment this fall. MRC members will interview County Department heads, staff, and elected officials, as well as partner organizations to understand how the MRC can help address the needs of the

community in regards to outreach about marine resources. The subcommittee will be meeting this month to plan the interview questions and the individuals and groups to interview. Interviews will be conducted in October-November, and results will be compiled and reported in February 2020.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.): None.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

Design Your Own Salish Sea Creature Art Contest Winners:



"Seacorn" by Amelia, 4th-5th Grade First Place



"Fire Fish" by Luna, 4th-5th Grade Runner-Up



"Squicken" by Ellie, 6th-7th Grade First Place

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: August 2020

Submitted by: Monica Montgomery

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- Olympia oyster Team – five members did monitoring at Disco Bay, including our MRC's Commissioner, & five members did reconnaissance at Dabob Bay. The Dabob site visited has plenty of oysters and won't need any restoration efforts.
- Kelp Team – four MRC volunteers did a third survey in August. They're finding the kelp bed taking a totally different shape this year. A masters student focusing his project on doing drone surveys for kelp monitoring has been tagging along and taking videos and photos and can georeference the perimeter to compare with the volunteers' data.
- Education & Outreach Team – finalizing edits on Olympia oyster and eelgrass videos with the local videographer. We are super excited with how the videographer has threaded the stories together and appreciate the feedback from Commission folks. Excited to share them with the world in September!

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

Nothing to report.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

Past Events/Meetings

- July 23 – Virtual MRC Symposium (San Juan MRC)
- July 24 – Forage fish sampling at Dabob Bay
- July 24 – Oly oyster restoration site assessment at Mystery Bay
- July 31 – NWSC Meeting
- August 2 – Oly oyster monitoring at Discovery Bay (Powerline)
- August 4 – MRC monthly meeting
- August 4 – Pre-recorded presentation for PT School District's 2-day Ocean Acidification Teacher Training
- August 5 – Forage fish sampling at Adelma Beach
- August 6 – Virtual MRC Symposium (Island MRC)
- August 12 – Live Q&A for PT School District's 2-day Ocean Acidification Teacher Training
- August 14 – Informal monitoring of No-Anchor Zones/boater compliance in PT and PH
- August 16 – Kelp team's 3rd survey
- August 19 – Oly oyster restoration site assessment at Dabob Bay
- August 21 – Forage fish sampling at Dabob Bay

- August 18 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting

Upcoming Events/Meetings

- August 28 – NWSC Meeting
- Sept 1 – MRC Monthly Meeting
- Sept 11 – Strait ERN LIO quarterly
- Sept 22 – Executive Committee Meeting
- Sept 25 – NWSC Meeting

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments):

The MRC worked with NWSF (Caroline) on submitting a coastal watersheds grant, to include the installation of two additional rain gardens in collaboration with the City of Port Townsend.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

1. Monitoring:

- Forage fish - Fort Townsend:** Nothing to report till October.
- Forage fish - Adelma Beach (Index):** The property owner (MRC member) sampled on August 5.
- Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The next sampling is planned for August 21 and will be carried out by the property owner (MRC member) and MRC Coordinator.
- Kelp:** The third survey of the summer took place on August 16 with the help of four MRC volunteers. In the past, volunteers have found the kelp bed had a dumbbell shape – thick patch on west petered then thick patch on east. However, this year, there's an inner fringing bed along the shoreline then a patch farther out, taking a different shape. A student at Evergreen who completed a seasonal job with DNR is working on his master's thesis, focused on drone surveys for kelp. He took drone videos and photos and can georeference the perimeter the day of sampling. There is potential for a fourth survey in September.

2. Rain Gardens:

- The subcommittee selected the SW corner of Adams and Clay streets for the second rain garden installation (sometime in September 2020), primarily due to its high visibility and expected benefits to water quality, capturing stormwater runoff from Lawrence Street, a relatively busy road. Unfortunately, since the initial listing of this site as a potential rain garden, the Jefferson County Public Utilities District has drafted plans to bury some lines right in the path of the proposed rain garden. The MRC has directed its efforts to a site at the NW corner of Benton and Clay streets – there is a considerable amount of runoff flowing down Clay, which also collects water from Benton. The homeowner is very enthusiastic about having a rain garden to help with the runoff and is willing to help maintain it. The downstream neighbors are also very supportive. Having

a rain garden at this site will reduce the flows to the rain garden at the Jefferson County Courthouse, which currently is getting overwhelmed when there is more than 0.25" of rain.

