



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting
Date: April 28, 2023
Time: 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

To join the Zoom meeting, [CLICK HERE](#). Meeting ID: 845 1561 9598 Meeting Password: 974813. For audio conference, dial: 253-215-8782 or [click here](#) to find your 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	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement	Elsa Schwartz, Chair
10:10 – 10:30	Committee reports Executive Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Officer Elections• Edits to Rules of Procedure External Relations Science Advisory Committee	Tom Cowan Tom Cowan Julia Parrish
10:30-10:35	Puget Sound Partnership update	Ahren Stroming
10:35 – 10:50	Business items Kelp Plan Workshop Kayak Monitoring Kickoff Derelict Vessels Green Crab Update	Jeff Whitty Jeff Whitty Dana Oster Allie Simpson



agenda

	NW Straits Conference – Nov. 3-4, 2023 San Juan County Commission Meeting – June 23, 2023	Caitlyn Blair Caitlyn Blair
10:50 – 11:20	Beneficial Use of Dredge Materials in the Lower Columbia River	Chanda Littles, US Army Corps of Engineers
11:20-11:25	Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	Cecilia Gobin
11:25-11:30	NW Straits Foundation update	Don Hunger
11:30-11:50	MRC Reports	MRC Representatives
11:50 – 11:55	Meeting highlights and action items Identify key points and action items from this meeting for MRC reps to report back to their MRCs	All
11:55-12:00	Public comment	All

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

Next meeting: Friday May 26, 2023 (Zoom)



Minutes

Executive Committee Meeting April 17, 2023 11AM-12PM (Zoom) Meeting Minutes

Attendees

Committee Members: Tom Cowan (Committee Chair), Jeff Taylor, Elsa Schwartz, Jude Apple, Julia Parrish

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Caitlyn Blair

Absent: Nan McKay

Welcome

Tom Cowan opened the meeting.

NWSC Officer Elections

April is officer elections month. Nan is leading the recruitment process. Tim Ellis has agreed to be the NW Straits Commission Chair, and Alan Clark has agreed to be the Vice-Chair. The Committee is in support of moving these nominations forward to the NW Straits Commission. With the Commission's approval, these changes will take place in May after the NW Straits Commission meeting on April 28.

San Juan Cattle Point Project Review

The Executive Committee reviewed San Juan MRC's pending Cattle Point Interpretive Area Upgrade project proposal. They discussed whether there is alignment with the NWS Commission's funding policy. Lucas shared about the three pieces of the project, which are: developing interpretive signage, artwork, and capital improvements to an existing building at the site (power and water).

The Committee decided that more information is needed on goals, outcomes, and measurable results of the interpretive signage and artwork. Regarding power and water to the existing structure, federal funding cannot be used toward capital improvements. Further, the building is managed by WA Dept of Natural Resources. The Committee determined that use of Commission resources to maintain state agency buildings does not align with the Commission's funding policy. Commission staff will follow up with MRC staff to share the Committee's thoughts and gather additional information on the signage and artwork.

March NW Straits Initiative Retreat debrief:

The Committee discussed the NW Straits Retreat that took place on March 30-31 at the La Conner Country Inn. The Committee agreed on the necessity to continue the conversations that were had at the retreat, including topics related to NW Straits Commission, NW Straits Foundation, and MRC relationships. The Committee is moving forward with meeting again in the near future to continue debriefing on the retreat.



Minutes

**Executive Committee Meeting
March 20, 2023 11-12 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Meeting Minutes**

Attendees

Committee Members: Tom Cowan (Committee Chair), Jeff Taylor, Nan McKay, Julia Parrish

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Caitlyn Blair, Dana Oster

Not Present: Elsa Schwartz, Jude Apple

Welcome

Tom Cowan opened the meeting.

Review policies and procedures:

The Northwest Straits Commission rules of procedure have been updated to include more robust descriptions of standing committees. Lucas shared the revised policies and procedures with the Committee. The Committee approved the Northwest Straits Commission's adoption of the revised policies and procedures.

Puget Sound Day on the Hill sign-on letters:

Lucas shared with the Committee that the Puget Sound Partnership and Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission have drafted six letters for organizations and individuals to sign in support of Puget Sound Day on the Hill priorities. There are three letters to the Senate Committees, and three letters to the corresponding House Committees. The Northwest Straits Commission Reauthorization is included as a priority in the Senate and House Commerce Committee letters. The signatures are due March 24th. The Committee approved the Northwest Straits Commission to be added as a signatory to these letters, and further contact will be made with the Northwest Straits Foundation and Marine Resource Committees to include them as signatories as well.

Reauthorization update:

Nan began by sharing that there has not been much change since our last Committee meeting on February 22, 2023. Nan and Lucas shared that they met with members of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and Puget Sound Partnership to talk about their support for Northwest Straits Commission Reauthorization. Each organization is supportive and asked to be kept informed as more is learned regarding the source of funds and the funding amount. Nan is seeking a follow up meeting with Senator Murray's staff to gather additional information but has not been able to get in touch with them to date. The Committee discussed the \$10 million appropriation request amount, which led to a discussion on the priority of maintaining the community-oriented approach to our conservation work, partnerships that could



Minutes

be formed with the funding, and the importance of Marine Resources Committees identifying and leading the work. Lucas is preparing support letter templates, which will be used to gather support from county councils and commissions.

NWS Commission Marine Programming Discussion:

Over the last several months, the Committee has been discussing Northwest Straits Commission programs. The focus of these conversations has been to identify the potential growth of our regional marine programming, and the staffing support at the Northwest Straits Commission that is required to manage these programs. At the February Committee meeting, Lucas mentioned that our program growth will require changes in our internal structures, to ensure staffing roles are aligned with the project management needs. Dana raised questions as to how we can look at our marine programming more strategically, how to prioritize local Marine Resource Committee efforts, and to keep our work rooted in local communities. With the program having already grown substantially, there has been a lot of work put onto Dana. Lucas mentioned it would be beneficial to adjust Dana's position to better match her new responsibilities.

The Committee expressed support for adjusting the marine program to align with the Commission's needs as we are now managing more regional projects. The Committee would like to see a proposal for what the marine program would look like as we continue to manage regional projects, including criteria that could be used to select regional projects and partnerships. Lucas and Dana will discuss this and prepare ideas for a future Executive Committee discussion.

**RULES OF PROCEDURE
FOR THE
NORTHWEST STRAITS COMMISSION**

REVISED ~~AND APPROVED April 24, 2020~~ DRAFT – 021/2023

Introduction

In 1998, in an effort to address the serious decline in marine resources in the Northwest Straits, Congress authorized The Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative (HR 3461) (the Initiative). This legislation created the Northwest Straits Commission (Commission), an umbrella organization encompassing a network of seven county-based Marine Resource Committees (MRCs). The Commission provides technical assistance, integrates scientific information, develops ecosystem-level coordination and guides funding for the MRCs. These Rules of Procedure (Rules) describe the structure of the Commission as well as the process and procedural rules which govern the Commission and its members.

1. Organizational Model

The Commission is a regional coordination and support body. Among its many goals are the following:

- to deliver technical assistance to MRCs;
- to fulfill all Commission responsibilities as described in the [Murray/Metcalf Report to the Convenors](#);
- to create a strong identity for the public and decision-makers that brands the Commission as a partner in Salish Sea recovery;
- to develop reasonable skill sets within the program; and
- to be cost effective.

To achieve these goals, the Commission will:

- employ a small administrative staff, supervised by a director (the Director) and augmented by additional program staff as needed;
- maintain shared offices/infrastructure at the Padilla Bay NERR;
- use Commission committees to streamline effectiveness;
- develop science, economic and outreach partners;
- establish an independent panel of science experts;
- coordinate with MRCs to develop and address regional education/outreach, funding, science, training and community relations;

- meet Commission benchmarks for performance, as prescribed by the Initiative and monitor MRC progress towards achieving Performance Benchmarks; and
- work in coordination with the Northwest Straits Foundation.

2. Membership

There are thirteen members of the Commission. Each of the seven MRCs shall have a representative on the Commission. Internal MRC rules govern the selection of their representative to the Commission and determine the duration of that representative's term. The Governor of the State of Washington is allotted five appointments, each on a four-year rotating term. One of those is required to represent the Puget Sound Partnership. The final seat is a tribal representative appointed by the Secretary of the Interior.

3. Alternates

The seven MRCs are encouraged to appoint alternate representatives to the Commission. The MRCs are further encouraged to send their appointed alternate to as many Commission meetings as possible, so that the Commission and the alternate will be familiar with each other in the event the regular member is unable to attend. When the regular appointee is absent, the alternate may fully participate in the Commission meetings including making decisions, whether by consensus or vote. Gubernatorial appointees may nominate an alternate, whose appointment will be subject to approval by the Commission. The Department of the Interior appointee may appoint an alternate.

4. Officers

A Chair and a Vice-Chair will be elected for a term of one year at the Commission's regular meeting in April, or at the next scheduled meeting of the Commission if no meeting is held that month.

5. Committee Structure

The following are standing committees of the Commission. Additional committees and/or ad hoc committees may be formed from time to time. Committee chairs must be a member or alternate of the Commission. Interested individuals may join these committees at the discretion of the committee chair.

To streamline effectiveness the Commission uses a standing Executive committee

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The Executive Committee will be comprised of the Commission Chair, the Commission Vice-Chair, the chairs of any other committee, the Director, and the Director of the Padilla Bay NERR (ex officio). The Executive Committee shall have no fewer than two MRC representatives. In the event that the Executive Committee has only one MRC representative, an at-large MRC representative will be appointed by the chair of the Commission. The Vice-Chair of the Commission will serve as the cChair of the Executive Committee and the Chair of the Commission will serve as Vice-cChair of the Committee. The Committee provides oversight on and recommends actions to the Northwest Straits Commission related to budget proposals, internal policy, legislative matters, and other operational issues.

