



**Meeting:** Northwest Straits Commission  
**Location:** Zoom Conference Call  
**Date/Time:** April 30, 2021, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

To join the Zoom meeting, [click here](#). Meeting ID: 854 5437 6778 Passcode: 398521  
 For audio conference, dial: +1 253 215 8782

10:00 – 10:05	<b>Welcome and introductions</b> Approval of March minutes	Alan Clark, Chair
10:05 – 10:20	<b>Director's Report</b>	Lucas Hart
10:20 – 10:35	<b>Committee reports</b> Executive Committee Science Advisory Committee External Relations Committee	
10:35 – 10:50	<b>Business Items</b> Green crab field season Pew kelp funding US Fish & Wildlife Service voluntary no-anchor zone funding	Dana Dana Dana
	<b>Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission/ Tribal update</b>	Cecilia Gobin, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
10:55 – 11:00	<b>Puget Sound Partnership update</b>	Jennifer Grimm, Puget Sound Partnership
11:00 – 11:05	<b>NWS Foundation update</b>	Don Hunger, NWS Foundation
11:05 – 11:20	<b>MRC Reports</b>	MRC Representatives
11:20 – 11:30	<b>Election of Officers</b>	Nan McKay/All
11:30 – 11:40	<b>Open Discussion Breakout Groups</b>	All
11:40 – 11:50	<b>Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs</b>	All
11:50 – 11:55	<b>Roundtable</b>	All
11:55 – 12:00	<b>Public comment</b>	All

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



## minutes

March 26, 2021 • 10:00 AM-12:00 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), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan), Tom Cowan, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Nan McKay, Chris Castner, Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership-alternate), Julia Parrish

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

**Others in Attendance:** Don Hunger (Northwest Straits Foundation), Austin Rose (Whatcom MRC), Alisa Taylor (Clallam MRC), Anna Toledo (Island MRC), Frances Robertson (San Juan MRC), Caroline Gibson (NW Straits Foundation)

**Absent:** Laura Blackmore

#### Welcome and Introductions

Alan opened the meeting and facilitated introductions.

#### Approval of Minutes

The Commission approved the minutes from the February Northwest Straits Commission by consensus.

#### Welcome from Melanie Bacon

Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon provided a welcome to the group. Commissioner Bacon serves District 1, from just south of Oak Harbor to the south end of Whidbey Island, and previously served as Director of Human Resources for the County. She ran for County Commissioner to help be a caretaker for Island County, and recognized the work of the Northwest Straits Commission as caretakers. She encouraged the Commission to continue our important projects, and expressed gratitude to the Commission for providing resources to the counties. Commissioner Bacon thanked the tribal representatives who participate, as well as the governor appointees, along with a personal thanks to the local MRC members and staff member Anna Toledo.

#### NW Straits Commission Committee Reports

##### **Executive Committee**

Elsa Schwartz provided a summary from the March meeting and brought forward a recommendation that the Joint Executive Committee group transition to serve as a Leadership Team. The group would be made up of the Foundation and Commission executive committees and their directors. The Commission approved the change as proposed by consensus.

##### **External Relations Committee**

Committee chair Tom Cowan noted that there was no meeting, and that they had expected to see the state budget by now. He noted that there is no indication that the funding for MRCs won't be in the budget, but there is no new information at this time. Lucas shared an update on the kelp priorities



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funding request initiated by Senator Rolfes. This funding, if approved, will help keep kelp priorities moving forward and includes some funding for the regional kelp monitoring effort.

### **Science Advisory Committee**

Committee chair Julia Parrish reported that they held a meeting on March 10 and described two major themes the committee focused on. One is the committee's role in the annual MRC funding cycle and the NW Straits Commission's Request for Proposal process. She noted that the committee sees itself as facilitating the current work, and providing additional "glue" to link NW Straits Commission/MRCs to science centers.

The second area of focus was looking at Actions to Impacts and how to make both regional and local impacts. As a description, she explained that Actions to Impacts just says that anything we do should have a measurable and positive impact on the system (ecosystem or social system). Impacts can be measured at the scale of an individual project, or linked to multiple projects. Julia noted that she is a fan of moving toward a "lessons learned" point of view (fail forward), where learning from the work is an important impact that can drive how work is carried out in the future by one or more MRCs.

### **Tribal Acknowledgement**

Allie Simpson shared background information about the purpose and process for creating a tribal acknowledgement, and read the current draft. The acknowledgement is anticipated to be shared as a verbal acknowledgement at meetings, including Commission meetings and other events where MRCs are participating, as well as included on our website. Cecilia Gobin noted that we should defer to a particular tribe when they are present, such as the Samish welcome at the February meeting. Cecilia plans to share it with the NW Indian Fisheries Commission in April as part of her update on NW Straits Commission activities. The acknowledgement will likely be ready for Commission approval at the April meeting.

Discussion followed, and Commissioners recommended providing clear information about its use and purpose when it is shared, in order to ensure it is used for its intended purpose and provides information to others. They also suggested that a written report about how the acknowledgement was created might be useful to others who want to follow suit.

### **Business items**

Lucas provided an update on the Veterans Conservation Corps internship position. Commission staff held interviews yesterday and are planning for two interns, one will join in April and the other in June.

Lucas also updated the Commission on the hiring process for the Communications & Outreach Specialist position. Commission staff will share the posting for that position when available.

Dana shared a link to the Survive the Sound virtual migration game and invited anyone interested to join the Northwest Straits Initiative team: <https://www.survivethesound.org/>



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Sasha provided an updated 2021 calendar, noting that the 2021 conference will be held virtually on October 29, with plans for an in-person event in 2022. Sasha will reach out to MRCs to schedule presentations from MRCs to the Commission for the May/June meetings. MRC staff will receive guidance for those presentations before the April Commission meeting.

### **Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) update**

Cecilia reported that she has been working with NW Straits Commission staff on the tribal acknowledgement, and facilitated having Lucas and Dana present to the NW Indian Fisheries Commission's Environmental Policy Committee on eelgrass voluntary no anchor zones this month. Cecilia also noted that the NWIFC sent a letter to Governor Inslee to request a special task force to develop solutions to address recreational impacts to tribal treaty rights. By request, she provided a copy of the letter to share with the NW Straits Commission members.