3. Education & Outreach:

- a. The subcommittee met to discuss the MRC's role in collaborating with artists and have put on hold the previously discussed collaboration with local plankton artists. Subcommittee members have been tasked to list MRC messaging they'd like to see communicated, to reconvene as a group to review and prioritize these messages. The plan is to then discuss how best to convey these messages, and whether collaboration with any local artists can enhance them. Two MRC members and two NWSI staff presented for the WSU Beach Naturalists training (August 3-20), representing the MRC/NWSI on project related topics including Olympia oyster restoration efforts in Discovery Bay, kelp monitoring, shoreline restoration, importance of eelgrass, water quality and rain gardens. Working on graphics specifications for rain garden rack cards and MRC roll-up poster, and finalizing edits on the Olympia oyster and eelgrass videos with the videographer – they should be ready to share in September.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- a. Five MRC members conducted Olympia oyster monitoring at Discovery Bay on August 2nd. The MRC Coordinator is working with the Project Lead to process and analyze the data. Five MRC members conducted Olympia oyster "reconnaissance" at Dabob Bay to assess the potential for a new restoration and/or monitoring site.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- a. The subcommittee will not be participating in a Zoom room for the virtual Wooden Boat Festival. The MRC Coordinator and one member will be conducting informal monitoring of boater compliance throughout the end of the summer. The MRC Coordinator monitored compliance at Port Townsend and Port Hadlock on August 14th and all boaters anchored nearby were in compliance.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

PT Sewer Outfall (advisory project): Nothing to report.

Jefferson County SMP Update: Nothing to report.

City of Port Townsend SMP Update: Nothing to report.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

Kelp 2nd survey, drone footage by Tyler Cowdrey from DNR/Evergreen (last month)





Oyster reconnaissance at Mystery Bay (last month)

Photo by Monica Montgomery:



Photo by: Brenda Johnson:



Oyster monitoring at Discovery Bay, photos by Monica Montgomery







Oyster reconnaissance at Dabob Bay, photos by Heather Burns





MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan

Month/Year: Aug 2020

Submitted by: Frances Robertson

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- The MRC continued efforts to spread the Be Whale Wise messaging through signage installation.
- Community value data collection regarding human use and management of SRKW foraging habitat is underway.
- Progress continues for the MSA update.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

Our new MRC member Beth Tate is due to be appointed by Council this month bringing the membership up to full capacity.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

The Monthly MRC meeting took place on August 6th.
The PFSS subcommittee met on the 18th August.

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments):

There are no new funding updates. County support of the Marine Program remains at risk for 2021.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

SRKW: The boater safety and Be Whale Wise kiosk is under construction and it expected to be completed in early September. In addition MRC members have assisted with installation of the additional Be Whale Signage to ensure that the majority of marinas and boat launches have been covered.

Acoustic data collection has continued through August and is expected to continue through to the Memorial Day weekend. In addition, data collection to better understand community values related to Southern Resident killer whale foraging habitat is also under way. Unfortunately, due to covid planned focus groups will be planned to be conducted via an online platform (e.g. zoom).

County staff are continuing to pursue grant opportunities to support the County and MRC's broader efforts related to continuing the whale warning flag and Be Whales Wise efforts and the associated outreach and education, including continued presence at regional boat shows, dock talks etc.

PFSS: The Plastic Free Salish Sea website has continued to bring in interest and the monthly beach clean-ups on San Juan Island led by community member and PFSS steering committee member Amy Cadwell have continued. Planning is also underway to implement phase III of the website to add an adopt a beach and adopt a road option. This is being made possible by funds available through the County's Solid Waste Program –a partner in PFSS.