External Relations Committee

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The External Relations Committee will be chaired by a member of the Northwest Straits Commission. The Committee will nominate a chairperson on an annual basis for approval by the Northwest Straits Commission. The Committee will strive to include at least two MRC members. Other members of the committee may join by consensus of the ~~C~~Committee Chair and Northwest Straits Commission Director and need not be members of the Northwest Straits Commission. The purpose of the External Relations Committee is to assist in the development and implementation of strategies that strengthen external partnerships related to funding, programs, and other emerging topics.

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Science Advisory Committee (SAC)

The SAC Chair will be a member of the Commission and appointed by the Northwest Straits Commission every two years. For additional details on Committee membership and the Committee's role and structure, see the Science Advisory Committee Articles of Association. The Articles of Association were approved by the NWS Commission September 30, 2022.

Commented [HL(S1): The Articles of Association do not explicitly identify how the Chair of the Committee will be chosen or what the term length of this position is. Other positions are two years. I added this line to make it more clear. I think this makes the most sense because the Articles do say that the SAC Chair will be a member of the Commission. Therefore, the Commission would be most ideal to select from among the members.

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~~Additional committees and/or ad hoc committees may be formed from time to time. The chairs of these committees must be a member or alternate of the Commission. Interested individuals may join these committees at the discretion of the committee chair.~~

6. Meetings

The Commission will meet monthly on the last Friday of the month or at such other time as is agreed upon by the Commission. The meeting venue will rotate around the region to facilitate participation by the MRCs and county commissioners/councils. ~~Conference calls~~Virtual meetings may take the place of in-person meetings as agreed upon by the Commission. The Chair may schedule special meetings.

The minutes of each meeting shall consist of decisions, future agenda items and documentation of the most important discussions. A draft of the previous month's minutes will be circulated to all Commission members for review prior to the meeting.

Guidelines for Northwest Straits Commission and Foundation overlap:

1. Hold joint meetings of the Commission and Foundation Executive Committees once or twice a year.
2. Encourage representation between members of the Commission and the Foundation Board where appropriate.
3. Ensure that the chair and vice chair of the Commission and president and vice president of the Foundation Board receive agendas and approved minutes for one another's meetings.

7. Open Public Meetings

All meetings of the Commission shall be open and public and all persons shall be permitted to attend. All actions shall be taken in open session. No action shall be taken in executive session.

Executive sessions in which the general public is excluded may be convened for the following purposes:

- a) to review negotiations on the performance of public contracts when public knowledge regarding such consideration would cause a likelihood of increased costs;
- b) to receive and evaluate complaints or charges brought against a commissioner or employee;
- c) to evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for employment or to review the performance of an employee.
- d) To discuss with legal counsel representing the Commission litigation or potential litigation when public knowledge regarding the discussion is likely to result in an adverse legal or financial consequence to the Commission

Notice of any official Northwest Straits Commission meeting (in person, conference call or other means) should be made to the public as well as practical means to participate.

8. Quorum

A simple majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The existence of a quorum is determined at the beginning of the meeting. In the event members leave during the meeting, the quorum requirement is still met.

9. Agenda

The Chair will approve the final draft agenda that will be sent to members at least three days before the meeting. The agenda shall always allot time for public comment. Requests for agenda time should be sent to the Commission office two weeks prior to a meeting.

10. Decision-Making Approach

The Commission shall use a “modified consensus” model for decision-making. All efforts will be made to reach consensus. Consensus means that all parties involved in decision-making share a sense that they have reached a common resolution. Consensus for the Commission will be seen as an agreement that all participants in the decision-making process are, at a minimum, “willing to live with” or “have no opposition” to the decision. If full consensus cannot be reached, a simple majority plus one may call for the issue to be put to a vote. A vote would then require a simple majority plus one to pass.

Voting by proxy is not allowed.

When making decisions, the Commission will determine consensus using the following approach:

1. A member of the Commission makes a motion to take action on an issue being considered by the Commission.
2. A Commission member seconds the motion.
3. Chair facilitates discussion.

4. Following discussion, the Chair asks “are there any objections to the motion? If not, we have consensus.”

11. Representing the Commission

The Chair and the Director are authorized to officially represent the Commission to others. Other Commissioners may officially represent the Commission only when specifically authorized by the Commission, the Chair or the Director.

12. Conflicts of Interest

12.1 Commission members who believe they may have a real or potential conflict of interest in regard to Commission business shall disclose the circumstances of the conflict to the Commission.

12.2 Commission members must comply with subsection 12.3 when the following circumstances apply or it is reasonably foreseeable that they will apply:

- a) the member is beneficially interested, directly or indirectly, in a contract, sale, lease, purchase, or grant that may be made by, through, or under the supervision of the Commission, in whole or in part; or
- b) the member accepts, directly or indirectly, any compensation, gratuity or reward from any other person beneficially interested in a contract, sale, lease, purchase, or grant that may be made by, through, or under the supervision of the Commission, in whole or in part; or
- c) the member either owns a beneficial interest in, or is an officer, agent, employee or member of, an entity that is engaged in a transaction involving the Commission.

12.3 If required by subsection 12.2 above, the member must:

- a) Recuse himself or herself from discussions by the Commission regarding the specific contract, sale, lease, purchase, grant or transaction; and
- b) Recuse himself or herself from any vote by the Commission on the specific contract, sale, lease, purchase, grant, or transaction; and
- c) Refrain from attempting to influence any other member or employee in any discussion or vote regarding the specific contract, sale, lease, purchase, grant or transaction.

12.4 The prohibitions contained in subsection 12.3 do not prohibit the member from using his or her general expertise to educate and provide general information on the subject area to other Commission members.

13. Adopting Policy

The Commission may, from time to time choose to adopt a new policy, endorse an initiative or comment on an issue of concern.

13.1 Requests for adopting a resolution/position statement must be in writing.

13.2 Requests for adopting a resolution/position statement must be sponsored by a Commissioner or a MRC.

13.3 Sponsored requests are referred to the Executive Committee for consideration. The Executive Committee may alter the language of the resolution/position statement. If approved by the Committee, the resolution/position statement is introduced to the full Commission at a regular meeting.

13.4 Immediately following introduction, the Commission will send a memorandum to the MRC chairs notifying them of the proposed resolution/position statement. During the two-month period following notification, the MRCs may choose to endorse, oppose or comment upon the proposed resolution/position statement.

13.5 Action by the Commission on the resolution/position statement may be considered at a regular meeting.

13.6 Sections 13.1 through 13.5 above may be waived in whole or in part by a consensus of the Commission.

14. Commenting on legislation (section approved by Commission September 2019)

The Commission may, from time to time choose to comment or provide testimony on proposed federal, state or local government legislation.

14.1 Requests for the Commission to comment on legislation should be in writing.

14.2 Requests are referred to the Executive Committee for consideration. The Executive Committee may recommend alterations to comment language and refer the original comment along with alterations to the Commission for approval.

14.3 If approved by the Commission by consensus, the comment or testimony will be provided to the appropriate legislative body or committee.

14.4 Where time does not allow for Commission consensus, the Executive Committee may waive 14.1-14.3 and provide comment if approved by committee consensus.

15. Matching Funds (added October 2020)

MRCs are highly encouraged to seek third party grants to support their work.

15.1 In cases where these grants require match, MRCs should not consider funding provided through the Commission, or the associated volunteer hours, in-kind support or direct support provided by any entity as available match for third-party grants without prior review and approval by the Commission operations manager or director.

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

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

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

16. Funding Policy (Approved by Commission August 2021)

The NWS Commission secures funding to address the environmental goals identified in the Northwest Straits Initiative's strategic plan. Funders provide financial resources to the NWSC in order to support MRC priorities and to allow the NWSC to integrate those priorities into regional initiatives. Funding may come from a variety of sources, primarily federal and state, and are obtained specifically for the purpose of supporting the operations and projects of the Commission and MRCs. Funds are distributed to the MRCs equally as periodic (annual or biennial) grants to each county. Many valued partners and organizations also carry out projects that benefit the Salish Sea. The NWS Commission and MRCs frequently collaborate with these partners toward common goals. This policy is not intended to prevent projects that result in mutual benefits to project partners. It is meant to 1) assure funds are used to advance MRC-led priorities, 2) allow us to effectively message and integrate MRC impacts and work throughout the Northwest Straits and Puget Sound region, 3) prevent the perception that MRCs are funding entities, which is outside the intended purpose of MRC funds, and 4) prevent the "pass-through" of funds that primarily advance the work of other organizations. Definitions: An MRC-led project is a project that has pre-determined goals, measurable results and meets each of the following criteria. These criteria also apply to situations where an MRC is considering taking the lead on a smaller piece of a larger project with partners:

- The project fills a need or gap identified by the MRC, and/or the MRC would pursue the project independent of any project partners.
- The project has been adopted by the full MRC through a majority vote or other mechanism outlined by the MRCs bylaws.
- The project has a clear outcome and project deliverable that can be solely attributed to the MRC.

- A member of the MRC or MRC subcommittee serves as the lead for the project.
 - An MRC lead is a member or a subcommittee that serves as the primary point of contact and organizer/manager of a project. They may also implement the project directly. They assure the project stays on track, assure deliverables attributed to the MRC are achieved, and bring regular updates to the MRC.

