



**Meeting:** Northwest Straits Commission  
**Location:** Zoom Conference Call  
**Date:** February 25, 2022  
**Time:** 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

To join the Zoom meeting, [CLICK HERE](#) Meeting ID: 833 9166 0200 Passcode: 690930  
For audio conference, dial: 253-215-8782 or [click here](#) to find a local number.

*We acknowledge the lands we're on today are the ancestral and current homelands of Indigenous Nations who have stewarded them 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.*

10:00 – 10:10	<b>Welcome and introductions</b> Tribal acknowledgement Approval of January 2022 meeting minutes	Elsa Schwartz, Chair
10:10 – 10:25	<b>Committee reports</b> Executive Committee  Science Advisory Committee  External Relations Committee	Tom Cowan  Julia Parrish  Chris Castner
10:25 – 10:30	<b>Director's report</b>	Lucas Hart
10:30 – 10:40	<b>Business items</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Green crab presentations and preparations</li><li>• Pilot volunteer program for green crab trapping</li></ul>	Staff Jeff Whitty Leah Robison
10:40 – 11:05	<b>REEF Environmental Education Foundation</b>	Christy Pettengill-Semmens, Ph.D. Co-Executive Director: Science & Engagement
11:05 – 11:10	<b>Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission/Tribal update</b>	Cecilia Gobin, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission



11:10 – 11:15	<b>Puget Sound Partnership update</b>	Jennifer Grimm, Puget Sound Partnership
11:15 – 11:20	<b>NWS Foundation update</b>	Don Hunger, NWS Foundation
11:20 – 11:40	<b>MRC Reports</b>	MRC Representatives
11:40 – 11:50	<b>Meeting highlights and action items</b> Identify key points and action items from this meeting for MRC representatives to report back to their MRCs	All
11:50 – 11:55	<b>Round table</b>	All
11:55 – 12:00	<b>Public comment</b>	All
12:00 PM	<b>Adjourn</b>	

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



# Minutes

January 28, 2022 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM  
Zoom – Conference call  
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

## Attendees:

**Commission Members:** Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership alternate), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Phil Green (San Juan-Alternate), Alan Clark (Clallam), Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Chris Castner

**Commission Staff:** Sasha Horst, Allie Simpson, Leah Robison, Jeff Whitty

**Others in Attendance:** Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Rebecca Mahan (Clallam MRC), Julie Schlenger (Snohomish-Alternate)

**Absent:** Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Christina Koons

## Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the December 10 meeting as written by consensus.

## Committee Reports

**Executive Committee:** Tom Cowan updated the Commission on the December 2021 and January 2022 meetings. The Committee discussed the possibility of a retreat, but recommends deferring until it could be held in person. The Committee is planning to draft a policy on providing letters of support in order to clarify the process for future requests. The Committee also considered the potential for an in-person conference in 2022 and staff has tentatively secured a venue. Tom also noted several bills that are currently proposed for the 2022 legislative session that are of interest, although the Commission does not take any position on them.

**Science Advisory Committee:** Julia Parrish reported on recent activities of the Committee. The Committee has engaged with local scientists and extended invitations to present at Commission meetings, which will begin next month. The Committee has also taken the first steps to developing terms of reference for the Committee, which will be brought to the full Commission at a later date for input.

**External Relations Committee:** Chris Castner reported on recent activity on the draft Northwest Straits Initiative reauthorization bill, noting that there is positive progress on ensuring that the language of the bill is concise and clear. The potential funding for Northwest Straits through Congressionally Directed Spending is still in suspense as the federal FY22 budget is delayed through a Continuing Resolution that goes through mid-February. The Committee's next meeting will be held on February 2.

## Business items

In addition to the written update, staff provided the following business items:

- Jeff Whitty shared information about his current activities and ideas for an implementation/coordination strategy related to the Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan.
- Allie reminded the group about the fourth climate change symposium on February 17, 2022 at 3:30pm. The event will be more interactive to allow for discussion between MRC members.



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- Allie reported on the eelgrass no-anchor zone project that is now underway with US Fish and Wildlife funding that started as of January 1. Commission staff is working with MRCs and the Foundation on the permitting phase.
- A tentative 2022 in-person conference is scheduled for November 18-19 at Maple Hall in La Conner, Skagit County. MRC members are encouraged to save the date and more information will be shared as planning begins.
- Sasha will share the brief Commission meeting highlights with all members of the Commission, where previously these were sent only to MRC representatives to share with their MRC. Commissioners can respond to that email to opt out of that correspondence at any time.

### Partner updates:

**Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission:** Cecilia Gobin shared updates on four key areas:

Treaty rights at risk – There is follow up with federal partners on [Treaty Rights at Risk](#), particularly around riparian and nearshore habitat issues related to how the Army Corps of Engineers and NOAA determine impacts from permitted structures. There is a need to do a cumulative effects analysis at the WRIA or Salish Sea scale to ensure that the total impact is considered.

Recreational impacts to treaty rights – They are working with state co-managers (such as WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife) on updating their recreational strategy plans, particularly around marine, freshwater and upper terrestrial areas.

[Lorraine Loomis Act](#) – Tribal leadership is working with the Governor's office on how to proceed with the bill in consideration of comments received in a recent committee hearing. While the bill is named after an important tribal elder, Cecilia noted that the bill is about salmon, which should be important to everyone.

[Pinniped predation on salmonids](#) – Tribes are working with WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife and the WA Academy of Sciences to convene a panel on pinniped predation on salmonids. The panelists are now listed and they hope to begin work in late February to develop guiding questions for the panel. There will be public workshops in the future related to this work.

**Puget Sound Partnership:** Jenn Grimm reported on four topics from the Puget Sound Partnership:

Upper Skagit watershed – Imperial Metals recently returned mining rights at the upper Skagit headwaters. More information is in a [Seattle Times](#) article, and the Governor has proposed \$4.5 million in the budget for this purpose.

The Army Corps of Engineers released their spend plan for infrastructure assistance, which did not include fish passage at Howard Hanson dam, but does include funding for infrastructure repairs to the Ballard Locks.

Governor Inslee recently issued an [emergency proclamation](#) for support on European green crab in the Lummi sea pond and elsewhere.