MSA: Efforts continue to update the MSA plans biodiversity conservation targets. These efforts are being led by MRC research assistant, Abigail Ames who will be presenting her work at the September MRC meetings. In addition, County staff have been working to address progress of the strategies identified in the original plan.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):



Orcas Island Yacht Club



Brandt's Landing

Examples of Be Whale Wise Signage installed by MRC member Carl Davis on Orcas Island.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: Aug/2020

Submitted by: Tracy/Pete

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- Forage fish surveys started up again this month. More extensive surveys are taking place at Bowman Bay.
- Skagit Valley College is working on a forage fish survey video for their students with the help of the forage fish survey crew.
- Fidalgo Bay Day goes Virtual! The “Scavenger Hunt” is set to launch on Sept 1.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Nothing new to report.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

- **MRC Monthly Meeting- August 13:** 16 people attended the Skagit MRC virtual meeting on August 13. Lisa Kaufman provided an update on the Northwest Straits Foundation’s projects and proposals happening in Skagit County.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day Scavenger Hunt (Sept 1 – Sept 30, 2020):** 14 participating organizations with different scavenger hunt activities for kids of all ages. Some activities are at specific geographic locations while others can be done at home. The Activity Guide can be downloaded to smart phones. Hard copies will also be made available.
- **Next MRC Monthly Meeting- September 10, 9am-11:00am** (GoToMeeting)

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments):

No updates.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

- **Salish Sea Stewards:** 21 participants completed the virtual Salish Sea Stewards training through Padilla Bay. The last class was held June 9th. We received a lot of positive feedback from the 15 participants who completed the survey. We now have an excellent template for planning next year’s training whether it’s virtual or in-class or a combination. The training will likely take place in February or March 2021. 4 new Salish Sea Stewards joined the SSS Advisory Committee for a total of 12 committee members! A meeting will be held August 26 to introduce the new members, review the results of the 2020 program, and start planning the 2021 training program.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day Scavenger Hunt Activity Guide:** There are a total of 14 participating organizations with scavenger hunt activities for kids of all ages. The Activity Guide has been drafted and is currently under review. The event website will be ready to launch soon. Scavenger Hunt activities are currently scheduled to take place during the month of September. Points can be earned for each activity completed and participants can receive a Certificate of Completion and special recognition for completing a certain number of activities. Participants can share photos of their experiences on Instagram #FidalgoBayDay2020 or email fidalgobayday@gmail.com.

- Bowman Bay Restoration: Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group Staff hosted a volunteer plant maintenance work party on August 7 and August 21 with a maximum of four volunteers. Dune grass is doing great, but there are a lot of weeds that need to get pulled. The Puget Sound Partnership is working on a short video about the restoration project.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Forage fish surveys have started back up again at all of our restoration sites and Index sites with a reduced number of volunteers. We plan on conducting a more extensive survey at Bowman Bay in August and September. Surf smelt eggs were found at that location for the first time just last year and we are hoping to find more this year. Several new Salish Sea Stewards will be helping with the forage fish surveys. The lab manager at Skagit Valley College has been tasked with creating virtual field trip videos for students in their Environmental Program, including a video on conducting forage fish surveys in Fidalgo Bay. She will be working closely with the forage fish survey crew to create the video which will also be made available for the MRC and volunteers to use in training and outreach.
- Kids on the Beach: A final report for the 2019/2020 Kids on the Beach program will be available before the end of this grant period in September. Annie England with Padilla Bay NERR is now in the process of working with teachers to develop the 2020/2021 Kids on the Beach program for this upcoming school year. Most schools are planning on starting off the school year with virtual classrooms or some kind of hybrid.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Field work is done for the season. Hatchery work and data analysis continues. A final report will be completed before the end of this grant period in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Paul and his son continue to conduct bimonthly monitoring of shell tiles to monitor oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. So far settlement has been pretty low this year compared to last year. Paul and his also kayaked out to the middle of Fidalgo Bay from the south end to look for oysters where they've never been before. They discovered that Olympia oysters are finally starting to settle out there in low densities where there are clam shells and Pacific oyster shells to settle on. They also observed Olympia oysters along the outer edges of the channels similar to what we've seen in the higher up channels at Sharpes Corner.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Kelp surveys took place in July and August at Shannon Point, Coffin Rocks, and Biz Point and will continue through September.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):