### **Puget Sound Partnership Update**

Jenn Grimm reported that the Partnership is beginning the process for the 2022-26 [Action Agenda update](#). They are also watching for the 2021-23 state budget, and tracking the status of the [PUGET SOS Act](#). Nan asked about funding and Jenn reported that the PUGET SOS bill authorizes for up to \$50M/year for five years, which would need to be appropriated separately by Congress.

### **Northwest Straits Foundation Update**

Don Hunger provided an update on the Foundation, noting that with the state in phase three of the recovery plan, the Foundation can get back to collaborating with MRC volunteers. Construction on the Seahorse Siesta restoration project is complete, which restored 12,000 square feet of forage fish habitat and restored shoreline processes. The Foundation is preparing to launch a new outreach and engagement campaign called the Passport for Adventure.

### **MRC Reports**

MRCs provided full written reports that are available in the [pre-meeting materials](#). Highlights are included below:

#### **Whatcom – Bob Cecile**

- The MRC recommended the appointment of Kathy Ketteridge to fill the Citizen-at-Large vacancy. The County Council will officially approve Kathy's appointment on March 23.
- The MRC held their virtual retreat on February 25 and March 4. The committee refined their annual process and timeline for prioritizing and selecting projects. After generating and reviewing a comprehensive list of current proposed projects, the MRC agreed to a final list of projects to include in the 2021-2023 grant proposal.

#### **Snohomish – Tim Ellis**

- The MRC Outreach Subcommittee is planning for an Earth Day cleanup of Snohomish County shorelines related to the "Plastic Free Salish Sea" campaign. This event will include an



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opportunity for participants to drop off their trash to be “sorted” and weighed so that the MRC can better understand how trash is impacting local waterways.

- Five one-pagers have been completed on the MRC’s priority areas for creosote piling removal in the Snohomish estuary. The MRC will be hosting stakeholder meetings this spring to discuss opportunities for future removal.
- The MRC is preparing their scope of work for 2021-2022 MRC grant, which will focus on updating information from the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area plan. This work is in partnership with Island County MRC.

### **Skagit – Pete Haase**

- Skagit MRC and the Skagit Board of County Commissioners submitted letters of support for continued state funding of the European green crab monitoring, trapping and removal effort.
- We are working on finalizing our grant proposals for the 2021-2023 MRC Grant.

### **San Juan – Christina Koons**

- The MRC co-hosted a successful science symposium on the subject of Navy jet noise with the Salish Sea Institute. Over 230 people attended from across 14 states, Canada and Mexico.
- Adopting a Beach in San Juan County is now available to all!

### **Jefferson – Jeff Taylor**

- We had some membership changes in March: welcomed three new MRC members, two members resigned, and one member changed positions (see below).
- We began rain garden work with high school students in front of the Maritime Center this week.
- Every subcommittee is meeting, planning and prepping for the busy spring and summer seasons.

### **Island – Elsa Schwartz**

- Forage fish: Volunteer monitoring has been allowed to resume. Ann will be working with volunteers to get them trained in the iForms app for data collection.
- Restoration – Seahorse Siesta (partnership with NWSF): The barge and bulkhead have been removed at Seahorse Siesta! The NW Straits Foundation led a planting event with community members.
- Restoration/Advisory – Hoypus Point (partnership with NW Straits Foundation): Newly elected Commissioner Bacon will be visiting Hoypus Point on April 19 to learn about the restoration site and the work of the MRC.

### **Clallam – Alan Clark**

- Summer Internships are being advertised and the hiring process is ready to begin. The internships are with the Tumwater Smolt Trap project, and Green Crab Removal Project with the Makah Tribe.
- The Committee has received 50 applications for the MRC Coordinator/Dungeness Floodplain Restoration Coordinator position.



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- The Clallam MRC Kelp Webinar was successful, with good turnout and positive audience feedback. The next webinar is in the process of being planned, and will focus more on the current status of local/regional kelp beds, environmental threats to kelp, and actions which can be taken by locals to help improve and maintain nearshore ecosystem health.

### **Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs**

The Commission generated a list of key highlights that staff will compile to send to MRC representatives to share with their MRCs. Highlights included:

- NWS Commission Tribal acknowledgement. A draft is included in pre-meeting materials that is still undergoing edits.
- Recreation impacts to treaty rights letter from the NW Indian Fisheries Commission.
- In place of the 2021 conference a virtual event will be held October 29
- Actions to Impacts and the importance of learning from “failure” as an important discussion for the MRCs
- May/June MRC presentations to the Commission
- Foundation is creating a “Passport for Marine Adventure” game to get the public outdoors and educate them on the NW Straits Initiative.
- [Adopt a Beach](#) – Plastic Free Salish Sea link
- Reminder for [Northwest Straits 101](#) on April 15, recommended for new MRC members
- MRCs should consider developing relationships with local reporters to keep them updated on MRC work.

### **Round table**

Pete Haase mentioned that the Salish Sea Stewards heard about kelp from Max Calloway in one of their recent training sessions.

Tom Cowan noted the importance of the work behind the scenes on the budget, and recognized Lucas for all of his work in the background.

Christina Koons asked about the lack of NOAA involvement in the Commission and NW Straits Initiative. Tom shared some insights from the original formation.

### **Public comment**

There was no public comment.

\* The next regular Commission meeting will be on [Friday, April 30](#).\*



**Executive Committee Summary**  
**April 19, 2021 • 11:00am-12:00pm**

**Attendees:** Elsa Schwartz, Alan Clark, Tom Cowan, Julia Parrish

**Staff:** Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst

**Absent:** Jude Apple

**Staffing:** Ecology has posted the Communications & Outreach Specialist position at <https://bit.ly/3x6MbEI>. The closing date is May 3, and anticipated hiring is May or June. A new project assistant position is also pending, with the hope of hiring in June or July. Our first Veterans Conservation Corps intern, Jonathan Hallenbeck, started with us April 2. A second VCC intern, Antonio Gibson, will start in June.