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The [2022-26 Puget Sound Action Agenda](#) is now out for board review through early February. The Puget Sound Partnership will have an online Action Agenda Explorer tool to make the information more accessible and user friendly.

**Northwest Straits Foundation:** In addition to the written reports in the meeting materials, Don Hunger reported out on current activities of the Foundation:

The [Caroline Gibson scholarship](#) application is now online and was sent to Western Washington University, University of Washington and The Evergreen State College. This is the first cycle and the future annual cycle will run in parallel with the academic year.

The Foundation is developing a business plan for an internship program, and expect to reach out to MRCs in about a month to solicit feedback.

Many of the Foundation's current projects are in the permitting or feasibility stage, including Hoypus Point, Polnell Point and Clayton Beach.

The Foundation's Passport to Marine Adventure will be getting a refresh for 2022, incorporating feedback from participants that they would like more interaction at the site. They are hoping to also make it web/app based. The Foundation will be checking back in with MRCs for site recommendations.

## MRC Updates

MRCs provided full written reports that are available in the pre-meeting materials. Highlights are included below:

### **Clallam – Alan Clark**

- We added 3 new members one being the Lower Elwha Tribal Representative.
- Several MRC members and Coordinator attended Oiled Wildlife Volunteer Training with Dept. of Ecology.
- Marine Critter Outreach/Education cards are being distributed to local venues.
- Continued forage fish sampling on Cline Spit and Ediz Hook.
- January 27th Mussel cages are being collected and sent to the lab for Biotoxin analysis.

### **Island – Elsa Schwartz**

- Forage Fish: Continued forage fish sampling at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Hidden Beach, and Glendale. Monitoring resumed at Seahorse Siesta in November.
- Advisory – Pinto Abalone: Jill Lipoti drafted a comment letter on the Pinto Abalone Recovery Plan, which the MRC and the Board of County Commissioners approved. It was submitted at the end of the year
- Staff Change: Island MRC has a new Coordinator – Kelly Zupich!

### **Jefferson – Jeff Taylor**

- In January, the rain garden subcommittee will be conducting site visits at all MRC co-sponsored rain gardens to assess maintenance needs.
- The MRC adopted a new project focused on storm surge and total water level monitoring.



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- The MRC voted in new officers: Chair – Brenda Johnson (Dist. 2), Vice Chair – Troy McKelvey (Recreation), NWSC Rep – Jeff Taylor (Dist. 2), NWSC Alt – Sarah Fiskén (Dist. 3)

### San Juan – Phil Green

- The MRC held their annual retreat on December 2nd.
- The MRC and County's Southern Resident killer whale efforts and Plastic Free Salish Sea initiative will be included in the 2022 Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference.
- The MRC continues to make progress on the MSA Plan update

### Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Kayak Kelp Survey Data: Skagit MRC's kelp survey data has been selected as one of the areas to be included in an additional multi-year trend analysis to inform the Puget Sound Kelp Canopy Vital Signs.
- MRC Project Planning Retreat: The MRC is in the process of planning a retreat to evaluate and prioritize the list of projects for federal appropriation funding.
- MRC-Salish Sea School Intern: An intern has been selected for this pilot program to work on a forage fish monitoring project at March's Point. Field work will occur Feb-October. The intern will present results to the MRC in January 2022. This MRC Intern project is part of a pilot program and is just one several other intern projects under the Salish Sea School STaRS program (Students Training as Research Scientists), including stormwater monitoring, beach debris, orcas, and marine birds.
- MRC Project Evaluation: MRC member, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, developed a new, easy to follow, three-pronged approach for MRC members to evaluate and prioritize MRC projects. A retreat will be held in April, to finalize the list of projects.

### Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish County's contractor has completed the removal of four vessels from the Snohomish Estuary area. The total cost of the removals was nearly \$115,000, which will be reimbursed at 90% by DNR. Additional information about the four vessels removed can be found at [www.snocomrc.org/projects/delict-vessel-removal](http://www.snocomrc.org/projects/delict-vessel-removal).
- The MRC conducted interviews for new MRC members on December 13 and 20. The MRC will be looking to fill up to 2 vacancies, in addition to a change in the Stillaguamish Tribal Representative. Franchesca Perez will re-join the MRC in 2022 to serve as the tribal representative upon the departure of Kip Killebrew, who is retiring at the end of 2021.
- The MRC has nominated three new members – Franchesca Perez (Stillaguamish Tribe Representative), Bob Margulis, and Allan Hicks – to Snohomish County Council. We are currently waiting formal appointment by the council.
- The MRC contracted with DNR to complete marine vegetation monitoring from Everett to Edmonds this summer. DNR found eelgrass was present at 21 out of 22 sites sampled, and at 192 of 224 transects sampled. A draft report is being reviewed by the subcommittee, with a final report due by January 31.
- The MRC finalized the Port Susan Stakeholder List in December. The MRC has also coordinated a draft of the Stakeholder Survey with project consultant ESA, staff from Snohomish County, and the Joint Island-Snohomish Port Susan Team. The next Joint Island-Snohomish Port Susan Team Meeting is scheduled for January 25.

### Whatcom – Bob Cecile



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- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the [MRC home page](#).
- Whatcom County was awarded \$100,000 from the Department of Ecology to support the use of CoSMoS (modelling developed by USGS) to inform incorporation of sea level rise (SLR) in the Shoreline Management Program. MRC staff will be joining a workgroup to develop a vulnerability and risk assessment for Whatcom County's marine and riverine shorelines. The MRC will be informed of the process and be able to provide input.

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

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- Upcoming climate change symposium series event for MRCs February 17 from 3:30pm-5:00pm.
- 2022 Conference dates – November 18-19, 2022 at Maple Hall in La Conner is the date and location if an in-person event is possible.
- The Northwest Straits Foundation's Caroline Gibson scholarship application period is open in February.
- The Northwest Straits Foundation is hoping to plan some summer social gatherings and will reach out to MRCs if there are opportunities.
- The Clallam MRC's developed some critter cards for community outreach. Contact Rebecca Mahan ([rparadis@co.clallam.wa.us](mailto:rparadis@co.clallam.wa.us)) if your MRC is interested in getting copies.