Policy

Funding secured and distributed by the Commission to MRCs may only be used for MRC projects as defined above. Projects that do not meet MRC project criteria are considered pass-through funding.

If a sub-contract is necessary to carry out the project, the sub-contractor must be working under the direction of the MRC or an identified MRC project lead or subcommittee. In some cases, sub-contractors may be project partners that are also contributing funds to the overall project, but the scope of the sub-contract must be directed by the MRC.

Examples:

Examples may apply to both projects and programs, but the term project is used throughout for simplicity.

Examples of projects that do not qualify for NWS Commission funding:

- One MRC member serves as a lead or partner on a project but the full MRC has not formally adopted the project as an MRC effort.
- A proposal is made to support communications (such as signage, brochures, advertising, etc.) related to another organization's project where the MRC is not a project lead or a lead on a project component, as described in the definitions section in this policy.
- A project is proposed by another organization where the MRC would serve as a partner, but the MRC itself does not have a mutual interest in the results. Further discussion would be needed with Commission staff to determine eligibility.
- A project that does not have an MRC member leading the project as described in the definitions section of this policy.
- The MRC is proposing to be a partner on a large-scale project where there is no distinct role (phase or project component) for the MRC. In other words, there are no outcomes or deliverables that can be solely attributed to the MRC.
- A project is proposed where the MRC's contribution is not essential to the completion of the project or project component. Further discussion would be needed with Commission staff to determine eligibility.

Examples of projects that do qualify for NWS Commission funding assuming all criteria under the definitions section are met:

- Another entity develops a project and the MRC joins as a partner, where the MRC has a mutual interest in the project results.
- The MRC is a partner on a large-scale or ongoing project, where the MRC has a distinct role (phase or component) and a mutual interest in the results.
- The MRC formally adopts the project and one member serves as champion/lead, and maintains ongoing communication with the full MRC about the project.
- The MRC collaborates with another partner (or partners) to develop and carry out a project. The partner organization serves as administrative lead, while the MRC maintains a key role in managing the project.
- The MRC carries out a distinct phase of a project independently (e.g. feasibility assessments), while another entity completes other phases (e.g. construction).
- An MRC and partners carry out shared communications for a mutual project.



Commission staff highlights - [April 2023]

MRC Support

2021-23 MRC Grants: Quarterly reporting is due in April for the January-March period. The next quarter (April-June) is the final opportunity to use state funding in the current MRC awards, which expires as of June 30.

2023 CDS MRC Grants: MRCs are no in progress on these awards, which are scheduled to end December 31, 2023. These awards have the same quarterly reporting schedule as other MRC grants.

2023-25 MRC Grants: Commission staff are holding consultations with each MRC to discuss planned projects for the grant proposals and identify areas where the MRC may need additional support. These meetings are also an opportunity to discuss anticipated budgets and whether MRCs plan to make use of all funds available to them.

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: The Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee met to discuss the Kelp Plan Action Workshop, next steps for the Kelp Plan, and communication tools to increase awareness of projects and organizations involved in Puget Sound kelp conservation and recovery.

Kelp Monitoring: NWSC staff hosted the 2023 MRC Kelp Kayak Monitoring Kick-off to review and update MRCs on kayak protocols, safety, and data. The workshop was attended by MRC kayak leads, volunteers, and guests. Commission staff also met with Skagit MRC kayak volunteers to review potential new survey sites.

Green Crab: The Washington Conservation Corps crew finished their first of 10 weeks with NWSC on European green crab trapping and removal in Samish Bay. During the week filled with classroom and in-field training, the crew captured their first two green crabs of the season and found two molts. Trapping and removal in Drayton Harbor is beginning April 24th in coordination with WDFW. In May, NWSC staff will be presenting on green crab to the Salish Sea Conservation Corps and providing support to partners for the new Molt Search training and bioblitzes in Whatcom and Skagit County.

Derelict Vessels: NWSC staff, Snohomish County staff, and WA Dept of Natural Resources staff have been coordinating on a plan to work with property/vessel owner at a site along the Snohomish estuary that has a derelict dock and two derelict vessels. The multi-agency coordination resulted in the *M/V Elusive Dream* being turned into the vessel turn in program,



Commission staff highlights - [April 2023]

significantly reducing estimated removal costs. The other vessel, *M/V Shilo*, had sunk and was partially buried in the riverbed. That vessel and debris was removed in pieces. Additionally, the dock appears to have broken up and will hopefully be removed as debris as well- preventing additional derelict vessels from being tied to the dock in the future. Work is progressing on taking temporary custody and planning removals for move vessels as part of this joint effort between NWSC, MRCs, tribal partners, and WA DNR.

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: The Request for Qualifications and Quotations (RFQQ) for the social marketing campaign for voluntary no-anchor zones was posted on April 12 and the notice emailed to more than 1,100 vendors in the state vendor database. Bids are due by May 25, after which an evaluation team will review bids to select a contractor.

Operations

Staff: The Communications Coordinator position remains vacant but was reposted with a new end date of December 2025. https://bit.ly/NWS22_CC

Budget: With the 2021-23 state budget in its final quarter, Commission staff is working with Ecology to anticipate final spend out plans. Commission staff prepared the NOAA application for fiscal year 2023 Congressionally Directed Spending, which was submitted by Ecology by the April 3 deadline. Commission staff is exploring the possibility of requesting a No-Cost Extension for the fiscal year 2022 Congressionally Directed Spending award, as there are several MRC projects and Commission components that are delayed.

Meetings Attended

Allie attended: Skagit MRC EGC Outreach 4/5; Incorporating Indigenous Knowledges webinar 4/6, 4/20; WCC EGC Training 4/10-4/13; WSU Molt Search Training 4/14; WDFW EGC Data App meeting 4/19; MRC kelp monitoring season kickoff 4/20; PERS Conference 4/21 & 4/22; Green Crab trapping in Samish Bay 4/24-4/26

Dana attended: Whatcom MRC meeting 4/6; Kelp Policy Advisory Committee meeting 4/6; Kelp Farming panel 4/11; Snohomish MRC Marine Vegetation project planning meeting 4/11; Skagit MRC meeting 4/13; Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory meeting 4/13; Floating Kelp Vital Sign Project Team meeting 4/14; Island MRC meeting 4/18; MRC kelp monitoring season kickoff 4/20; PSP Social Science Advisory Committee 4/25; DEI lens in Daily Responsibilities training 4/25 & 4/27

Jeff attended: San Juan County Marine Managers Workshop 4/4 & 4/5; Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory meeting 4/13; MRC kelp monitoring season kickoff 4/20; HSIL Marine Vegetation Implantation Strategy Pod meeting 4/26; Skagit MRC Kayak meeting 4/28



Commission staff highlights - [April 2023]

Leah attended: Skagit MRC EGC Outreach 4/5; Incorporating Indigenous Knowledges webinar 4/6, 4/20; WCC EGC Training 4/10-4/13; WDFW EGC Data App meeting 4/19; MRC kelp monitoring season kickoff 4/20; PERS Conference 4/21 & 4/22; Green Crab training in Drayton Harbor 4/24-4/28

Lucas attended: Conference Planning Committee meeting 4/5; Padilla Bay Staff meeting 4/6; Sen. Murray visit 4/5; Sen. Murray Staff meeting 4/7; External Relations 4/11; NWSC/F Staff meeting 4/12; NWSC 101 presentation to WCC 4/13; NOAA Aquaculture Strategic Planning meeting 4/18; Hope for the Salish Sea Workshop 4/19-4/21; Governor Inslee Staff meeting 4/24

Sasha attended: Conference planning meeting 4/5; San Juan MRC 4/6; Whatcom MRC 4/6; Skagit MRC 4/13; Clallam MRC 4/17.

Caitlyn attended: San Juan County MRC Meeting 4/6, Incorporating Indigenous Knowledges webinar 4/6, Kids on the Beach 4/13, Executive Committee meeting 4/17, Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge Webinar 4/20



Commission staff highlights - [March 2023]

MRC Support

2021-23 MRC Grants: March wraps up the third month of the sixth quarterly period in these two year awards, and quarterly reporting will be due in April along with payment requests.

2023-25 MRC Grants: Commission staff held two information sessions about the Request for Proposals for MRC staff, which were well attended. Commission staff is also working with Ecology grant staff to prepare the online application, which will open on May 4.

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: NWSC staff hosted the Kelp Plan Action Workshop (March 1 & 2) to determine where we are with the actions of the Kelp Plan and how to move them forward. The workshop was attended by 46 individuals from community groups, Tribes, county, state, and federal agencies, non-profits, and other non-governmental organizations.

Kelp Monitoring: NWSC staff continued to work with DNR staff on a StoryMap and recommended updates for the MRC Kelp Kayak Monitoring Program. The QAPP and protocol for the MRC Kelp Kayak Monitoring Program was updated and submitted for approval.

Green Crab: NWSC staff began planning for the upcoming field season starting in April. NWSC staff presented to the Green Crab Multi-Agency Coordination group on project updates.

Derelict Vessels: An interagency agreement was signed between NWSC/Dept of Ecology and WA DNR. NWSC staff coordinated with DNR and Makah Tribe staff to continue to understand permit requirements and coordinate on a potential derelict vessel turn in event co-hosted at the Makah reservation. The Island Sprinter was removed from a beach on Whidbey Island. This was the first vessel removal through this regional project with MRCs and DNR.

Operations

NWSI Retreat: The Northwest Straits Initiative retreat was held March 30-31 at La Conner Country Inn. The summary notes from the event are in progress by Hilary at Triangle Associates and will be shared with the group when complete.