Over the last year, our administrative position began taking a lead role in communications. This is unsustainable due to our extensive administrative support needs. We will need additional funding to support a position dedicated to communications.

**Retreat:** The Leadership Team (Joint EC) decided we would wait until COVID allows in person meetings before planning a retreat. We have extended Hilary Wilkinson's contract through September in the event that a retreat is possible.

**NW Straits Initiative diagrams:** Katie Harris was leading the development of diagrams that describe the NW Straits Initiative before her departure in February. We are delaying further work on this until we can rehire and train that position. Katie saved the materials and input from previous conversations that will inform the work moving forward.

**Tribal Acknowledgement:** We have settled on a Tribal Acknowledgement. Cecilia will inform the NW Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) in April. We would like to bring it to the NW Straits Commission for adoption at the April meeting, pending any feedback from the NWIFC.

Tom inquired about MRCs use of the language, and whether MRCs would be encouraged to use it. Lucas reported that the MRCs asked for information about the process and that they can choose to use it and adapt the list of tribes based on their location. San Juan MRC will continue using the statement that they are already using. Tom also recommended that staff thoroughly document the process taken to arrive at this statement for future reference.

*We acknowledge the land we're on today is the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Nations and has been since time immemorial. We respect their sovereignty, support their Treaty rights, their right to self-determination, and we honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. These Indigenous Nations include the Jamestown S'Klallam, Lower Elwha Klallam, Lummi, Makah, Nooksack, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Samish, Stillaguamish, Swinomish, and Tulalip Tribes.*

**Funding updates:** Lucas shared updates on what potential funding is pending in the state 2021-23 biennium budget, including MRC State funding (\$455K/year), green crab funding (\$170K/year), kelp funding for the NWS Commission to analyze MRC data and coordinate the Puget Sound Kelp plan (\$175K). In addition to the \$175K, kelp funding includes money for the NWS Commission to distribute to specific tribal partners and the Puget





Sound Restoration fund. Tom noted that he is interested in following up to determine the status of the MRC funding before the last day of the session.

Dana and Allie have received approval from US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to do the permitting phase for an eelgrass protection zone project expansion, which would provide ~\$60K in funding to the Commission and Foundation.

The NW Straits Foundation is serving as fiscal agent for a Pew Charitable Trusts-funded kelp policy project (~\$65K) led by Dana, which is in final preparation for signature.

**MRC funding policy:** Commission staff shared the draft funding policy with MRC lead staff on April 2. They suggested adding project examples to clearly explain qualifying projects. The Executive Committee offered similar advice. Lucas and Sasha will add examples and bring the policy back to the Committee and share with MRCs.

**NW Straits Commission budget:** Lucas shared a draft budget that would support programs, opportunities, and priorities at the Commission, based on the true representation of what we need to fully implement the work we're currently involved in or would like to do.

Julia noted that the tribal project fund might be more clearly described as being additional support for projects with tribes, since MRCs and the Commission already partner with tribes on work with funding from other lines of the budget. Julia also recommended writing out a more detailed description of the regional program staff needs to assure we're incorporating necessary science skills.





## Commission staff highlights- [April 2021]

**Staffing update:** The vacant Communications & Outreach Specialist position was posted by Ecology at <https://bit.ly/3x6MbEI>, with a closing date of May 3. Please share widely!

**MRC Grants:** MRCs have submitted their quarterly reporting for the January-March period, and Commission staff is processing the associated payment requests. MRCs are encouraged to check up on their current spending to ensure that state all funds are used in the April-June period, before they expire on June 30. The new grant application will go live in Ecology's web-based grant management system on May 11, and Commission staff is testing the system in the lead up to launch.

**Eelgrass:** The Commission will be awarded funds through the US Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program in 2022 to begin planning and permitting for proposed Voluntary No-Anchor Zones to protect eelgrass beds. Commission staff continue to lead monthly Salish Sea Eelgrass Protection Zone meetings with WA and BC partners to coordinate a transboundary network of no-anchor zones.

**Kelp:** The Commission and NWS Foundation are kicking off a project funded by Pew Charitable Trusts to take actions to follow up on needs from the Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan. The project will focus on coordinating needs and next steps to support science informed regulations and implementation. Additionally, planning is beginning for the 2021 bull kelp monitoring season including a kick off meeting May 6.

**Green Crab:** The Commission has restarted trapping efforts in Drayton Harbor. Commission, WA Department of Fish & Wildlife, and WA Sea Grant staff participated in a week-long field orientation to ensure all new staff understood trapping procedures and proper invasive species removal. During orientation, 5 green crabs were captured and removed from Drayton Harbor.

**Annual Report:** The 2020 Northwest Straits Initiative annual report is now available at <https://bit.ly/NWSI2020>. The link was sent directly to members of the Commission. Please share widely!

### **Meetings attended:**

Dana attended: Kelp Expedition Advisory Committee 4/2, Eelgrass Protection Initiative Consortium in San Juan County 4/21

Sasha attended: MRC Lead Staff meeting 4/; Skagit MRC meeting 4/8; Northwest Straits 101 4/15

Lucas attended: Salish Sea Institute Advisory Board 3/30; Shoreline revolving loan program presentation 3/31; MRC Lead Staff meeting 4/2; DEI Strategies meeting 4/5; Tribal Acknowledgement meeting 4/7; Shore Friendly Advisory Committee 4/22; Day on the Hill 4/23, 4/30; Marine Heritage Area Workgroup 4/27

Allie attended: Tribal Acknowledgement Workgroup 4/7, Green Crab Field Orientation 4/12-4/16

## Northwest Straits Foundation 2021 Work Updates

April 2021

### Programs: Nearshore

- Worked with project partners (ReSources and DNR) to plan a virtual refresher training for experienced volunteers in conducting intertidal surveys. We were unable to complete these surveys in 2020 due to the pandemic, we expect to be able to following appropriate safety guidelines this summer.
- Presented on the Derelict Gear Program to the Salish Sea Stewards. Fully engaged audience of about 40 in attendance.
- Derelict crab pot surveys in Port Townsend Bay and Dungeness Bay have commenced. Removal operations expected to commence late-April and continue through mid-May.