### **Public comment**

There was no public comment.

\*The next Commission meeting will be on Friday, February 25, 2022, via Zoom.





**Executive Committee Meeting**  
**February 14, 2022 • 11:00am-12:00pm**  
**MS Teams Meeting**

**Committee members:** Tom Cowan, Chris Castner, Julia Parrish, Jeff Taylor, Jude Apple

**Commission Staff/Support:** Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst

**Staffing update:** Dana will be returning on a limited schedule in late February, then four days per week starting in March. Reclassification of our administrative position (Leslie's old position) is almost complete. After reclassification, we need to recruit and hire. This could take several months.

**Reauthorization update:** Chris gave an update on reauthorization. He reported that he talked with Senator Murray's staff a few weeks ago and it is expected that the most recent version of the reauthorization bill with edits incorporated would have been sent to NOAA. He anticipates that contact with NOAA for follow up discussion will be early March, and noted that Senator Murray's staff noted that we may want to consider a request for Congressionally Directed Spending for fiscal year 2023.

**Congressional directed funding:** This is still pending passage of a federal budget. The current continuing resolution expires on February 18. It appears congress will pass another continuing resolution through March 11.

**Legislative update:** The session ends March 10 this year. Senate Bill 5691 (identifying priority kelp and eelgrass habitat) has passed in the Senate and will go to the House. House Bill 1700 (funding derelict vessel removal) has passed and will go to the Senate. Senate Bill 5885 (replacing existing shoreline structures must meet most up to date standards) has passed Senate and will go to the house. The Lorraine Loomis Act for riparian habitat protection has been dropped.

The committee discussed sending a thank you letter to Senator Lovelett for her leadership on Senate Bill 5691, which all agreed would be a good idea, but they will revisit the idea after the legislative session ends.

**Maritime Washington National Heritage Area:** The Heritage Area is a non-regulatory effort that "builds partnerships and increases collaboration to support our coastal communities in celebrating, maintaining, and sharing their water-based stories." A draft management plan (270 pages) for the heritage area was recently released and public comment is being taken through March 4. Comment can be provided via an online survey, email, or virtual meeting (<https://preservewa.org/ahoy>). The Committee discussed whether the Commission should provide comment and if so what mechanism to use. It was recommended that with such a short timeframe and no clear synthesis of consensus-based input, the Commission should not submit comments at this time. Individuals and MRCs can still provide comment.

**Conference 2022:** Staff reported that the NW Straits Foundation has reserved Maple Hall in La Connor in case we are able to hold an in-person conference. Maple Hall will allow an event with flexibility to scale to our capacity and budget, and also allows for cancellation with full refund up until 60 days in advance.

**Funding policy:** At the last Executive Committee meeting, Lucas suggested adding one new criterion to the NW Straits Commission funding policy that further defines an "MRC-led" project. Staff provided a revised version with changes tracked. The Committee generally approved the additional language and recommended additional language to be added around data sharing to ensure that for projects done in partnership that access to data is set as a clear expectation. Staff will incorporate that language and bring the funding policy back to the Committee at the next meeting.

**Providing letters of support:** At our last Executive Committee meeting we discussed writing an internal procedure for providing letters of support to partners. Writing this procedure is still pending. A draft will be provided to the committee at a later date.





## Commission staff highlights - [February 2022]

### MRC Support

**MRC Grants:** The first quarterly progress reporting and payment requests for the October-December 2021 period are now complete. Commission staff has started planning for the process to amend these agreements for year two projects and other requested changes, and will bring forward a timeline for that process at the next meeting.

**Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP):** Several projects with existing QAPPs were due for annual review, and the 2022 addendums for four of those projects have now been fully executed. This includes Skagit's pinto abalone project, Jefferson's Olympia oyster project, Whatcom's Chuckanut Pollution Identification and Correction program, and the regional forage fish program. Review and addendums are pending for the kelp surveys, green crab, and Clallam's Olympia oyster project.

**NW Straits 101:** A reminder that the NW Straits Commission and Foundation staff will host a NW Straits 101 event on March 17, 3:30-5:00pm via Zoom. This is a great primer on the Initiative, and new MRC members are especially encouraged to join.

### Regional Projects

**Eelgrass:** NW Straits Commission staff continues to work with NW Straits Foundation staff on the permitting process for establishing multiple No-Anchor Zones across the Northwest Straits region.

**Kelp:** NW Straits Commission staff are working with other Salish Sea agencies from the US and Canada to coordinate efforts to advance multiple kelp recovery and conservation plans (e.g. Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan, the Hakai Institute lead Kelp Node of the transboundary Biodiversity Action Network, and the DNR lead Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy).

**Green Crab:** NW Straits Commission staff continue to plan for the upcoming field season. Staff have put together a volunteer opportunity announcement to share with Skagit and Whatcom MRC to assist with the green crab trapping programs. Staff have also drafted a Veteran's Conservation Corps position posting and are discussing possibilities with VCC leads. NW Straits Commission staff are also working on updating the green crab QAPP and management plans to incorporate Samish Bay.

**Forage fish:** NW Straits Commission Staff continue to work with MRCs and NW Straits Foundation staff to coordinate sampling supplies and deliveries to WDFW. WDFW staff and WCC crews have been especially busy in the field this past month but continue to process MRC samples in their lab.

## Operations

**Staffing update:** As of Feb 28<sup>th</sup>, Dana Oster has returned from leave and will be working a four day per week schedule. The reclassification process for the Project Coordinator position is still underway.

**COVID-19 update:** There is new guidance evolving with Ecology and WA State, and probably more on the way soon. Commission staff continues to operate remotely via telework. While in the office, staff are required to mask unless a higher level of protection is required or they meet the criteria for working alone.

**Funding update:** Most NW Straits Commission staff are operating under the new 2021-23 EPA/Puget Sound Partnership award, with some staff receiving support from project-specific funding sources. The 2019-21 EPA/Puget Sound Partnership agreement is now closed. Some funds remained at the end of the period due to staffing vacancies. There are no new funding sources awarded or pending at this time.