Staff: The Communications Coordinator position is still vacant. A round of interviews was held in March but no hire resulted from the interviews.



Commission staff highlights - [March 2023]

Budget: Commission staff is re-working the budget and scope for the US Fish and Wildlife Service funding for the voluntary no-anchor zone project. An amendment is planned for the near future on that award, after coordinating with staff at USFWS.

Meetings Attended

Allie attended: Kelp Plan Action Workshop 3/1 & 3/2; Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone Workgroup 3/9; EGC MAC Group Meeting 3/30; Northwest Straits Initiative retreat 3/30 & 3/31

Dana attended: Kelp Plan Action Workshop 3/2; Island MRC meeting 3/7; Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone Workgroup 3/9; DNR Kelp and Eelgrass Health Plan Workshop 3/14; Kelp Policy Advisory Committee meeting 3/22; Northwest Straits Initiative retreat 3/30 & 3/31

Jeff attended: Hosted Kelp Plan Action Workshop 3/1 & 3/2; DNR Kelp and Eelgrass Health Plan Workshop 3/14; Snohomish MRC meeting 3/15; Northwest Straits Initiative retreat 3/30 & 3/31

Leah attended: Kelp Plan Action Workshop 3/1 & 3/2; Skagit MRC Meeting 3/9; Spatial Data Workgroup 3/23; Ecology Equity Series 3/29; EGC MAC Group Meeting 3/30; Northwest Straits Initiative retreat 3/30 & 3/31

Lucas attended: NWSC/F meeting 3/8; MRC RFP info session 3/9; Reauthorization discussion with NWIFC 3/10; Rep. Larsen Staff meeting 3/15; MRC RFP Info Session 3/15; Marine Vegetation surveys meeting w/ DNR 3/17; NWIFC presentation 3/20; External Relations meeting 3/28; Salish Sea Advisory Board meeting 3/29; NWSI retreat 3/30-3/31

Sasha attended: San Juan MRC 3/2; Retreat Planning Committee 3/7; Skagit MRC 3/9; Northwest Straits Initiative retreat 3/30 & 3/31

Caitlyn attended: Kelp Plan Action Workshop 3/1 & 3/2; Jefferson MRC meeting 3/7; Skagit MRC Meeting 3/9; Above/Below & NW Straits Meeting 3/16; Executive Committee Meeting 3/20; Northwest Straits Initiative Retreat 3/30 & 3/31

Northwest Straits Foundation April 2023 Program Updates

Mission Statement - *To protect and restore the health of the marine ecosystem by promoting and implementing science-based restoration and stewardship, enhancing collaboration and attracting resources for the work of the Northwest Straits Initiative*

NWSF Welcomes Communication Intern, Katie McNabb

Katie joined the NWSF in March as the Communications Intern. She is a senior at Western Washington University, where she will be graduating with degrees in both English and journalism this June. Katie grew up in Spokane, WA and has been a Washington resident all her life. Living in this beautiful state has given her a deep appreciation for nature and wildlife, and she hopes to continue working to conserve and care for both, whether in her future career or in her spare time. Katie's excited to learn more about marine conservation through her internship with the Northwest Straits Foundation and to connect with people who have a similar passion for environmental stewardship.

Forage Fish Activity at Cornet Bay

Juvenile salmon and forage fish activity is picking up along the Cornet Bay shoreline this season. So far we have captured and released 1,609 chum salmon, 11 Chinook salmon, and 9 Pacific sand lance during our bi-monthly beach seine surveys which run January – June. That is already more for each of those species than what we saw in all of last season. Many thanks to all our volunteers driving this work as we push to wrap up 10 years of beach seining as part of the Cornet Bay Restoration Project.



L to R: Cornet Bay volunteers carry the net to the next site on April 3rd, 2023. Volunteer Hal Lee setting the net at Cornet Bay.
Juvenile chum salmon captured during a set on April 3rd, 2023.

Beach Seine with Kids with Whatcom MRC

The Salish Sea Conservation Corps members participated in Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee's *Beach Seine with Kids* event on Friday, April 14th at Boulevard Park in Bellingham. Whatcom MRC hosted two Lummi Nation School 4th grade classes for a two-hour field event where they observed the deployment of a beach seine at Boulevard Park during the peak of the juvenile salmon outmigration period.

While half the group was observing beach seining, the SSCC members engaged the other half with an activity station they created that focused on the marine food chain and bioaccumulation.

SSCC members will be participating at all the Beach Seine with Kids events this year.



L to R: Lummi Elder and retired Skookum Hatchery Manager, Bill Finkbonner sharing the history of salmon fishing using fish traps and reef net gear. Lummi Nation School's 4th graders watch a beach seine getting set and pulled while learning about forage fish.

Salish Sea Conservation Corps Work Party and Celebration

Join us May 20th from 11am-2pm to celebrate the Salish Sea Conservation Corps members! Meet at Waypoint Park (1145 Granary Ave, Bellingham) at 11am to help manage invasive vegetation and erosion at the SSCC adopted site. Around 12:30 we will be making our way over to Kulshan Traskside (298 W Laurel St, Bellingham) for a social gathering where we will learn about the SSCC members and their accomplishments during the program. All are welcome!

NWSI Retreat

The Northwest Straits Foundation Staff and Board Members attended the Northwest Straits Initiative Retreat on March 30th and 31st. It was a fun-filled two days collaborating with Northwest Straits Commission Staff, members, and MRC Representatives.

Salish Sea Stewards Presentation

Northwest Straits Foundation staff Lisa Kaufman, Jason Morgan, and Haley Sherman hosted a volunteer training for the Salish Sea Stewards, a volunteer program of the Skagit County Marine Resources Committee and Padilla Bay National Estuarine Reserve. A total of 23 volunteers in training and two alumni members met staff at Bowman Bay on April 4th, 2023, to learn about the restoration project and the importance of restoration monitoring. Lisa described the negative effects shoreline armoring had on the nearshore habitat at the site and the positive changes that have occurred following restoration. Afterwards, Jason demonstrated the types of monitoring conducted at the site to quantify these changes and why it's important to document such things. The stewards were also informed of the many volunteer opportunities the Foundation has to assist with vegetation management and nearshore monitoring.



Skagit MRC's Salish Sea Stewards at a learning event where NWSF presented on their work.

Whatcom County Vegetation Site Visits

The NWSF Shore Friendly team visited three landowners in Whatcom County, providing assistance with their native vegetation questions. The properties were all very different in their issues from a high feeder bluff needing vegetation to stabilize soils, take up surface water, and reduce lawn, to a spit property concerned about flooding during high tide and high wind events. In the middle is a gradually sloping property where we've been assisting two adjacent landowners converting large lawns to native vegetation using hügelkultur techniques to reduce surface water flow, abate the strong winds coming off Lummi Bay, and provide better habitat for the fish and wildlife that rely on their shorelines. The Shore Friendly program provided a few native plants and grasses to one, and extra trees purchased by one landowner were donated to another. It was a great day hearing the stories of each landowner while also hearing how much they appreciate the opportunity to gain knowledge and assistance from this program.

Shore Friendly Site Visits and Services – Spring/Summer 2023

After a wild winter of king tides, wind, and an unusually cold March, many shoreline landowners are expressing concerns about higher rates of erosion and flooding as well as a loss of native plants that were recently planted. Now is a great time to contact the Shore Friendly program to request a site visit with our staff and team of coastal professionals. These free assessments take a beach to upland look at your property and the surrounding shoreline. Our coastal experts provide input on current erosion rates, what's driving erosion on your property, drainage and vegetation management, as well as considerations for ensuring your property is climate resilient for you, the habitats, and the species we all want to protect. One of the most efficient ways to utilize the program would be to arrange a beach walk with your neighbors, followed by individual site assessments.

For those who have received a site visit, additional services and technical assistance may be available for qualifying landowners wanting help with shoreline armor removal, native planting plans, drainage planning, and even house moving or elevation evaluations. Working with your neighbors on these projects can qualify you for cost-share opportunities for implementation.

Link here to request a site visit today: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SF23-25>

Shore Friendly Workshops

The Northwest Straits Foundation partnered with Snohomish, Island, and Clallam Marine Resource Committees to host two *Shore Friendly Living* workshops for shoreline homeowners in Snohomish and Clallam Counties on February 25th and March 11th, 2023. The workshops invited shoreline property owners to learn about the anticipated impacts to the shoreline related to sea level rise and adaptive strategies to protect their home. There were presentations from Herrera Environmental Consultants Rachel Johnson, Andrea MacLennan, and Jonathon Waggoner as well as Jeff McCord from Nickel Bros.

The next workshops will be held in Skagit and Whatcom counties.

Saturday, April 29th from 10am - 1pm and 1:30-2:30pm at Seafarers' Memorial Park Building, 601 Seafarers Way, Anacortes, WA 98221. [Click here to learn more and to sign up!](#)

Saturday, May 20th, 2023 from 9:30am-12:30pm and 1-2pm at the Blaine Boating Center, 235 Marine Dr #2, Blaine, WA 98230. [Click here to learn more and to sign up!](#)



Pictures from the Shore Friendly workshop in Clallam County on March 11th. The group visited two homes that were moved by Nickel Bros.

Northwest Straits Foundation March 2023 Program Updates

Mission Statement - *To protect and restore the health of the marine ecosystem by promoting and implementing science-based restoration and stewardship, enhancing collaboration and attracting resources for the work of the Northwest Straits Initiative*



Pictures from the Shore Friendly workshop in Clallam County on March 11th. The group visited two homes that were moved by Nickel Bros.