Volunteer Work Party at Bowman Bay

Photo By: SFEG

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: August 2020

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- MRC Piling Grant: The MRC received feedback from partners and made edits to the draft report. The final report will be made available in September and a press release is planned for the project in September. Phase 2 is going to focus on high-priority areas and additional conversations with stakeholders.
- The MRC has partnered with DNR to do marine vegetation mapping of the Snohomish Estuary. Data was collected late July, and a report will be completed later this fall.
- The MRC continues to support derelict vessel work around the county and assist other agencies who have derelict vessels on their property. Additionally, Snohomish County is working on a contract to remove 4 vessels from the estuary this fall.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

No changes at this time.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

Washington Department of Natural Resources completed field work data gathering for the marine vegetation mapping work of the Snohomish Estuary July 27-31.

Elisa Dawson attended a cross-agency meeting on Meadowdale restoration monitoring with the Tulalip Tribes, USGS, and Snohomish County on July 29.

Tom Doerge, Traci Sanderson, and Elisa Dawson completed the August monitoring of Edmonds kelp beds on August 3.

Elisa Dawson and ESA Consultants presented on the MRC Pilings Project to the Snohomish Basin Technical Committee on August 4.

Elisa Dawson presented to SWM Management on the MRC Pilings Project on August 6.

Elisa Dawson and several MRC Members participated in the MRC Symposium for Island County on August 6.

The MRC Pilings subcommittee met on August 13 to discuss edits to the MRC draft report and grant plans for Phase 2.

Elisa Dawson completed kelp monitoring at Hat Island with SWM staff on August 17.

In place of their monthly meeting, the MRC hosted a social hour on August 19. The regular August meeting was cancelled.

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments):

None.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

MRC Grant 2019-2020 Task 2: The MRC has reviewed the draft of the pilings report and received stakeholder feedback. The draft report is being edited and will be available in September. The MRC is working with Snohomish County Communications to do a press release showcasing their work. The MRC pilings subcommittee finalized their Phase 2 project scope and the amendment is being processed.

Task	Completion Date
Task 1. Compile Piling Information and Assemble GIS Database	January 31, 2020
Task 2. Develop Draft Prioritization Framework	February 28, 2020
Task 3. Field Verification of Pilings	May 31, 2020 Changed to June 22
Task 4. Conduct Prioritization and Prepare Project Report	
• Draft report	July 7, 2020
• Presentation of draft findings to Snohomish MRC	July 15, 2020
• Final report	August 31, 2020

Nearshore Beach Restoration at Howarth Park and Everett Nearshore Project (Opportunity Fund Project): Bob Hillmann is working on getting the signs from this project installed. After signs are installed, the grant will be closed out.

Below projects are other projects of the MRC funded by SWM fees:

Crabber Education: The MRC was highlighted on a local radio station by Stitch Mitchell on Classic County 101.1 for crabber education best management practices. Signs continue to be posted for general outreach at boat launches.

MyCoast: Reports continue to come in. No additional report at this time.

Derelict Vessels: Staff Elisa Dawson has gotten SWM management approval to work on the removal of 4 derelict vessels in the Snohomish Estuary. The goal is to remove the vessels this fall.

<https://mycoast.org/reports/58693>

<https://mycoast.org/reports/58690>

<https://mycoast.org/reports/58625>

<https://mycoast.org/reports/56296>

MRC Outreach Subcommittee: No updates at this time.

Oil Spill: WSU Beach Watchers will host a model oil spill group training on September 19 and 26. MRC Members Susan Tarpley, Mike Sadler, and Julie Schlenger will attend the training along with MRC Staff Elisa Dawson.

Meadowdale: Elisa Dawson is participating on a cross-agency effort to do pre-project monitoring at Meadowdale Beach in anticipation of the restoration work there. The MRC will monitor for forage fish and do grain size analysis.