### Meetings attended:

Lucas attended: Puget Sound Partnership Legislative update 2/11, 2/18; Salish Sea Green Crab update meeting 2/15; Puget Sound Partnership Ecosystem Coordination Board meeting 2/16

Allie attended: Whatcom MRC 2/3; UN Ocean Decade Discussion 2/3; Interagency Green Crab Fidalgo Bay Planning meeting 2/8; Skagit MRC meeting 2/10; Interagency Crab Team meeting 2/14; Salish Sea European Green Crab Regional Stakeholder meeting 2/15; Climate Change Symposium #4 2/17; Whatcom Marine Research Symposium 2/23

Sasha attended: Whatcom MRC 2/3; External Relations 2/2; Whatcom CDS follow up 2/10; Executive Committee 2/14; Climate Change Symposium #4 2/17

Leah attended: Whatcom MRC 2/3, Interagency Green Crab Fidalgo Bay Planning meeting 2/8; Skagit MRC meeting 2/10, Salish Sea European Green Crab Regional Stakeholder meeting 2/15; Climate Change Symposium #4 2/17; Whatcom Marine Research Symposium 2/23

Jeff attended: Jefferson MRC meeting 2/1; San Juan MRC meeting 2/3; UN Ocean Decade Discussion 2/3; Interagency Green Crab Fidalgo Bay Planning meeting 2/8; Skagit MRC meeting 2/10; Interagency Crab Team meeting 2/14; Salish Sea European Green Crab Regional Stakeholder meeting 2/15; Snohomish MRC meeting 2/16; Whatcom Marine Research Symposium (2/23)

## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Clallam

**Month/Year:** February 2022

**Submitted by:** Rebecca Paradis

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

- Marine Critter Outreach/Education card meeting with NWSF.
- CMRC update presentation to Clallam BOCC.
- January 27<sup>th</sup> Mussel cages were collected and sent to the lab for Biotoxin analysis.

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

**Events/Meetings** (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events): Clallam County MRC Chair Tim Cochauner gave a presentation to the Clallam County Board of County Commissioners. The presentation was a PowerPoint giving a brief update of what the CMRC has been up to in the past year. The presentation went very well! The BOCC said they would very interested in a pitch on derelict vessel cleanup and that they may be able to front some capital to get derelict vessels in Clallam County cleaned up.

Monthly MRC Meeting: will be on February 28th.

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

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

CMRC Ed Bowlby, Mary Sue Brancato and Coordinator Rebecca Mahan successfully removed the WDFW mussel cages from the Port Angeles Yacht Club boat launch area. The mussels were transported to WDFW Olympia lab for analysis.

Forage Fish sampling is going well. Clallam MRC continued to collect the monthly samples at Cline Spit and Ediz Hook and Elwha beaches East and West.

**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): Mary Sue Brancato and Ed Bowlby removing WDFW mussel cages. Photo: Rebecca Mahan.



## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Island

**Month/Year:** February 2022

**Submitted by:** Kelly Zupich

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

- **Strategic Planning:** The Committee is working to hire a consultant to help facilitate the retreat on March 19.
- **Staff in Training:** Kelly Zupich has started her new position and is being onboarded.

**Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Barbara Bennett and Jill Lipoti were voted in as the new chair and vice chair of the committee. The new Executive Committee members will be Barbara Bennett, Jill Lipoti, Ken Collins, and Scott Chase.

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

#### Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- March 1: MRC meeting. Topic: Retreat and strategic planning
- March 19: MRC Retreat 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

**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: Teams are continuing to monitor monthly at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Hidden Beach, Glendale, and Seahorse Siesta.

Seining: The seining team is going strong. They hosted members of the Island County DNR office to join the seining efforts on February 7. (see pictures)

Outreach – Port Susan MSA: The project “Integrating science and local knowledge to update the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Conservation Action Plan” groups (Island MRC, Snohomish MRC, and the student team at the Evans School of Public Policy and Governance) have met to discuss the project scope and plan. This work will update the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Conservation Action Plan report card. Island County will focus on reviewing the progress of the literature review being produced by the students.

**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.):

- Retreat: The MRC is working on a strategic planning retreat for March 19.

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



Cornet Bay Seining February 7, 2022



Photo by Jennifer Johnson



Photo by Jennifer Johnson



## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Jefferson

**Month/Year:** February 2022

**Submitted by:** Monica Montgomery

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

- The rain garden subcommittee conducted site visits at all MRC co-sponsored rain gardens in Port Townsend to assess maintenance needs and created a list of rain gardens overgrown with weeds/grass. The subcommittee is planning a work party on Mar 18 to add mulch to the Franklin and Adams St. rain garden and to weed some of the other rain gardens around Port Townsend.
- No anchor zones subcommittee members (Troy, Pam, Gordon, Bryan) serviced the buoys along the Port Townsend waterfront on Jan 22 – the MRC's first time back to diving since 2019. They swapped out the remaining 4 summer spar buoys with winter floats and checked the integrity of the ropes and hardware, relocating 6 of the anchors.
- Expansion of the Olympia oyster restoration site in South Discovery Bay received permit approvals from WDFW and Jefferson County (DNR, USACE and Ecology pending).

**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

Jan 24 – Fort Townsend forage fish survey

Jan 25 – Dabob forage fish survey

Jan 26 – NWSC kelp kayak update meeting

Jan 31 – Olympia oyster meeting (MRC Coordinator and Neil) with Brady Blake/WDFW re: 2022 plans

Feb 1 – MRC monthly meeting

Feb 9 – Mapping lost crab pots meeting (MRC Coordinator and Jeff) with a University of Delaware professor to discuss fish finder specs and capabilities for detecting lost crab pots

Feb 15 – Executive Committee meeting

Feb 16 – Dabob forage fish survey

Feb 17 – Neil Harrington presentation on Olympia oysters via the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Library speaker series

Feb 17 – NW Straits Symposium Part 4

### Upcoming Events/Meetings

Feb 21 – Fort Townsend forage fish survey

Feb 25 – Straits ERN LIO quarterly meeting

Feb 25 – NWSC meeting

Feb – Forage fish survey at Adelma

Feb/Mar – Education & Outreach subcommittee meeting

Mar 1 – MRC monthly meeting

Mar 9 – Fort Townsend forage fish survey

Mar 22 – Executive Committee meeting

Mar 28 – MRC presentation to the BoCC

**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:

- **Forage fish - Fort Townsend:** The MRC Coordinator and four MRC Members (Sarah, Troy, Frank, Joanie) and one community volunteer (Gregg) will survey on Feb 21.
- **Forage fish - Adelma Beach (Index):** Nothing to report.
- **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The MRC Coordinator, Project Lead (Sarah), one MRC Member (Troy), and two community volunteers (Anne, Cheryl) surveyed on Jan 25. The MRC Coordinator, Project Lead (Sarah), one MRC member (Troy), and one community volunteers (Anne) surveyed on Feb 16.
- **Kelp:** The MRC Coordinator and 3 MRC members (Betsy, Brenda, Solenne) participated in the NWSC kelp kayak update meeting on Jan 26.