Shore Friendly Workshops

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After the presentations concluded in Clallam County, attendees were invited to visit two separate Nickel Bros projects to view homes that have been relocated to increase setback on a coastal bluff property as well as a home that had been raised with a new adaptive foundation that allows high tides to flow under the home. Attendees walked along the beach with presenters and gained valuable knowledge about the nearshore habitat and how protecting their homes with natural methods can be beneficial to the many species that rely on our shorelines.

The next workshops will be held in Skagit and Whatcom counties.

Saturday, April 29th from 10am - 1pm and 1:30-2:30pm at Seafarers' Memorial Park Building, 601 Seafarers Way, Anacortes, WA 98221. [Click here to learn more and to sign up!](#)

Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead

In early March, [\\$14 million was awarded](#) across the Puget Sound region through the Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead (HSIL) to support recovery of species and habitats. The Foundation, together with several of our partners are the recipients of three of these awards.

- **Clayton Beach Eelgrass Restoration Feasibility and Design (\$701,039):** Working with Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Western Washington University Shannon Point Marine Labs (WWU), we will investigate the extent of a 13-acre dredge hole adjacent to Clayton Beach. In the early 1900's, large volumes of sediment were dredged from this area to support the development of the trestle that spanned the beach and provided passenger service from Bellingham to Mount Vernon. Our partners at DNR will utilize multi-beam sonar to survey the hole and areas adjacent to it to determine the extent and sediment composition. A study will determine methods and sources of sediment to potentially fill the hole and restore the eelgrass bed. WWU will propagate eelgrass in their labs in Anacortes for eventual transplanting and restoration. This study adds a new phase to our current restoration planning in partnership with Washington State Parks and the Skagit and Whatcom Marine Resources Committees that aims to remove over 1,300 linear feet of rock armor and pilings from the nearshore at Clayton Beach to allow for eelgrass bed expansion and connectivity of nearshore and upland habitats.
- **Application of the Shoreline Monitoring Database to address restoration effectiveness and protection evaluation (\$797,256):** Our shoreline monitoring partners at the University of Washington took the lead in applying for this grant that will allow for the continuation of our long-term monitoring program at shoreline restoration sites, several of which have been monitored for up to ten years. Our monitoring team, including dedicated citizen scientists, will continue to contribute to a [long-term data set](#) that assesses trends and changes to shorelines when armor is removed. Ultimately, the data collection and evaluation of project effectiveness will provide priorities and guidelines for improved implementation of future habitat protection and restoration. Project partners are the University of Washington, Washington Sea Grant, Northwest Straits Foundation, the Vashon Nature Center, and Sound Data, representing institutions of higher learning and non-profits.
- **Shore Friendly Partnership Landowner Strategic Engagement:** We will work closely with our Shore Friendly partners across the Sound, our program leads at WDFW's Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP), and our grant managers at the Recreation and Conservation Office to expand the work of the shoreline landowner incentives program. Funding will allow for program activities not currently supported by the capital funds provided by ESRP. This includes adding to our *Shore Friendly Living* video series as well as education and outreach to influencers such as contractors, planners, and permitters.

As a small organization, we look forward to working with the funders at the HSIL and appreciate the ability to expand our reach and impact through all the valuable partners we are privileged to work with.



SSCC members Megan Gonzalez, Samantha Herlich, Emily Stevenson, Dylan Trainer, Tabitha Hellman, and Ellen Goudie at Cornet Bay on Monday March 13th.

Salish Sea Conservation Corps

The Northwest Straits Foundation's Salish Sea Conservation Corps (SSCC) met at Cornet Bay, learning about nearshore restoration techniques, plant identification skills, and monitoring. The group is developing a vegetation monitoring plan for Hoypus Point to help learn from prior plantings, conditions, and vegetation.

[Click here to read about the 2023 Salish Sea Conservation Corps members!](#)

Looking to meet the SSCC members? Join us on April 12th, 2023, from 5:30 to 7:30PM at Western Washington University's Viking Union Room 462 A/B for our next social event!



Our field crew with Fenn Enterprises and Natural Resources Consultants standing with the 29 pots they removed from Port Gardner on March 22nd, 2023.

Derelict Gear Program

The derelict gear removal team with Fenn Enterprises and Natural Resources Consultants just wrapped up 8 days of dive operations removing 234 derelict crab pots in Port Gardner, WA. NWSF's Environmental Technician, Haley Sherman, joined them during retrieval operations on March 22nd, in which the team pulled 29 pots in just one day of work. Of the 29 pots pulled, two were commercial and 27 were recreational.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: April 2023

Submitted by: Rebecca Mahan

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

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Coordinator Rebecca Mahan attended training on European Green Crab molt surveys using MyCoast App. Training was hosted by WA SeaGrant and WSU Extension service.
- Shore Friendly hosted a workshop *Living with Sea Level Rise* March 11, 2023 at the Dungeness River Nature Center.

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): March 11, 2023 NWSF Shore Friendly hosted in collaboration CMRC a workshop focusing on *Living with Sea Level Rise*. Clallam Conservation District and Clallam County Environmental Health along with CMRC had tables set up with program information for landowners. The Clallam MRC arranged for Lucas Hart to give a presentation to the BOCC March 27th. Lucas gave a background report on the NWSC and also talked about how other MRCs are staffed.

April MRC meeting was held 4/17/23.

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): The MRC Olympia oyster shell placement project in collaboration with Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe is moving along nicely. We are working on obtaining permits and procuring clean oyster shell.

Forage Fish sampling continues to go well. Several Clallam MRC members 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.): The Clallam MRC wrote 2 letters of support this month. One supporting the Olympic National Coast Marine Sanctuary and the other for Feiro Marine Life Center. These letters were to potential funders for both entities to continue their work.

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

Photos by Rebecca Mahan of Shore Friendly workshop.



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: March 2023

Submitted by: Rebecca Mahan

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

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- February 23rd Clallam MRC held first retreat since Covid 19
- Shore Friendly will be hosting a workshop *Living with Sea Level Rise* March 11, 2023

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): March 11, 2023 NWSF Shore Friendly will have a workshop focusing on *Living with Sea Level Rise*. Clallam Conservation District and Clallam County Environmental Health along with CMRC will have tables set up with program information for landowners. The Clallam MRC will be presenting a forage fish presentation to the Clallam County Board of Commissioners March 27th.

March MRC meeting will be 3/20/23.

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): The MRC Olympia oyster shell placement project in collaboration with Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe is moving along nicely. We are working on obtaining permits and procuring clean oyster shell.

Forage Fish sampling continues to go well. Several Clallam MRC members 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):

Photos by Ann Soule of the retreat.



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: April 2023

Submitted by: Monica Montgomery

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

- The MRC had its retreat on April 1 to discuss projects for the next two-year grant cycle and finalized decisions at the subsequent April 4 MRC monthly meeting.
- The MRC is preparing for its first Digging for Dinner event since before the pandemic, taking place on April 23!
- The MRC is offering community presentations to share about Olympia oyster restoration opportunities in Kilisut Harbor and to solicit input from community members on May 4 and 7.

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

March 21 – MRC Executive Committee meeting

March 29 – Forage fish survey at Adelma

April 1 – MRC retreat

April 4 – MRC monthly meeting

April 14 – Meeting to review rain garden internship candidates

April 16 – Tabling event at the Connectivity Fair, a local event to connect with community members seeking volunteer opportunities

April 17 – MRC Executive Committee meeting

April 17 – Meetings to review crabber outreach and storm surge monitoring internship candidates

April 18 – Meeting to review MRC Assistant internship candidates

Upcoming Events/Meetings

April 19 – Puget Sound Lost Crab Pot Workshop 1

April 20 – MRC Kelp Season Kickoff meeting

April 23 – Education & Outreach: Digging for Dinner event

April 24 – Forage fish survey at Dabob

April 24 – Interviews with rain garden intern candidates

April 26 – Puget Sound Lost Crab Pot Workshop 2

May 1-4 – Side scan sonar surveys for derelict crab pots in Port Townsend Bay

May 2 – MRC monthly meeting

May 4 – “Olympia Oyster Restoration in Kilisut Harbor” virtual presentation

May 7 – “Olympia Oyster Restoration in Kilisut Harbor” in-person presentation with beach walk

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:** Awaiting results for the 2022-2023 season.
- **Forage fish - Adelma Beach (Index):** The Project Lead (Jeff) surveyed on March 29 with one volunteer, Cindy.
- **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The Project Lead (Sarah) did not survey in March and is planning to survey on April 24.
- **Kelp:** The team is looking forward to the MRC season kickoff on April 20.
- **Storm surge monitoring:** The team is actively recruiting an intern for 2023.

2. Rain Gardens:

- The team reviewed internship applications and have scheduled two interviews.

3. Education & Outreach:

- A [Digging for Dinner event](#) is planned for April 23 at Quilcene WDFW Tidelands with full registration (50 participants) and featuring WDFW speaker, Camille Speck.
- The crabber outreach team reviewed internship applications and is working on scheduling interviews.
- MRC members are planning a Searching for Seaweed event on June 6 featuring Nam Siu as the guest speaker.
- MRC members are also planning a coupled speaker event in partnership with the Port Townsend Marine Science Center, to include an evening educational talk on ocean acidification by scientist Jan Newton and a fieldtrip to Point Whitney Shellfish Lab.
- The team is developing targeted education about shellfish for the community event Fjordfest in May.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- The team is working on logistics for a large shell spread event in May.
- The Project Lead (Neil) and MRC Coordinator set tentative dates for Olympia oyster population surveys for June 5 and June 7, as well as a reconnaissance trip at Broad Spit on July 6.
- Community presentations with project partners (PSRF, WDFW) on the potential for Olympia oyster restoration work in Kilisut Harbor are set for May 4 (virtual) and May 7 (in-person with beach walk). Tideland owners are also welcomed to schedule beach walks with habitat biologists. [More information here.](#)

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- Troy, Gordon, and the MRC Coordinator had a “No-Anchor Zone work party” on March 25 to replace old labels.
- The team aims to swap the Port Townsend winter floats with summer spar buoys in late April.