### Shorefriendly

- NWSF staff assisted shoreline landowners near the Nooksack delta with Shore Friendly planting to create a riparian buffer that will slow erosion and provide connectivity between the nearshore and upland habitats. Over 250 plants were installed after the owners cleared ivy and blackberry and created a **hügelkultur** mound for the base of one of the planting areas. This is the first of up to three adjacent parcels that will be planted using the cost-share opportunities offered to landowners through the Shore Friendly program.



Hügelkultur mound before (right) and after (left)

### Advancement

- Passport for Marine Adventure: The Foundation has launched its public adventure game connecting people throughout the NW Straits region with fun coastal sites to learn and explore. The Passport highlights three sites in each county where family and friends can connect with our magnificent marine environment. The goal of the Passport is two-fold: to encourage people to get outdoors to our shorelines and waters; and to learn about the role and work of the Northwest Straits Initiative. Join in on the fun on our website!

- Full proposal submitted to The Russell Family Foundation (invited). Foundation program support to include two fellowships.
- Grant awarded by Shell Puget Sound Refinery, for rain garden/stormwater retrofit project in partnership with Mt. Erie Elementary School, City of Anacortes, and Skagit MRC.

## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Clallam

**Month/Year:** April 2021

**Submitted by:** Cathy Lear

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

- An intern was selected to work on the European Green Crab project. The internship is based in Neah Bay and is conducted in partnership with the Makah Tribe.
- Kelp Webinar II— Planning continues for a second kelp webinar.
- Video outreach to local college students has been effective in raising interest in internships.

**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):

Monthly MRC Meeting: was held April 19.

**Funding updates** (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments):  
MRC members are working on the draft application for NWSC funding.

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

European Green Crab internship interviews were conducted with members and staff of the MRC, and EGC mentor Adrienne Akmajian, marine biologist for the Makah Tribe. Four candidates were interviewed via Zoom.

Outreach for interns entered a new phase this year. Due to Covid restrictions, in-class presentations are not possible. CMRC fellow Alisa Taylor created a video to be shared with local college students through their marine biology classes. Results are promising, with potential candidates contacting the MRC to inquire about internships.

Forage Fish sampling is going well. The MRC will purchase a microscope to identify eggs, and to be used with other projects. Thanks to Tim Cochnauer, who found a great deal on a microscope.

Oil spill preparedness and response efforts continue as MRC member Ann Stafford looks into the feasibility of re-starting oiled wildlife and other training.

**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.):

Bob Campbell, former CMRC chair (among many other things), passed away on March 21.

As facilities director at Feiro Marine Life Center, Bob oversaw everything to do with the well-being of the animals in his care. He encouraged kids' exploration of the marine environment. In 2012 Puget Sound Partnership recognized Bob as a Puget Sound Champion for his work in stewardship and education.

You may remember his delighted, infectious laugh.

The Robert J. Campbell Scholarship has been set up at Feiro Marine Life Center for students from the north Olympic Peninsula who study the natural sciences – especially marine biology.

His obituary and scholarship information can be found at this link:

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/peninsuladailynews/obituary.aspx?n=robert-james-campbell&pid=198417702>

## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Island

**Month/Year:** April 2021

**Submitted by:** Anna Toledo

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

- **Restoration – Tire Cleanup by Seahorse Siesta:** The MRC worked with the Seahorse Siesta community to organize a cleanup of 70 tires and other marine debris along the shoreline west of the Seahorse Siesta restoration site.
- **Restoration – Hoypus Point (partnership with NWSF):** County Commissioner Melanie Bacon visited Hoypus Point with Anna Toledo, Gwendolyn Hannam, and Lori Clark to learn about the restoration project.
- **Interest in Microplastics:** The MRC is interested in learning more about microplastics and ways we might be able to engage, particularly in understanding what questions we should be asking/answering, what work is already underway, and areas where the MRC could fit in. We welcome any suggestions for organizations or individuals to contact!

**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:

- April 6: MRC meeting. Topics: Sea star research, eelgrass storymap
- April 15: Island County Natural Resources Symposium, including presentation about the MRC.

#### Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- May 4: MRC meeting. Topics: Noxious weeds, needs assessment

**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):

Monitoring – Forage Fish: Ann is working with forage fish volunteers to acquaint new volunteers with existing sites and to get all volunteers trained in the iForms app for data collection. Ken Collins has stepped up as the MRC Champion for the forage fish project.

Monitoring – Kelp: The kelp team met to discuss plans for the upcoming monitoring season. Linda Rhodes will be stepping back from the primary coordination role, but will continue to volunteer on the water. Ron Beier, a Sound Water Steward who has been volunteering with the team for a few years will be taking on the coordination role. Hannah Liss will remain the MRC Champion for the kelp project, with support from Randy Berthold and Ken Collins.

Outreach – Needs Assessment: The needs assessment subcommittee has completed a majority of the planned interviews with community partners as well as Island County staff. Barb Bennett and Andi Kopit will be sharing the initial findings with the MRC at the May meeting.

Restoration – Tire Cleanup by Seahorse Siesta: The MRC worked with the Seahorse Siesta community to organize a cleanup of tires and marine debris along the shoreline west of the Seahorse Siesta restoration



site. The volunteers gathered 70 tires in addition to a broken kayak, rebar, and other debris. The Washington Department of Natural Resources marine debris removal program will be disposing of the debris within the next couple months, when tides allow for them to access the site.

**Restoration – Hoypus Point (partnership with NWSF):** County Commissioner Melanie Bacon visited Hoypus Point with Anna Toledo, Gwendolyn Hannam, and Lori Clark to learn about the restoration project. The 90% design is expected to be completed by the end of April. This project will be going through a pilot process with the Multi-Agency Review Team (MART) to facilitate the permitting process as a restoration project.