2. Rain Gardens:

- The Project Lead (Janette) and one MRC Member (Brenda) assessed MRC co-sponsored rain gardens across Port Townsend on Jan 17, and created a list of rain gardens overgrown with weeds/grass and in need of maintenance. The subcommittee is planning a work party on Mar 18 to add mulch to the Franklin and Adams St. rain garden and to weed some of the other rain gardens around Port Townsend.

3. Education & Outreach:

- The subcommittee is working on scheduling a meeting in late February-early March, following the NWSI Symposium, to discuss climate change-focused education and outreach efforts.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- The MRC Coordinator and Project Lead (Neil) met with Brady Blake (WDFW) on Jan 31 to discuss 2022 plans, as well as additional sites to consider for Olympia oyster restoration into the future.
- Permit applications for expanding the Powerlines Site in South Discovery Bay have been submitted to DNR, County, and WDFW. WDFW HPA permit modifications, WDFW shellfish transfer permit, County permits have been approved. The JARPA Attachment E has been approve and a new DNR Land Manager is reviewing the JARPA. The MRC Coordinator will be submitting permit materials to USACE and Ecology on Feb 25 once the 2022 NWP's go into effect, as advised by both agencies.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- Four MRC members (Pam, Troy, Bryan, Gordon) serviced the buoys along the Port Townsend waterfront on Jan 22. Pam skippered the Port of PT boat, Bryan and Gordon dived, and Troy offered support from the boat. The team swapped out the 4 summer spar buoys with winter floats, checked the integrity of the ropes and hardware of most of the screw anchors, and replacing some. There are still 3 screw anchor positions (of the 13 authorized by DNR) that need to be relocated. When the crew can coordinate schedules with favorable weather conditions, plans are to locate the remaining 3 screw

anchor positions along the Port Townsend waterfront and to service the Port Hadlock and Mystery Bay buoy fields.

6. Mapping Lost Crab Pots:

- *Side Scan Sonar:* The MRC Coordinator submitted an edited contract form through the county on Feb 14 for approval.
- *ROV:* On Feb 9, the MRC Coordinator and Project Lead, Jeff, met with a University of Delaware professor to discuss the capabilities of fish finders for locating lost crab pots. Jeff is researching equipment to complement the ROV and improve its accuracy in detecting lost crab pots. Project partners, the Sea Dragons, are working on developing a survey protocol for using the ROV. The MRC Coordinator is working on a removal plan and scientific collection permit for WDFW approval to remove lost crab pots.

**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.): Nothing to report.

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

Jan 22 No-Anchor Zones: Port Townsend buoy maintenance – Photo by Pam Petranek











Jan 24 Fort Townsend Forage Fish Survey – Photos by Monica Montgomery







Jan 25 Dabob Bay Forage Fish Survey – Photos by Monica Montgomery





## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** San Juan County

**Month/Year:** February 2022

**Submitted by:** Frances Robertson

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

- The MRC welcomed two new members
- The MRC continues to make progress on the MSA Plan update

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

The MRC welcomed two new members:

Adam Parrot is the Assistant Harbor Master at the Port of Friday Harbor

Matthew Arata is the owner of A1 Marine, a marine construction business on San Juan Island.

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

- The MRC held their monthly meeting on February 3<sup>rd</sup>
- The MRC worked with San Juan County Department of Environmental Stewardship and the County Council to compose a joint letter to the Islands Trust in British Columbia regarding a request to the Canadian Government to reposition one of their multi-mission emergency towing tugs to Sidney, BC. Please see the press release for more information.  
<https://www.sanjuanco.com/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1148>

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

No new funding updates.

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

This is generally a quieter time for the MRC as they work to set up projects that will take place over the summer. This month progress has been made in:

- Connecting with Grade 5 classrooms to bring Killer Whale Tales back to the students this spring.
- Initiating the contacting for maintenance of the Odlin County Park eelgrass protection buoys.
- Onboarding of new MRC members.
- The MRC (led by new MRC member Adam Parrot) will be working with the port to install the Seabin at the Port of Friday Harbor this spring.

The core effort of the MRC coordinator and MRC continues to be progressing the MSA Plan update. The MSA Plan subcommittee are undertaking reviews of drafted chapters and providing input to chapters currently in progress. The MRC discussed and reviewed strategies and actions that addressed Climate Change related threats at the February MRC meeting. They will focus on discussing invasive species and the impact of changing food webs at their March meeting, which happens to fall on National Invasive Species Day.

**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):

No photos from this month.



## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Skagit

**Month/Year:** January/2022

**Submitted by:** Tracy/ Diane

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

- Forage fish surveys at the Bowman Bay restoration site have temporarily been put on hold to help protect the northern elephant seal and her new pup until the pup is fully weaned.
- 19 participants have registered so far for the in-person Salish Sea Stewards training program that starts March 1<sup>st</sup>. Masks and vaccinations are required. Speakers have the option to present virtually. Salish Sea Stewards alumni are invited to attend virtually. The [2022 Training Schedule](#) is now available on the Skagit MRC website.

**Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): MRC Chair and Vice-Chair elections were held at our February MRC meeting. Betsy Stevenson was re-elected as MRC-Chair and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson was elected as MRC Vice-Chair.