Kelp Project: MRC has collected their yearly kelp monitoring data at Edmonds, Meadowdale, and Mukilteo and Hat Island. Data will be submitted online and mapped using SoundIQ

Mussel Watch: No updates at this time.

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area: Elisa Dawson is working on scheduling the next Port Susan Subcommittee joint meeting with Island County for late September.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

Upcoming Events:

- MRC August meeting was cancelled and instead the MRC hosted a virtual social hour in place of their yearly picnic.
- Next MRC Meeting is September 16th

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: August 2020

Submitted by: Austin Rose

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- The MRC hosted a virtual European Green Crab forum on August 12. The webinar was targeted to Drayton Harbor residents but suitable for anyone in the region to learn about green crabs. The goal was to make sure the public understands why green crabs are an issue, how to identify and report them, and how green crabs are being managed in Drayton Harbor. The video can be viewed here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YXDMBPc9c>
- The MRC is planning to hold a virtual retreat in early 2021. The goals of the retreat are: project planning (considering COVID-19), addressing member engagement and capacity, and alignment of MRC activities with goals and mission.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

- The MRC will be hiring two new interns for their forage fish survey program and the North Sound Stewards program. The announcement should be posted on the Whatcom County website and the MRC website by the end of August.
- The Whatcom County Natural Resources Division Secretary, Robin Klein, who provided some of her staff time to help with the MRC meeting minutes, is retiring at the end of August. Meeting minutes will be prepared by MRC staff for the foreseeable future.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

- The MRC held their general meeting on August 6.
 - A member of the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District Advisory Committee shared an overview of a pilot citizen science project monitoring for harmful algae blooms (HABs) in Drayton Harbor. The MRC was invited to help with monitoring and to provide input on how the project could be replicated in other areas of Whatcom County.
 - Hilary Wilkinson, VEDA Environmental, will facilitate a retreat for the MRC in early 2021. Hilary briefed the MRC on how a virtual MRC retreat will be planned and conducted. The goals of the retreat are: project planning (considering COVID-19), addressing member engagement and capacity, and alignment of MRC activities with goals and mission.
- The MRC hosted a virtual European Green Crab forum on August 12. The webinar was targeted to Drayton Harbor residents but suitable for anyone in the region to learn about green crabs. The goal was to make sure the public understands why green crabs are an issue, how to identify and report them, and how green crabs are being managed in Drayton Harbor.

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments):

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

- Kelp surveys have occurred at the Aiston Preserve and SW Lummi Island. The kelp bed at the Aiston Preserve is noticeably larger than previous monitoring years. The Alden Bank survey has been cancelled for now due to weather.
- Eleanor is working to put together a small video for the North Sound Stewards, highlighting the 2020 year. Most of the trainings have been virtual this year, and most field work involving outside volunteers has been put on hold. There has been an effort to engage volunteers through the iNaturalist app and virtual beach walks.
- Lisa Hillier, WDFW, joined the MRC intern for the August Whatcom County forage fish surveys. Lisa provided training on how to use Iforms for electronic data collection, and guidance on the survey protocols.
- The MRC surveyed the Olympia oyster plots in N. Chuckanut Bay on August 19. 12 bags of seasoned Pacific oyster shell were placed amongst the plots to assess for natural larvae recruitment in 2021. Significantly more Olympia oyster (dead or alive) were found within the plots in 2019 as compared to 2020. However, the Olympia oysters found in 2020 were larger than those found in 2019.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

- Experienced volunteers are helping to survey European Green Crab in Drayton Harbor. No trainings can be provided at this time, which limits volunteer participation.
- The MRC has been asked by WDFW, NWSC, WA SeaGrant, to help find contact info for high priority Drayton Harbor area landowners have properties either close to sites that green crabs have been found or have properties that based on satellite images look like really good green crab habitat. Also, the MRC has been asked to help develop a mailer to shoreline property owner in Drayton Harbor. 105 European Green Crabs have been found in the area this summer.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

Photos below taken by Austin Rose, MRC Staff