**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.): The MRC is interested in learning more about microplastics and ways we might be able to engage, particularly in understanding what questions we should be asking/answering, what work is already underway, and areas where the MRC could fit in. If the Commission or other MRCs have suggestions for individuals or programs we should reach out to, please let us know.

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



*Volunteers cleaning up debris west of Seahorse Siesta restoration site.*



## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Jefferson

**Month/Year:** April 2021

**Submitted by:** Monica Montgomery

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

- Olympia oysters team spread 80 cultch bags (2 cubic yards) of Pacific oyster shell at the Discovery Bay Lagoon site on April 16<sup>th</sup> with the help of 12 MRC members, staff and community volunteers – see photos below.
- Rain gardens work continues with students at Quilcene School (a second installation here) and in front of the Maritime Center in Port Townsend (a rehabilitation effort).

**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

Mar 23 – Forage fish sampling at Adelma (2 MRC members)

Apr 1 – MRC Coordinator attended Chumsortium (meeting with local partner organizations)

Apr 2 – MRC Coordinator attended the MRC lead staff meeting

Apr 6 – MRC monthly meeting (17 members & 2 staff present); Dr. Filipe Alberto presented on bull kelp genetics and its implications for restoration in the Puget Sound

Apr 13 – Salish Sea No-Anchor Zones meeting (1 MRC member)

Apr 14 – Forage fish sampling at Dabob (MRC coordinator, 1 member and 1 community volunteer)

Apr 15 – NWSI 101

Apr 16 – Oly oyster workday at Discovery Bay lagoon site (MRC Coordinator, 7 MRC members & 4 community volunteers)

Apr 21 – Executive Committee meeting

#### Upcoming Events/Meetings

April – Forage fish sampling at Adelma

Apr 30 – NWSC meeting

May 4 – MRC monthly meeting

May 6 – NWSI kelp season prep

May 7 – Strait ERN LIO spring quarterly meeting

May 11 – Salish Sea No-Anchor Zones meeting

May 19 – Executive Committee meeting

May 19 – Hood Canal Coordinating Council meeting

May 28 – NWSC meeting

May – Second Executive Committee meeting to review BoCC presentation

May – Forage fish sampling at Dabob & Adelma

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

Nothing to report.

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

1. Monitoring:

- a. **Forage fish - Fort Townsend:** The MRC Coordinator is working to organize a project summary presentation from our partners at Point No Point Treaty Council.
- b. **Forage fish - Adelma Beach (Index):** Two MRC members (Jeff & Troy) monitored on March 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- c. **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The MRC Coordinator, one MRC member (Sarah Fiskien), and one community volunteer monitored on April 14<sup>th</sup>.
- d. **Kelp:** Nothing to report.

2. Rain Gardens:

- a. Maritime Center rain garden rehabilitation - Bob Simmons has continued to lead this effort with the students. On April 1, they removed invasive weeds and grasses, and on April 15, they finalized removal and added about a 2-inch layer of bioretention soil mix (since some soil was removed with the grasses). There were 5 students there for 2 hours and 3 instructors (including Bob) there for 3 hours – for each session. They completed a planting plan and ordered the plants, to be installed April 29.
- b. Quilcene School rain garden – Students finished adding soil to this rain garden and planted the leftover plants the MRC had from the previous year. They created a planting plan to fill in the rain garden and ordered the plants to be delivered April 29.
- c. The rain garden installed at Chetzemoka Park in previous years needs some maintenance. More plants will be needed to fill it in better and have been ordered, to be delivered April 29 (though installation will likely not happen till May).

3. Education & Outreach:

- a. Subcommittee members are working on developing and pricing project proposals for an educational audiobook for kayakers, a county guide to marine resources and conservation efforts, an Olympia oyster marine science education program for K-12 students, and a StoryMap and/or Port Townsend walking tour activity for MRC-installed rain gardens. Members also finalized design of a rain garden rack card and sent to print for distributing at key locations throughout

the County. Members are also working on sourcing a smaller A-frame sandwich board with project-specific posters for identifying the MRC while in-the-field.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- a. The MRC received their WDFW shellfish transfer permit on March 25<sup>th</sup> (valid as of February 15<sup>th</sup>).
- b. On April 16<sup>th</sup>, the MRC Coordinator, Neil Harrington (JSK biologist and MRC member), 6 MRC members (Gordon, Sarah, Frank, Brenda, Joanie, Heather), and 4 community volunteers helped spread clean cultch at the lagoon site (80 cultch bags, or 2 cubic yards). Clean cultch was delivered from Taylor Shellfish, and volunteers placed shell in the pond area, along the pond side of the lagoon, and along the spit.
- c. The MRC Coordinator is working on amending the current DNR Right of Entry (and determining other permitting requirements) for expanding the Powerline Site southwards to be able to monitor more extensively and potentially place additional clean cultch here going forward.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- a. One MRC member attended the monthly Salish Sea No-Anchor Zones meeting on April 13<sup>th</sup>.
- b. The subcommittee needs to meet again to finalize the dive safety manual and will be planning to swap the winter floats with summer spar buoys soon.

**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.):

**Shoreline Landowner Outreach (NWSF project):** Subcommittee members are working on contacting their proposed communities/shorelines for site visits and targeted education.

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

April 16 Olympia oyster workday at the Discovery Bay Lagoon Site – photos by Monica Montgomery





















4/16 Oysters settled on shell placed at the Lagoon Site in 2019 – photo by Neil Harrington



4/16 Cluster of Olympia oysters towards the spit at the Lagoon Site – photo by Heather Burns



## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** San Juan County

**Month/Year:** April 2021

**Submitted by:** Frances Robertson

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

- MRC members and PFSS beach stewards participated in the Spring Great Islands Clean-up
- April saw a focus on reporting, grant amendments and grant preparation.

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

No Changes to membership or leadership.