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

- Clayton Beach Restoration Kick-off Meeting- **Feb 3** (via Zoom): attended by 3 Skagit MRC members, Skagit MRC staff, Whatcom MRC, NWSF staff, and State Parks.
- MRC Monthly Meeting- **Feb 10** (via Microsoft Teams)- Attended by 19 people. Allie Simpson presented an update on Green Crabs in Skagit County. The Committee discussed the 13 projects that will be moving forward to the next phase in the evaluation/ranking process. The MRC retreat is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 13 at Padilla Bay at 9:00am.
- Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee Meeting- **Feb 15** (via Zoom)
- NWSI Symposium Series #4 "Climate Change Impacts in the Salish Sea"- **Feb 17** (via Zoom)
- Salish Sea Stewards Training starts - **March 1**.
- Next MRC Monthly Meeting – **March 10**, 9am-11:00am via Microsoft Teams
- Kids on the Beach Seining Activity with Sedro Wooley Middle School at Padilla Bay - **March 29-31**
- Skagit MRC Project Planning Retreat at Padilla Bay- **April 13**, 9am-11am

**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:** The 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program will start March 1 – May 24, 2022. Classes will be held in-person Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. Masks and proof of vaccination are required. Speakers have the option of presenting virtually. Sara Brostrom developed a Hybrid Plan, for in-person and virtual speakers, a virtual option for trainees unable to make it class in case of an emergency or the need to quarantine, and a virtual option for Salish Sea Stewards Alumni. Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee members will provide technical support for the virtual sessions. The [2022 Training Schedule](#) is now available on the Skagit MRC website. The training has been widely promoted through over 32 publications and organizations. There was a recent article about the training in the

Skagit Valley Herald. 19 people have registered so far to take the training. The maximum class limit size is 26. Registration deadline is February 22, 2022. The SSS Advisory Committee meeting was held February 15.

- Fidalgo Bay Day: We will be sending out a survey to past participating organizations to gauge their interest and comfort level in participating in-person. We will also be looking at different dates and alternative locations to host the event just in case we are unable to have it at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: The NWSC hosted the annual MRC Kelp Kayak Survey workshop on January 26<sup>th</sup>. The workshop was well attended including four presentations. Over 50 volunteers participated in 2021 kelp surveys across 7 counties including Skagit County. Volunteers monitored 21 different kelp beds, documented 404 acres of kelp forest, and collectively paddled 326 miles! MRC kelp monitoring data will be used for the Department of Natural Resources new floating kelp canopy vital sign indicator and to create an interactive StoryMap. In addition to kayak kelp surveys, the Department of Natural Resources collected kelp canopy data using drones, fix-winged aircraft, and high-resolution cameras and compared it to the data collected by the kelp kayakers. They found that the kelp kayak surveys are currently the best method for collecting the most reliable kelp forest data compared to other methods. Puget Sound Restoration Fund presented an overview of the kelp expedition that took place last July with 184 participants collecting kelp data over 8 days from Neah Bay to south Puget Sound. The purpose of the expedition was to catalyze a broader effort to protect and restore our kelp forests. Kayak Kelp Survey training will take place this spring. Surveys won't start again until June 2022.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Parts of the beach area are currently closed to protect a new northern elephant seal pup and its mother, until the pup is fully weaned. There are several Salish Sea Stewards that are involved in monitoring the seal and her pup and providing outreach to help keep them safe from people and dogs. Skagit MRC is partnering with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to continue planting and plant maintenance activities at the restoration site with the help of volunteers. We plan to integrate additional dune grass up to the fence line and in between the logs that washed up along the shoreline. We will also plant trees and shrubs along the fence line to help protect the rest of the vegetation and provide some shade, and do some weeding, thorough watering, and monitoring. The trees will likely have to be mounded and we are considering the use of slow drip watering bags to increase the survivability of the newly planted trees during times of drought and extreme heat. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is seeking funding for a feasibility study/design to restore the pocket estuary and replace the Pass Lake culvert to improve flushing and have requested a Letter of Acknowledgement for their grant proposal from the Skagit MRC.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Monthly forage fish surveys continue. However, surveys at Bowman Bay have temporarily been put on hold until the northern elephant seal pup that was born at the park in January is fully weaned. Surf smelt spawning is pretty much over for the year in the northern part of Similk Bay out toward Turner Bay and Kukatali and won't likely start again until late May. However, they continue to spawn in Fidalgo Bay and Marchs Point.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern: The intern is a college graduate that will be working on several projects including one for the MRC that involves mentoring a 7<sup>th</sup> grader from Shoreline to collect and analyze forage fish data at several locations along Marchs Point. Field work will occur Feb-October. Data analysis and report prep Nov-Dec. The intern will present results to the MRC in January 2022. This MRC Intern project is part of a pilot program and is just one of 5 other intern projects under the Salish Sea School STaRS program (Students Training as Research Scientists), including stormwater monitoring, beach debris, orcas, marine birds, and marine mammals.
- Kids on the Beach: Three schools will be participating in the spring KOTB program. Sedro-Wooley 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will be participating in a mudflat safari and beach seining activity

over a three-day period in late March (March 29-31st) at Padilla Bay with the help of volunteers. Conway and Concrete middle schools will be collecting fish seine data and forage fish eggs at the Fidalgo Bay RV Park on April 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> with the help of volunteers. Annie is still working out the details for the Anacortes School District to participate in the spring program. Annie is also working in collaboration with the La Conner School to integrate the KOTB with the Swinomish Tribal Community's Between Two Worlds program.

- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Hatchery work continues with 15,000 abalone in cultivation. Field work including monitoring and outplanting started this month. The goal is to outplant 10,000 juvenile abalone to the abalone restoration sites in Skagit County by April this year.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Field work will start up again in April 2022 with abbreviated monitoring again this year. More intensive monitoring is planned in 2023 depending on funding. In March, Padilla Bay staff plan to collect a sub-sample of oyster seed from the bags of cultch that were placed in Fidalgo Bay last summer. The shells will be transported to south Padilla Bay channels later this summer. Paul will present on the native oyster restoration project as part of the 2022 Salish Sea Stewards training program in late March.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling: It is anticipated that the QAPP will be completed in late March.