6. Mapping Lost Crab Pots:

- The MRC is awaiting permit and approvals for ROV derelict crab pot removal operations.
- The MRC Coordinator is finalizing contract agreements.
- The team plans to conduct side scan sonar surveys in Port Townsend Bay the week of May 1-4, contracting Coastal Sensing & Survey.

- The Project Lead (Jeff) and MRC Coordinator will be attending the Puget Sound Lost Crab Pots workshops on April 19 and 26.

7. Internships:

- The MRC is actively recruiting for all four internship positions. Deadline for 3 internship applications is set for March 31.

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 DEI subcommittee scheduled its next meeting for April 24.
- The MRC (11 members) had its retreat on April 1 to discuss projects for the next two-year grant cycle and finalized project decisions at the subsequent April 4 MRC monthly meeting.

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

March 25 – Troy McKelvey and Gordon King at our No-Anchor Zone buoy relabeling party



April 1 MRC Retreat to discuss projects for the next funding cycle



April 16 Connectivity Fair – Frank Handler, District 2 Alt rep, sharing about MRC projects with community members seeking volunteer opportunities at a local event.



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: March 2023

Submitted by: Monica Montgomery

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

- The MRC gave its annual update presentation to the Jefferson BoCC on March 13.
- The MRC DEI subcommittee had its first meeting on March 14.
- The MRC is planning a retreat set for April 1 to discuss projects for the next two-year grant cycle.

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

February 21 – MRC Executive Committee meeting
February 24 – NWSC monthly meeting
February 24 – Fort Townsend forage fish survey
March 6 – Education & Outreach subcommittee meeting
March 7 – MRC monthly meeting
March 9 – Salish Sea No-Anchor Zones meeting
March 10 – Strait ERN LIO meeting
March 13 – MRC update presentation to the Jefferson BoCC
March 14 – MRC DEI subcommittee meeting

Upcoming Events/Meetings

March 21 – MRC Executive Committee meeting
April 1 – MRC retreat
April 4 – MRC monthly meeting
March & April – Forage fish survey at Adelma and Dabob

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 Fort Townsend team (Janette, Troy, Frank) along with the MRC Coordinator, surveyed on February 24.
- **Forage fish - Adelma Beach (Index):** The Project Lead (Jeff) surveyed on February 28 with one volunteer, Cindy. Updated lab results show presence of sand lance eggs from the 12/1/2022 survey (58 eggs) and 1/13/2023 survey (126 eggs).
- **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The Project Lead (Sarah) plans to survey in March.

- **Kelp:** Nothing to report.
- **Storm surge monitoring:** Nothing to report.

2. Rain Gardens:

- Nothing to report.

3. Education & Outreach:

- Project lead (Brenda), 4 MRC members (Gordon, Frank, Joan, Sarah), Bob, and the MRC Coordinator met on March 6 to discuss 2023 outreach events and efforts.
- The shoreline landowner outreach project lead, Sarah, attended the Clallam Shore Friendly workshop on March 11.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- The team is working on logistics for a large shell spread event and getting dates on the calendar for spreading shell and population surveys.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- Nothing to report.

6. Mapping Lost Crab Pots:

- The MRC Coordinator submitted permit materials and is continuing to work on contract agreements.

7. Internships:

- The MRC is actively recruiting for all four internship positions. Deadline for 3 internship applications is set for March 31.

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 DEI subcommittee, including 3 MRC members (Nam, Gordon, Neil), 2 staff (Monica, Bob), and Strait ERN LIO partner, Kara, met on March 14.
- The MRC is planning for a retreat on April 1 to discuss projects for the next two-year grant cycle.

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

Feb 24 Forage fish survey at Fort Townsend by MRC members Janette, Troy & Frank – Photos by Monica Montgomery



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: March/ 2023

Submitted by: Barbara Bennett, Chair (Kelly Zupich continues to be on medical leave.)

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

- In March, we devoted an entire MRC meeting to breaking into small groups and planning for 2023 work projects. The plans that emerged are substantive and the process engaged members as teams and individuals anticipating the work for the coming grant cycle.

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

- 4 new members have been approved by the County Commissioners and 3 applications are pending. New members' skills include cartographer, oceanographer, using remote sensing devices to monitor remote wildlife populations, marine engineering and Port management.

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

Previous Meetings/Events:

- Jan 26: Executive Committee Meeting
- Feb 7: MRC Committee Meeting
- Feb 23: Executive Committee Meeting
- March 7 MRC meeting was dedicated to small group working sessions on 2023 Projects: Water Quality Monitoring, Derelict Boat Removal and Shoreline Armoring Survey.
- March 8 the MRC Outreach Committee met with Ann Prusha, Shore Friendly Coordinator, to plan outreach to inform and direct property owners to the Shore Friendly program.

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- Apr 4 postponed
- Apr 18: MRC Meeting

Funding updates (newly awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): Planning for 2023 grant funded activities occupied the meetings this month.

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

Monitoring – Forage Fish: The new season of forage fish monitoring is preparing to launch. As reported last month, our work monitoring for Forage fish eggs continues at most of our sites year-round. Teams continue to monitor monthly at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Glendale, Seahorse Siesta. Hidden Beach is on hold currently until we make some decisions with the NWSF about which site is best for us to continue at.

Bull Kelp Surveys: Kelp monitoring is preparing to launch. We are still working to get all the data from the volunteers for summer 2022. As reported last month, we are seeking a new project lead to replace Ron Beier who has done an exceptional job for the past several years. MRC members (and Executive Committee members) Jill Lopoti (Vice Chair) and Ken Collins are developing a plan to add water monitoring to our 2023 practices at several of our sites.

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.): High impact King Tide events in January that impacted numerous private properties across both islands have elevated climate concerns for County Commissioners attention.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):
Photos me able to be provided.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: March 2023

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge

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

- **The Marine Managers Workshop is scheduled for April 4-5, 2023, at the UW Friday Harbor Labs. The event will assess strategic actions identified in the MSA Plan and identify partnerships in implementing these actions.**
- **A 47' wooden sailboat named the Morning Star, which sank while anchored in Blind Bay in San Juan County on November 6, 2022 was raised and removed by San Juan County during the week of March 6th.**

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

We officially welcomed our new MRC members (Craig Smith and Aaron Boyles) at our March 2nd meeting. Also, Tyler Davis has recently been promoted into a Marine Project Manager role within the County. Tyler will continue to be involved with management and implementation of MRC projects, but he will no longer be performing MRC reporting and administrative duties. We have recently posted to fill Tyler's old position and we hope to have that job filled within the next month.

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

- Stewardship Network meeting – March 1st
- Monthly MRC meeting – March 2nd (with LIO/CAG)
- Derelict Vessel Patrol- March 16th
- Marine Managers Workshop- April 4-5th
- Next MRC meeting: April 6th

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

No new funding updates this month.

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

Marine Managers Workshop planning is in full swing with the event scheduled for April 4-5 at Friday Harbor Labs. The MRC hosted a Marine Managers Workshop in 2020 to gather collective knowledge of those actively engaged in research, monitoring, and resource management in San Juan County waters to understand the status of key biodiversity groups, the knowledge gaps and the threats that they face. Now, the MRC is once again inviting stakeholders and co-managers to gather, but this time to assess the actions that have been identified to address the knowledge gaps and threats. This workshop will:

- **Assess Strategic Actions:** Participants will break out into 9 subject expert groups to prioritize and identify additional actions as needed.
- **Identify Partnerships:** Identify who is working on the strategic actions, what has been accomplished so far, and where partnerships exist to allow us to collectively further our work to address the threats and challenges facing our marine waters.

The Great Islands Clean-up planning committee is continuing to plan for the Spring event, which is scheduled for Earth Day, April 22nd. Organizers from San Juan, Orcas, Lopez, and Shaw Islands are all working together to plan another successful GICU.

The Morning Star (Blind Bay, Shaw Island), a vessel that was tagged in September of last year and listed as a top priority for San Juan County's submission for the NWSC's Derelict Vessel Workgroup's consideration before sinking in November, was finally raised and removed during the week of March 6th. Prior to removal, the Morning Star was removed from our priority list for NWSC funding due to the cost increase upon its sinking. Ultimately San Juan County took the lead on removing the vessel and we will be requesting reimbursement for removal costs from DNR.

The Dudek Motorized Barge (Blind Bay), which was our second priority DV for NWSC funding was towed on March 9th by the County, based on DNR asking San Juan County to take the lead. The barge is on our priority list for DNR to receive NWSC reimbursement, and we are now preparing to proceed to remove this DV.

Permit applications have been submitted for the Jackson Beach piling removal and restoration project. This project will remove the crumbling derelict pier at the northeastern end of Jackson Beach on San Juan Island. This structure is made up of 117 creosote-treated timber pilings, dolphins, and associated overwater structures. It is a significant source of toxic contamination to the nearshore environment in an area that is important to forage fish and juvenile salmon. We plan to go to bid on this project in July for construction in September.

In its role as the Salmon Recovery Citizens Advisory Group (CAG), the San Juan MRC recently began the process of reviewing Letters of Interest (LOI) for the 2023 Salmon Recovery Grant Round. Four LOI were received this year, and we are scheduling site visits to occur during the first week of May.