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

#### *March events*

- The MRC met on April 1st via Zoom for their monthly meeting.
- The MRC participated in the monthly San Juan County Stewardship Council meeting
- MRC members participated in the County led eelgrass coordination effort for the protection, restoration and recovery of eelgrass in the San Juans. Two of four planned work sessions were held on March 24<sup>th</sup> and April 21<sup>st</sup>.

#### *Upcoming events*

- The MRC's May meeting will be held on Thursday April 6<sup>th</sup> – this meeting will be dedicated to the approval of the MRC 2021-2023 grant proposal prepared by staff as well as review of this year's salmon recovery projects.
- San Juan County Marine Program will host its third eelgrass work session in collaboration with the Northwest Straits Commission led transboundary eelgrass anchor-out group. This session will be hosted the 2nd week of May of will focus on monitoring methods including aerial surveys, vessel compliance monitoring, and eelgrass recovery/restoration progress monitoring.
- San Juan County and the MRC will also be hosting the user group engagement effort to present the results of their marine spatial planning effort with user group members and the community. These workshops will also discuss what might be feasible management options for the area. These are expected to occur the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of May.

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

There are no updates relating to funding.

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

Plastic Free Salish Sea: Members of the community continue to sign up as beach stewards through the PFSS website. The initiative has also partnered with the National Park Service and now includes three

popular beaches in American Camp. April 24<sup>th</sup> saw the Spring Great Islands Clean-Up event take place throughout the county. MRC members and beach stewards participated and the PFSS website is now considered the central hub for volunteer sign-ups and event information.

Southern Resident Killer Whales: MRC member Kailey Genther continues to liaise with the Orcas, Lopez and San Juan Elementary school grade 5 teachers and with Jeff Hogan of Killer Whale Tales to schedule virtual sessions in the classrooms. In addition, the MRC is working with County Parks once again to achieve a boater safety kiosk at Odlin State Park.

Marine Stewardship Area Plan update: Progress continues to be made on updating the biodiversity targets and planning for the next stages of the update.

**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.):

San Juan County Marine Program is partnering with the MRC to host a series of work sessions dedicated to eelgrass protection and restoration efforts in the County. The work is being funded by Pew Charitable Trusts and the funds are being made available with the help of the Northwest Straits Foundation. The MRC will take the lead on monitoring efforts for vessel usage in areas with protection buoys installed or identified as locations of need and will start pilot monitoring efforts this spring and summer. With approval of the MRC, the 2021 grant is undergoing amendment to allow for the MRC to cover the costs of installing the anchor out zone at Odlin County Park. This will be the MRC's first anchor out zone in the County.

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

None this time round.

## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Skagit

**Month/Year:** April/2021

**Submitted by:** Tracy/Pete

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

- Lots of pinto abalone were recently discovered at two abalone restoration sites in Skagit County waters that were previously thought to have low survival rates.
- Fidalgo Bay Day is canceled this year. The Committee is considering other alternatives.

**Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Skagit MRC voted by consensus to make the recommendation to the Board of Skagit County Commissioners to appoint Catey Ritchie to the MRC. Catey will replace Todd Mitchell as the representative for Swinomish Indian Tribal Community.

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

- MRC Monthly Meeting- **April 8,** 2021 – 2023 MRC Grant project list and budget finalized. Our projects will include: Fidalgo Bay Day, Salish Sea Stewards, Kids on the Beach, Pinto Abalone, MRC Intern, and Stormwater Sampling. Alex Gradwohl presented on the Maritime National Heritage Area.
- Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee Meeting- **April 21,** 12:30pm (via Zoom)
- Salish Sea Stewards Classes Held Tuesdays- **February 23 – June 1,** 1pm-3:30pm (via Zoom)
- Next MRC Monthly Meeting- **May 13** 9am-11:00am (via GoToMeeting)
- The 2020 MRC Annual Report will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners on **April 20** at 8:30am.

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

The Northwest Straits Foundation was recently awarded a grant from Shell Puget Sound Refinery, for a rain garden/stormwater retrofit project in partnership with Mt. Erie Elementary School, City of Anacortes, and Skagit MRC.

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

- Salish Sea Stewards: 2021 was the first year that the SSS Training Program was advertised to the public as an all-virtual, on line program, which resulted in a significantly larger class. 41 students registered and 39 are on track complete the training, this is an additional 15 trainees over 2020 (62.5% increase over past average). The 9 member SSS Advisory Committee meets once a month with Padilla Bay NERR staff to talk about how the program is going, any issues that arise, and how we can make improvements. The AC discussed all of the benefits of a virtual program and whether or not the larger class size and expanding volunteer base would impact PBNERR's ability to administer the program effectively, which it was decided would not. They also acknowledged all of the benefits of in-person classes. For the 2022 SSS training, the AC and PBNERR are now considering a combination of: virtual, in-person classroom, and hands on field training.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: The 2021 event date was originally set for Saturday, August 28 (11am-3pm) at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. However, with the Governor's orders currently in place, the Fidalgo Bay Resort is unable to take reservations for events at the Convention Center. In addition, several organizations have indicated they will not be participating in any large in-person events this year. We are looking at other alternatives.