**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.): NA

**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:** February 2022

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

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

- The Stakeholder Survey for the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Conservation Action Plan Update project was launched on February 9. The survey will remain open until March 2, and respondents will have the opportunity to respond either in writing or with a follow up phone interview.
- The MRC contracted with DNR to complete marine vegetation monitoring from Everett to Edmonds this summer. DNR found eelgrass was present at 21 out of 22 sites sampled, and at 192 of 224 transects sampled. DNR submitted their final report on February 11 and presented on this work at the February 16 MRC Meeting.
- The MRC retrieved cages for the Mussel Watch program on January 31. One mussel cage (Kayak Point) was lost during heavy storms shortly after deployment in November, while the remaining 6 cages were successfully retrieved and returned to WDFW.

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

Three new MRC members nominated for appointment to the MRC are still awaiting formal appointment by Snohomish County Council.

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

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman met with NWSC staff to discuss the status of efforts to secure Congressionally Directed Spending funds for MRC projects on January 25.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman met with staff from Snohomish County and the Snohomish Conservation District to discuss potential projects to address issues of trash and pet waste on January 25.

Alex Pittman attended the NWSC Kelp Management Advisory Team Meeting on January 25.

Elisa Dawson, Alex Pittman, and Sara Maxwell attended the Port Susan Snohomish-Island MRC Joint Committee Meeting on January 25.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman conducted derelict vessel reconnaissance in the Snohomish Estuary on January 26.

MRC staff and members attended the NWSC MRC Kelp Kayak Survey Update Meeting on January 26.

Elisa Dawson attended a meeting to discuss the Acknowledgement of Indigenous Lands on January 27.

Elisa Dawson, Alex Pittman, and David Bain attended the SMP Learning Group Meeting on January 27.

Elisa Dawson attended the third Meadowdale Monitoring Team Meeting on January 27.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman attended a meeting with the UW Evans School Student Consulting Lab team to discuss scoping for their assistance with the Port Susan Conservation Action Plan Update Project on January 27.

Elisa Dawson, Alex Pittman, Tim Ellis, and Susan Tarpley attended the WSU Beach Watchers' Starlight Beach Walk event at Olympic Beach in Edmonds on January 28.

Elisa Dawson met with staff from Snohomish County staff to discuss the installation of a monitoring camera at the Meadowdale Beach & Estuary Restoration Project site on January 31.

Snohomish MRC, in partnership with Tulalip Tribes and the Stillaguamish Tribe, retrieved 6 mussel watch cages in Snohomish County on January 31 as part of WDFW's Mussel Watch Program. A total of 7 cages were deployed and ultimately returned to WDFW, though 1 cage was damaged during a winter storm and was retrieved at an earlier date.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman met with Snohomish County staff to discuss the development of the 2021 MRC Annual Report on February 1.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman met with Snohomish County staff to develop a list of previously completed projects and initiatives to support stakeholder outreach efforts for the Port Susan MSA Conservation Action Plan Update project on February 1.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman met with staff from WSU Extension to discuss WSU Beach Watchers beach cleanup events in 2022, including opportunities for increased collaboration with the MRC, on February 2.

Elisa Dawson met with staff from Snohomish County staff to discuss the existing hatchery at the Meadowdale Beach & Estuary Restoration Project site on February 3.

The Nearshore Restoration subcommittee met to discuss the draft one-pager on the beneficial re-use of dredged material from the Snohomish River on February 3.

The Stakeholder Survey for the Port Susan MSA Conservation Action Plan Update was sent to stakeholders on February 9.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman met with Snohomish County staff to discuss the incorporation of water quality improvement efforts into the Port Susan MSA Conservation Action Plan Update process on February 9.

Elisa Dawson conducted field reconnaissance to inform potential trash and pet waste project ideas on February 10.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman attended a meeting with project consultant ESA and the UW Evans School Student Consulting Lab team to discuss opportunities for coordination and collaboration throughout the stakeholder engagement process for the Port Susan Conservation Action Plan Update Project on February 10.

Elisa Dawson presented to an environmental studies school group at the Meadowdale Beach & Estuary Restoration Project site on February 15.

Laura Gurley attended the Washington Department of Natural Resources launch of the Snohomish Watershed Resilience Action Plan (WRAP) at the Port of Everett on February 15.

The MRC held their monthly meeting on February 16. Bart Christiaen from DNR gave a presentation about DNR's efforts to monitor marine vegetation in south Snohomish County in 2021, and the MRC voted to recommend comments for submittal regarding the County's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update process.

The MRC conducted Forage Fish Monitoring on February 16 Picnic Point and Meadowdale and February 17 at Howarth Park.

Elisa Dawson attended a site tour of the Meadowdale Beach & Estuary Restoration Project site on February 17.

MRC staff and members attended the MRC Virtual Symposium #4 on February 17.

**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):

**Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area (MRC grant project for 2021-2022):** Snohomish MRC launched the Port Susan Stakeholder Survey on February 9. The survey will remain open until March 2, and respondents will have the opportunity to respond either in writing or with a follow up phone interview. The MRC coordinated a meeting with Snohomish MRC project consultant ESA and the UW Evans School Student Consulting Lab team, contracted by the Island MRC, to identify opportunities for coordination throughout the stakeholder engagement process. The next Joint Island-Snohomish Port Susan Team Meeting is scheduled for March 3.

**Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds):** MRC staff conducted field reconnaissance of potential vessels for removal in 2022 on January 26. Following reconnaissance, staff are in the process of are in the process of soliciting feedback on the 2022 vessel removal plan from SWM management and stakeholders, with a goal to post 4 vessels for removal in March.

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

**Forage Fish Monitoring:** Forage fish samples continue to be taken once per month at Picnic Point, Meadowdale, and Howarth Park. Sampling occurred on February 16 (Picnic Point & Meadowdale) and February 17 (Howarth Park).

**Nearshore Restoration:** MRC staff have continued to work with project consultant ESA to develop the Meadowdale Monitoring Plan. A Meadowdale Monitoring Team Meeting was held on January 27.

The Nearshore Restoration subcommittee also continues to develop a one-pager on the beneficial re-use of dredged material from the Snohomish River to help facilitate discussions about this prospective opportunity for nearshore projects.