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.):

Subcommittee members from the MRC Oil Spill Prevention and Response Preparedness committee have been working with San Juan County Council member Cindy Wolf to draft a letter to Senator Cantwell articulating the urgent need to station a dedicated emergency rescue tug in either Roche Harbor or Sidney BC to prevent groundings and potential spills from commercial vessels that become disabled transiting to and from the Port of Vancouver, British Columbia.

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



Dudek Motorized Barge. *Photo Credit: Marta Green*



Morning Star being raised in Blind Bay on March 8, 2023. *Photo Credit: Marta Green*

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: April /2023

Submitted by: Tracy/Diane

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

- 75 6th graders from Sedro-Wooley participated in the Kids on the Beach program at Bay View State Park on April 11, 12, and 13. Students looked at mudflat species abundance and biodiversity at different locations representing natural habitat, partially restored habitat, and armored/disturbed habitat.
- MRC Project Leads are working on project proposals for the 2023-2025 MRC Grant that will be evaluated and prioritized by MRC members for funding.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): No changes.

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

- **April 13-** Skagit MRC's monthly meeting via Microsoft Teams (9am-11am). The meeting focused on project planning for 2023-2025 MRC grant.
- **April 11, 12, and 13-** Kids on the Beach field days at Bayview State Park for a mudflat safari with 6th graders from Sedro Woolley.
- **April 25-** Salish Sea Stewards last class and graduation!
- **May 9-** Salish Sea Stewards data-sharing/social event at Padilla Bay.

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: 2023 SSS training continues **February 7th through April 25th**. Classes are held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. The announcement for recruiting new MRC members was shared at one of the SSS classes. Two new SSS are now seriously considering joining the MRC. Erin Merklein, the new Part time SSS Volunteer Coordinator is now officially onboard and working 2 days a week. The Padilla Bay Foundation received a private donation to purchase the 2023 SSS graduation gear including t-shirts and name tag button. A data-sharing/social event is currently being planned for all Salish Sea Stewards on May 9th. It will be a good chance for everyone to meet – newbies and old-timers. Jason Morgan and Erica Bleke will share data from restoration/monitoring projects, Sue Ehlers will share heron foraging data, and Pete will be heading up forage fish survey data.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event is set for **Saturday, August 26, 2023**, from 11am to 3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes. The FBD promo materials have been finalized and posted on the MRC website and various online event calendars in Skagit County. Past participating organizations have been contacted to confirm interest in participating at this year's event. Continuing to line up volunteers for various tasks. The Anacortes High School Key Club will be helping with face painting and kids craft activities this year. This year's event will include Samish indigenous themed art & perhaps some Salish storytelling.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Surveys continue at the 3 Index sites and two restoration sites. April is a slow spawning time for surf smelt in our area, so the volunteers haven't been finding much. We picked up a new restoration site to survey on the west side of Similk Bay on two private properties where bulkheads were removed through the Northwest Straits Foundation's Shore

Friendly program. There have been reports of a huge herring spawning event that recently occurred in Similk Bay near the Swinomish shellfish farm. A High School Biology teacher is currently working on a genetic study with shiner perch and wants to do something similar with forage fish. He is interested in getting some live surf smelt eggs from the forage fish survey team to preserve in alcohol to look for genetic signatures. The forage fish survey team hosted an outreach booth at the Mount Vernon High School Science night. One of the new Salish Sea Stewards class participants expressed interest in joining the MRC and taking the lead on forage fish surveys. Pete will be teaching him the ropes.

- MRC- Salish Sea School Intern: The project isn't going quite as well as we had hoped. The current plan is to have an intern do some forage fish survey work with young students this summer. The time commitment and coordination of the interns and students to do the work has been difficult.
- Kids on the Beach: 75 6th graders from Sedro-Wooley participated in the Kids on the Beach program at Bay View State Park on April 11, 12, and 13 and classroom visits on April 10 and 14. Students looked at mudflat species abundance and biodiversity in different locations representing different levels of habitat health: natural habitat, partially restored habitat, and armored/disturbed habitat. 5 volunteers and 6 Padilla Bay NERR education staff assisted each class of 25 students with field activities each day. Volunteers and education staff were trained on data collection methods before working with students. There was a recent article about the KOTB in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: The 2023 MRC Kayak Kelp Monitoring Kick Off meeting was held April 20th at 3pm via Zoom. The agenda included the MRC kelp survey storymap, networking, season planning, and review of safety training and data management protocols. One new kayaker from the 2023 Salish Sea Stewards class signed up to help with kelp surveys this year. Later this month we will have a Skagit kelp kayaker all teams in-person meeting at one of the kayak team member's houses. The kayak team plans to do a reconnaissance of potential new kelp bed survey sites this year to determine if there are any we want to add to the surveys in the future.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Plant maintenance will likely start back up in May under the management of the Northwest Straits Foundation. The plants continue to struggle at this site. State Parks has water trucks that they keep full for fire suppression that we can use for watering the plants this summer. The Foundation plans to water heavily and host several volunteer work parties to weed and maintain the plants at the Bowman Bay site this summer.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: The field season has had its challenges, with both wind and broken boats. Due to the lack of dive boats, Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) will likely be unable to complete a full survey of the 2 historic index sites in Skagit waters this year. New broodstock were collected and taken to the Chew Center Hatchery. They have around 4500 juveniles that will be seeded to 6 sites (2 of which will be in Skagit) this year. Eileen Bates' (UW) six oceanographic sensor arrays will likely be put on two new sites in Skagit County near Deception Pass. This will be year 3 of her study. PSRF has done quite a bit of recon in Skagit County to find new outplant locations. This has been a priority since we did not seed in Skagit last year. Joe Gaydos is interested in doing an episode of Salish Sea Wild on the abalone recovery program, which will include a day of filming abalone loading at the hatchery and a day in the field with SeaDoc.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Paul plans to collect and re-distribute oyster shell bags at Fidalgo Bay sometime in May to monitor oyster spawning and settlement. Paul worked with Sylvia Yang from Padilla Bay NERR and capstone students from the Shannon Point Marine Center to collect data on the oysters transplanted in Padilla Bay last year. The oysters appear to have done well overall. There was some oyster mortality due to non-native oyster drills and cold winter temperatures during low tide events. We will be conducting a large bay-wide native oyster

population survey with NOAA Congressional funding in partnership with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund starting in June 2023. Paul Dinnel is working on the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for the bay-wide oyster monitoring project. The QAPP is currently being reviewed by PSRF staff before it is finalized and sent to Ecology for approval and signatures to begin work. Paul presented on the oyster restoration work to the Salish Sea Stewards trainees and will be recruiting volunteers to help with monitoring this summer.

- Green Crab Outreach: An outreach plan has been developed. The primary focus of the outreach is to do a mailing to shoreline landowners to help make them aware of the European green crab issue and how to identify them and how to report them if they are present. We will also provide green crab outreach materials at community events like Fidalgo Bay Day. Skagit County's GIS Department provided a mailing list of over 500 shoreline property owners. We will be collaborating with the NWSC, Washington Dept of Fish and Wildlife, and Washington SeaGrant to craft the letter that will be sent to property owners along with other outreach materials. Lynne plans to reach out to the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team to see if there might be an opportunity for their volunteers to look for EGCs while they are out surveying the beaches for sea birds.
- School Rain Garden: The MRC Project Lead Diane Hennebert started reaching out to the schools to talk about potential sites and aim for fall construction, which is the ideal time for planting. There is potential for partnership with La Conner High School and the Swinomish Tribal Community's Between Two Worlds program. We are currently looking into how our program goals could fit with their native plant food and medicine garden project which includes aspects of how plants affect water movement above and below the ground surface with a learning area and fish pit.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle: The Interlocal Agreement between the County and City of Anacortes has been drafted and the terms of the Agreement are still being negotiated. A meeting to develop the education/outreach plan will be held after the Agreement gets signed.
- Shore-Friendly Workshop: The date is set for **Saturday April 29th** from 10am -2:30pm at Seafarer's Memorial Park in Anacortes. There will be presentations by Herrera and Nickel Brothers (house moving company). The focus of the workshop will be on coastal processes, climate change/sea level rise and adaptations. The workshop will be followed by a beach walk. The Foundation received additional Shore Friendly funding to continue with more videos and workshops for influencers such as contractors, land managers, and planners (in addition to those being funded with CDS funds).
- Clayton Beach Restoration: The Foundation was recently awarded the HSIL grant for feasibility and design of the eelgrass restoration of the dredge hole where sediment was taken out to aid the railroad trestle. DNR will begin monitoring this summer to map the 13-acre dredge hole and survey for eelgrass around the boundary of the hole, sample sediments, and map the bathymetry. The initial work will tie into the monitoring of the eelgrass within the intertidal area. Sediment samples will help determine composition and chemistry required to plant eelgrass once the hole is filled. A feasibility study will be developed to identify sediment sources to fill the hole from other dredge projects. WWU/Shannon Point will propagate eelgrass at their labs for eventual transplanting.

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):

Kids on the Beach: Sedro-Woolley 6th grade class exploring the mudflats at Bayview State Park



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: March /2023

Submitted by: Tracy

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

- The Kids on the Beach spring program involving 75 6th graders from Sedro-Wooley has 3 field days scheduled at Bay View State Park on April 11, 12, and 13 paired with in-class visits. Activities will include: a tour of the aquarium, beach seining, collecting fish data, and collecting data on mudflat organism abundance and diversity.
- The Salish Sea Stewards last day of classes will take place April 25th. A data-sharing/social event is currently being planned for all Salish Sea Stewards on May 9th.
- Skagit MRC is currently in the process of prioritizing projects for the 2023-2025 MRC grant funding cycle and plans to recruit new MRC members to become Project Leads.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Lynne Wenberg-Davidson replaced Kari Odden as the representative for the Skagit Land Trust on the Skagit MRC. Kari will continue to serve as Lynne's Alternate for the SLT.