- Bowman Bay Restoration: Plant maintenance will likely start up again in May or June 2021.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Surveys will likely start up again in June 2021. Five new Salish Sea Stewards have expressed interest in helping with the kelp surveys. The virtual 2021 kelp survey kick off meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 6 from 1-4pm.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Forage fish surveys continue at our MRC restoration sites (Marchs Point- 2/month, Bowman Bay- 1/month, and Kukatali Reserve -2/month) and at our Forage Fish Index sites for the NWSI and WDFW (Similk Bay, Samish Island, and Ship Harbor). Lots of surf smelt eggs have been found at the Marchs Point restoration site. The Bowman Bay restoration site is a high energy site which has made it difficult to find any surf smelt eggs because the fine sands tend to get washed away. Surf smelt have also been found at the Similk Bay and Ship Harbor sites, but very few have been found at the Samish Island site. The forage fish surveys are all coordinated and conducted by a team of trained volunteers. Volunteers are also conducting forage fish surveys along the beaches of the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve for the Washington Department of Natural Resources. The surf smelt are found at this location in huge abundance during the summer months! There are potentially two new sites that are currently being considered as additional forage fish index survey sites including: the beach at Skyline in partnership with Amy Eberling's Salish Sea School students. The second potential location of interest is at the proposed MJB Development site in Anacortes along the Fidalgo Bay shoreline. The area is currently heavily armored.
- Kids on the Beach: The Kids on the Beach program will be virtual classrooms and field trip experiences this spring, starting April 26<sup>th</sup> through June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Over 200 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> - graders will be participating from four different schools (Sedro-Woolley, Conway, Concrete, and La Conner). The curriculum will focus on forage fish. The virtual field trips will consist of beach seining and forage fish spawning surveys. Students will also get to look at eggs under microscopes. The students will analyze and compile the data into reports to present at a virtual symposium.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Field work started up again in March with Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) and WDFW divers. Field work consists of monitoring and outplanting juvenile abalone at 10 different restoration sites in the San Juans including 4 sites in Skagit County waters, scouting for potential new restoration sites, collecting wild adult abalone for broodstock in the hatchery, and deploying underwater cameras to study predation. Since 2009, around 14,000 abalone have been outplanted at 6 different sites in Skagit County waters. PSRF had a bumper crop of around 10,000 abalone produced at the hatchery this year. They are planning to outplant 1,000/each at four different restoration sites in Skagit County. This is about twice as many as they had proposed to outplant this year. During a recent survey, they discovered lots of pinto abalone at two sites in Skagit County waters that were previously thought to have low survival rates and had been removed from the list to receive any additional outplanting. The two sites are now back in the fold to receive future outplants! PSRF will be working with a UW Graduate Student to deploy oceanographic arrays at six sites around the San Juans to track temperature, pH, Dissolved Oxygen, salinity, sedimentation, and currents, for a number of months during the summer, pre- and post-outplanting of pinto abalone. They will also deploy cameras to take a look at predation.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Routine field work will start up again in May with a reduced amount of monitoring this year at three different sites in Fidalgo Bay for the third year. The monitoring effort will increase again in 2022. Paul Dinnel gave a presentation on the native oyster restoration work for the Salish Sea Stewards class on April 13.

**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: Snohomish**

**Month/Year: April 2021**

**Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman**

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

- The MRC hosted an Earth Day cleanup of Snohomish County shorelines in partnership with the “Plastic Free Salish Sea” campaign and WSU Snohomish County. 554 pounds of trash were picked up and dropped off to be sorted by volunteers. This was a great inaugural event and we hope to do it again!
- MRC staff Elisa Dawson hosted a stakeholder meeting with DNR, Department of Ecology, Snohomish County, Tulalip Tribal Police, Snohomish County Sheriff, Everett Police Department, City of Marysville, and the Port of Everett on derelict vessels. The group discussed the scope of work for 2021 removals and continued collaborative efforts to address the backlog of derelict vessels in the Snohomish estuary.

**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):

Staff Elisa Dawson met with SWM staff to discuss opportunities for beach re-nourishment using dredge materials on April 11.

On April 12 our local newspaper published an article on the recent donation to our derelict vessel removal program from local Everett couple, Phil and Kelly Johnson:

<https://www.heraldnet.com/news/everett-couple-writes-check-to-clean-up-the-snohomish-river/>.

Staff Elisa Dawson presented to the 2021 Beach Watcher class on the MRC and Snohomish County nearshore projects on April 14.

The MRC conducted forage fish monitoring at Howarth Park on April 15.

There was a stakeholder meeting on Derelict Vessels on April 16.

The MRC had their monthly meeting on April 21. The MRC reviewed the draft 2021-2022 grant applications, discussed Earth Day plans, and had other updates from the group.



The MRC partnered with WSU Snohomish County Waste Warriors on Earth Day for a shoreline cleanup that collected over 554 pounds of litter from our local shoreline parks. Trash that was dropped off at one of the 5 locations was sorted by the volunteers to document how trash is impacting our waterways. Notably, there was over 67 pounds of plastic and 41 dog poop bags picked up.

Staff Elisa Dawson attended Puget Sound Day on the Hill on April 23.

MRC conducted forage fish monitoring at Picnic Point and Meadowdale on April 26.

**Funding updates** (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments) Snohomish County and the Northwest Straits Foundation have completed a contract to transfer \$45,000 in funds for derelict vessel removal from the Foundation to Snohomish County.

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

MRC Grant 2019-2020 Task 2: The MRC will host a collaborative stakeholder meeting on May 26 with the City of Everett, City of Marysville, Port of Everett, Snohomish County, Department of Natural Resources, and the Army Corps of Engineers. The goal is to discuss the pilings and possibilities for removal.

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area (proposed grant project for 2021-2022): A draft scope of work for the 2021-2022 Port Susan MRC grant was discussed at the April MRC meeting. The subcommittee will be finalizing the grant in the coming weeks and will present the project plan to the NWSC at the May Commission meeting.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): Snohomish County and the NWSF have finalized a contract for funding Snohomish County for \$45,000 towards derelict vessel removal. The funds come from a private donor from Everett, who donated to the NWSF specifically for this project. The funds will be used to remove vessels in late summer 2021. A press release about the donation was published in April. MRC staff Elisa Dawson hosted a stakeholder meeting with DNR, Department of Ecology, Snohomish County, Tulalip Tribal Police, Snohomish County Sheriff, Everett Police Department, City of Marysville, and the Port of Everett on derelict vessels. The group discussed the scope of work for 2021 removals and continued collaborative efforts to address the backlog of derelict vessels in the Snohomish estuary.

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

Forage Fish: forage fish samples continue to be taken once per month.

Meadowdale: Meadowdale project manager Logan Daniels is getting consultants and on board for construction. The team still hopes to go to construction in 2021.

Marine Vegetation: Staff are preparing to write a contract for monitoring in south Snohomish County with DNR in 2021. Monitoring of marine vegetation is expected to occur in late summer.