**MRC Outreach Subcommittee:** MRC staff and members attended the WSU Beach Watchers' Starlight Beach Walk even on January 28. About 50 people from the public attended.

MRC staff met with staff from WSU Extension to discuss WSU Beach Watchers plans for beach cleanups in 2022, including opportunities for greater collaboration with the MRC. Snohomish County has contracted with WSU to conduct at least one beach cleanup each quarter of 2022, the first three of which are planned for the following dates and locations:

- March 3 – Howarth Park
- April 23 – Picnic Point (Earth Day)
- September 17 – location TBD (International Coastal Cleanup Day)

**Marine Vegetation Monitoring:** DNR completed marine vegetation monitoring from Everett to Edmonds this summer. Eelgrass was present at 21 out of 22 sites sampled, and at 192 of 224 transects sampled. DNR provided a final report on February 11, and presented about this work at the February 16 MRC Meeting.



**Stormwater (formerly Mussel Watch):** The MRC retrieved cages for the Mussel Watch program on January 31. One mussel cage (Kayak Point) was lost during heavy storms shortly after deployment in November, while the remaining 6 cages were successfully retrieved and returned to WDFW.

No updates for:

- Crabber Education
- Snohomish Estuary Pilings
- Oil Spills

**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 voted to approve comments for submittal for the visioning process for the County's 2024 Comp Plan Update. Comments are due February 25.

**Upcoming Events:**

- WSU Beach Watchers Beach Cleanup Event – March 3
- Next MRC Meeting – March 16
- Forage Fish Monitoring – March dates TBD
- Northwest Straits 101 – March 17

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



MRC Member and WSU Beach Watcher, Tim Ellis (right) at the Starlight Beach Walk on January 28. Photo: Alex Pittman.



Starlight Beach Walk at Olympic Beach in Edmonds on January 28. Photo: Alex Pittman.

## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: FEBRUARY 2022

Submitted by: Austin Rose

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

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>
- [Registration is open](#) for the Whatcom Marine Research Symposium, scheduled for **February 23, 2022, 9:00-3:15pm**.

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

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>

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

- The MRC held their February meeting on February 3. Meeting topics included:
  - Helen Berry (DNR, Julia Ledbetter (DNR, and Allie Simpson (NWSC) provided a three-part presentation on bull kelp. Highlights included:
    - An understanding of where kelp in the Puget Sound is showing stability or showing major losses.
    - The Puget Sound Partnership revised their [vital signs](#), and added a floating kelp canopy indicator, recognizing the value of kelp to Puget Sound.
    - The data that the MRC's collect from their annual surveys will be included in the development of the kelp vital sign. Anyone interested in helping with the development of the kelp vital sign can send an e-mail to [nearshore@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:nearshore@dnr.wa.gov).
    - Allie Simpson summarized the Whatcom MRC kelp data from four of the five sites monitored annually (Cherry Point, Pt. Whitehorn, SW Lummi Island, and the Aiston Preserve) from 2016-2021. Data can be viewed [here](#).
    - There is a lot of shoreline in Whatcom County where kelp data is not being collected. The MRC was encouraged to expand their monitoring if possible.
- [Registration is open](#) for the Whatcom Marine Research Symposium, scheduled for **February 23, 2022, 9:00-3:15pm**. The symposium will feature two keynote speakers, Nooksack Elder and Tribal Storyteller Tammy Cooper-Woodrich, and Washington State Poet Laureate and Lummi Tribal member Rena Priest; and eight presentations on new research on a wide range of topics relevant to Whatcom County area marine waters and nearshore ecosystems. The symposium is

free and will be delivered online as a Zoom Conference. The symposium program can be found [HERE](#).

**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):

#### Education and Outreach

- Mike MacKay and several other MRC members are preparing the *Beach Seine with Schools* project. This year, the project will involve elementary students (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade) from Bellingham and Lummi Tribal schools attending a two-hour field event where they will observe the deployment and catch in a beach seine at Boulevard Park during the peak of the juvenile salmon outmigration period. Dates and times when the field events will occur: April 26, May 10, and June 7 from 11am – 1pm on each of those days. Each event will be preceded by a short talk by a Tribal leader/elder and/or a marine scientist. Field staff from the Lummi Tribe will operate the seine and assist in sharing their knowledge of marine resources captured in the net. Students will be briefed on the importance of the intertidal corridor to juvenile salmon, what they can expect to see during the seine set, and will be given a form to record the seine catch. A formal invitation as well as an application for attending is currently being sent to 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers. 32 teachers have been contacted in addition to the associated school principles.

#### Monitoring

- The MRC was recently approached by the Bellingham Community Boating Center (CBC) who is interested in including kelp education and monitoring in their summer programming. There are several ways the MRC could collaborate with the CBC and perhaps gather more kelp data in Whatcom County.

**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.):

- MRC members met with Amber Forrest (WA State Parks) and representatives from DNR to discuss the heavy use of the boat ramp at Larrabee State Park during low tide to launch boats, resulting in vehicles driving over the adjacent eelgrass meadow. The MRC would like to utilize volunteers with the North Sound Stewards program and Beach Stewards program this summer to help gather information on boat ramp users and frequency of boaters using the ramp at low tide. With that baseline information, the MRC is considering social marketing techniques to provide education and limit damage to the eelgrass.
- The Whatcom County Council voted 7-0 for a “temporary” closure to motor vehicles on Gulf Road – essentially closing access to that stretch of beach. This is a MRC kelp monitoring site, with several years of data that is being used to help develop the floating kelp vital sign. It is unknown at this time whether this would impact the MRC monitoring as there is good chance the MRC could receive special access for the surveys.

- Whatcom and Skagit MRC's met with the Northwest Straits Foundation and other partners regarding the Clayton Beach restoration project. The group identified additional stakeholders, constraints, concerns, and opportunities associated with the project. There will be continued discussions about the development of a monitoring plan, grant opportunities, and work with the railroad (BNSF).
- Lummi Nation is interested in help with removing two derelict boats in the Sandy Point marina. Due to the complicated situation of ownership and state of the boats, the timing will not work to allocate the potential CDS funds. Lummi asked that the MRC keep the issue on their radar.

**Photos:**