MRC Outreach Subcommittee: The MRC hosted an Earth Day cleanup of Snohomish County shorelines in partnership with the “Plastic Free Salish Sea” campaign and WSU Snohomish County. This event will included an opportunity for participants to drop off their trash to be “sorted” and weighed so that the MRC can better understand how trash in impacting local waterways.

No current updates for

- Oil Spill
- Mussel Watch
- Crabber Education
- Nearshore Beach Restoration at Howarth Park and Everett Nearshore Project

**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:**

- Salmon Recovery Conference April 28-30
- Kelp Kick off meeting May 6
- MRC Meeting May 19 at 6:30PM
- Forage Fish monitoring May 18 and 19
- Snohomish LIO meeting May 20
- Snohomish Estuary Pilings collaborative meeting May 26

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

Earth Day Shoreline Cleanup Photos (photos can be credited to Snohomish MRC)







## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Whatcom

**Month/Year:** April 2021

**Submitted by:** Austin Rose

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

- Kathy Ketteridge was appointed to the MRC on March 23 to fill a Citizen-at-Large position. She was welcomed by the MRC at the April meeting.
- The MRC provided comment to the Whatcom County SMP amendments supporting the inclusion of the Marine Resource Lands policy section, as developed by the MRC.

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

- Kathy Ketteridge was appointed to the MRC on March 23 to fill a Citizen-at-Large position. She was welcomed by the MRC at the April meeting.
- Rachel Arnold accepted a nomination for the MRC Vice-Chair position. A final election will occur at the May MRC meeting.

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

- The MRC general meeting was held on April 1. Meeting highlights include:
  - Whatcom County Planning and Development Services explained the periodic review of the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) amendments. The MRC previously supported a proposal to include a "Marine Resource Lands" chapter. The inclusion of that chapter is being considered at this time. Additionally, there are suggestions to develop and/or strengthen policies regarding climate change/sea level rise, including the incorporation and use of new data (COSMOS, as it becomes available), to review and revise, if warranted, shoreline use regulations. The MRC feels that the committee along other interested parties has provided plenty of input already and their voices have been heard. It was suggested that the MRC prepare a letter to the Planning Commission expressing their support for the language as proposed.
  - Mike MacKay shared aerial photos from herring spawn events along the Cherry Point shoreline. The presentation can be viewed here <https://app.box.com/s/d66ua2y3yep9q4pxywsove26gsg57lpr>
- The MRC provided comment to the Whatcom County SMP amendments supporting the inclusion of the Marine Resource Lands policy section, as developed by the MRC.
- The MRC is reviewing the Land Use and Water Resources chapters of the Whatcom County Climate Action Plan, which was developed by the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee. Members will hold a discussion at their May MRC meeting.

- MRC Staff attended the virtual workshop about the Maritime Washington National Heritage Area in Whatcom & Skagit Counties. Summary information was shared with the MRC. Members will provide input to the [Maritime Washington survey](#), identifying their favorite maritime sites on the [interactive virtual map](#), and answer workshop discussion questions individually.

**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):

- Due to construction set to begin at Little Squalicum Estuary (LSE), the MRC has moved their forage fish survey index site near entrance to Little Squalicum Beach (just a few hundred feet of south of LSE). This site adjustment was approved by Lisa Hillier. Spawn has been detected at Little Squalicum Beach before so it made sense for long term monitoring.
- The Olympia oyster population survey will take place on May 27. Students from Bellingham Technical College – Fisheries and Aquaculture will likely join MRC members in the field to help with the survey. Previously, the MRC has placed seasoned Pacific oyster shell in vexar cultch bags (~50shell/bag) – donated by Taylor Shellfish – into the plots to assess for natural recruitment of Olympia oyster larvae on that shell substrate. Evidently, Pacific oyster shell is hard to come by these days. MRC Staff are working to connect with Taylor Shellfish more shell. Dr. Paul Dinnel will also join the survey to show the MRC a refined monitoring tools for larvae settlement using ceramic tiles.
- City of Bellingham is planning development along the north side of North Chuckanut Bay. The MRC is actively involved with projects in the area, therefore has concern and interest in this development. MRC Staff is reaching out to City of Bellingham staff to see if a staff person would be willing to present at an upcoming MRC meeting. Concerns from the MRC include:
  - What water quality impacts might this development have? Are septic/sewer systems going to be an additional burden to bacteria loads in North Chuckanut Bay?
  - What species might this impact, both during construction and afterward? (Eleanor and MRC staff noticed a new eagle nest right in the area where development if planned. Also, see photo included in this report of eagle in creek from last sampling run)
  - Erosion control and prevention of more sediment going into the bay leading to high turbidity.
- The Public Speakers Series Committee (MRC/WWIN) is hoping to host an updated State of the Bay Research Symposium in early 2022. The group is reaching out to previous panelists to see if they have interest in sharing their latest research related to the health of Bellingham Bay.
- Whatcom Water Week planning meeting began in March. Whatcom Water Week is tentatively scheduled to occur September 12<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>.
- The North Sound Stewards (NSS) will include a *Beach Stewards* program to get NSS volunteers trained up to be out on beaches during low tide as beach interpreters who can talk to beach users about beach etiquette and water quality to keep our beaches healthy. Beaches are expected to get hit extra hard in summer of 2021 with so many low tides. Additionally, both Larrabee State Park and Birch Bay State Park have requested these services for years.



Volunteers will be trained on simple beach interpretation, beach etiquette, and water quality – related to bacteria and what can be done to help keep beaches clean and swimmable. Training will include two 2 hours virtual classes (May 3 and May 10 6-8pm) in addition to a 1-2 hour beach trip at low tide to apply what was learned.

**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.):

- Eleanor Hines and MRC Staff (Austin) were interviewed by Annika Fain on her podcast NW Fish Passage. Annika is currently editing the recording and it should go LIVE by the end of April. Eleanor and Austin answered questions about the Whatcom MRC and current projects.

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



Photo credit: Austin Rose. *Eagle* is waterway just upstream of sample site in N. Chuckanut Bay.