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

- **March 9-** Skagit MRC's monthly meeting via Microsoft Teams (9am-11am). Tessa Francis, Lead Ecosystem Ecologist with the Puget Sound Institute, presented on Shoreline Restoration for Nearshore Fishes
- **March 14, March 15, March 16, and March 23-** MRC Executive Committee Meetings for Project Planning
- **March 20-** Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Committee meeting via Microsoft Teams (9am-11am).
- **April 11, 12, and 13-** Kids on the Beach field days at Bayview State Park for a mudflat safari with 6th graders from Sedro Woolley.
- **April 25-** Salish Sea Stewards last class and graduation.

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: 2023 SSS training continues **February 7th through April 25th**. Classes are held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. The new SSS class is super enthusiastic and asks a lot of great questions. They are all eager to start volunteering. A data-sharing/social event is currently being planned for all Salish Sea Stewards on May 9th. It will be a good chance for everyone to meet – newbies and old-timers. Jason Morgan and Erica Bleke will share data from restoration/monitoring projects, Sue Ehlers will share heron foraging data, and Pete will be heading up forage fish survey data.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event is set for **Saturday, August 26, 2023**, from 11am to 3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes. The Shannon Point Marine Center confirmed their participation with the portable Touch Tank. The County's new Education/Outreach person created a new logo and poster for FBD which will be ready for distribution soon. Started recruiting volunteers to help with the event. The 5 person FBD planning team meets monthly.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Surveys continue at the 3 Index sites and two restoration sites. It's a quiet time of year for surf smelt in our area. Ship Harbor is the only site where we've found

sand lance. We are no longer surveying the March's Point restoration site now that we've reached our goal of collecting over 6 years of post-restoration data. However, Forage fish survey volunteers will be picking up a new restoration site to survey on the west side of Similk Bay. Katie Olsen with WDFW maintains all the forage fish data and facilitates a quarterly Zoom meeting with MRC forage fish survey volunteers from 7 counties. Similk Bay appears to have the most surf smelt spawning activity during the summer months compared to all the other county MRC forage fish survey sites. The Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve (a non-MRC survey site) likely has the most surf smelt spawning in all of Puget Sound. During the hot summer months there is little survival due to the lack of shade, except for the eggs protected within the crevices of the riprap. However, during the cooler shoulder months there is good survival at the Fidalgo Bay forage fish survey sites.

- MRC- Salish Sea School Intern: No update.
- Kids on the Beach: 75 6th graders from Sedro-Wooley will be participating in the spring program with 3 field days at Bayview State Park paired with an in-class visit before and after the field days. Field days are scheduled for April 11, 12, and 13. Field activities will include a tour of the aquarium, beach seining, collecting fish data, and collecting data on mudflat organism abundance and diversity. In the classroom they will work on graphs, analyzing data, and presentations. Volunteers are being recruited to assist with field activities.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: We are gearing up for the 2023 kelp survey season. MRC Project Lead Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, attended a series of kelp and eelgrass workshops, but was unable to attend the 2-day Kelp Action Plan workshop in March. Multiple partners, agencies and organizations are involved in putting together the Kelp Action Plan. Skagit MRC's Shannon Point kelp bed monitoring sites are in one of WDNR's Puget Sound sub-basins that is listed as having insufficient data. The Skagit kelp monitoring team met with WDNR to discuss what the 'insufficient data' means and if there is anything we can do to change that status. The insufficient data is based on historic geographic data of where kelp beds used to be, but there isn't much data available for Skagit County waters. In addition to researching historical data, the Skagit Kelp survey team plans to do some reconnaissance of potential new kelp bed locations that have been identified to verify the feasibility of adding new sites to survey.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Plant maintenance will likely start back up in May under the management of the Northwest Straits Foundation. Don and Lisa had a very productive meeting with the Park Manager, Jason Armstrong to discuss watering and vegetation maintenance. Parks has water trucks of varying sizes that they keep full for fire suppression but need to empty periodically that we could use for the plants once we establish a schedule for weekly watering this summer. This will help us stretch the grant funds further for more mulch, trees, etc.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Field work is underway. There should be more to report on next month.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: We will be conducting a large bay-wide native oyster population survey with NOAA Congressional funding in partnership with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund starting in June 2023. Paul Dinnel is working on the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for the bay-wide oyster monitoring project which should be completed soon. Paul presented on the oyster restoration work to the Salish Sea Stewards and will be recruiting volunteers to help with monitoring this summer.
- Green Crab Outreach: An outreach plan has been developed. The primary focus of the outreach is to do a mailing to shoreline landowners to help make them aware of the green crab issue and how to identify them and encourage them to allow us access for monitoring and trapping if green crabs are present. We will also provide green crab outreach materials at community events like Skagit Water Weeks and Fidalgo Bay Day.
- School Rain Garden: No update.

- Fidalgo Bay Trestle: The Interlocal Agreement between the County and City of Anacortes has been drafted and is still being negotiated. A meeting to develop the education/outreach plan will be held after the Agreement gets signed.
- Shore-Friendly Workshop: Planning is underway. The focus of the workshop will be on coastal processes, climate change/sea level rise and adaptations. The date has tentatively been set for Saturday April 29th from 10am -2pm at Seafarer's Park in Anacortes. The workshop will include a beach walk, but we are still deciding on the best location. The Foundation received additional Shore Friendly funding to continue with more videos and workshops for influencers such as contractors, land managers, and planners (in addition to those being funded with CDS funds).
- Clayton Beach Restoration: BNSF will be providing a letter of permission to the Foundation for the project. DNR will begin monitoring this summer to map the eelgrass, sample sediments, and map the bathymetry. The Foundation was recently awarded the HSIL grant for feasibility and design of the eelgrass restoration of the dredge hole. The initial work will tie into the monitoring of the eelgrass within the intertidal area. DNR will map the dredge hole and survey for eelgrass around the boundary of the hole. Sediment samples will help determine composition and chemistry required to plant eelgrass once the hole is filled. A feasibility study will be developed to identify sediment sources to fill the hole from other dredge projects. WWU/Shannon Point will propagate eelgrass at their labs for eventual transplanting.

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: April 2023

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. The last event was held on March 23rd and a dozen volunteers picked up over 30 pounds of trash. The next event is April 22 event and will be held in partnership with Tulalip Tribes and the Beach Watchers for Earth Day. This cleanup will utilize the Escaped Trash Protocol and be held at Mission Beach.
- The MRC is currently writing the project descriptions for the 23-25 MRC Grant. We are planning to include a project focused on marine vegetation, as well as the creation of a 2025-2030 MRC Strategic Plan to be created in 2024 with the help of a hired consultant.

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

The MRC is currently recruiting new members and specifically looking for applicants who can represent Economic Interests and Local Government Interests. There is also one vacant At-Large Position.

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

Elisa Dawson met with representatives from EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers to discuss beneficial use of Snohomish River dredge materials on March 21.

Elisa Dawson attended the Washington State Kelp Advisory Group Meeting on March 22.

MRC Staff and Members attended a Beach Cleanup hosted by WSU Beach Watchers and the MRC on March 23.

MRC Staff and Members attended DNR's Puget Sound Kelp and Eelgrass workshop on March 23.

Elisa Dawson attended a Meadowdale onsite meeting to discuss monitoring on March 29.

There was a Meadowdale Monitoring team meeting on March 30.

Elisa Dawson attended the Kelp and Eelgrass Executive Work Group Meeting on March 30.

Forage Fish monitoring occurred on April 10 and 13.

There was a marine vegetation subcommittee meeting on April 11.

MRC Staff met with ORCA school staff to discuss their 2023 contract on April 13.

Elisa Dawson and other SWM staff conducted interviews for the MRC's summer intern on April 17 and 18.

Joycelyn Blue attended the Salmon Recovery Conference April 17-19.

The MRC monthly meeting was held in-person on April 19.

MRC Members attended the NWSC Kelp season Kick-off on April 20.

The MRC hosted a beach cleanup at Mission Beach in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers and the Tulalip Tribes for Earth Day on April 22.

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 2021-2023): ESA will provide a draft story map for the Port Susan project on April 30. The Subcommittee will meet in early May to discuss edits and next steps for the story map.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): Staff completed an on the water inventory for derelict vessels on March 6th.

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, Howarth Park, and Meadowdale. Upcoming forage fish sampling is planned on May 15 and 18.

Nearshore Restoration: The Meadowdale Monitoring Team has begun taking data for year 1 monitoring. There are still plants to go in to finalize the restoration site, which are expected to go in this spring.

Outreach: Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. The last event was held on March 23rd and a dozen volunteers picked up over 30 pounds of trash. The next event is April 22 event and will be held in partnership with Tulalip Tribes for Earth Day. This cleanup will utilize the Escaped Trash Protocol and be held at Mission Beach.

Crabber Outreach: The subcommittee will meet on May 2nd to discuss plans for summer outreach.

Marine Water Quality: Review of the Intergovernmental Services Agreement with ORCA (Ocean Research College Academy) has been completed and signed. Staff from ORCA and the MRC met on April 13th to discuss next steps. A draft QA/QC plan is due on April 30th from ORCA, and the team will meet again in early May to discuss feedback with SWM staff.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring: The subcommittee met on April 11 to begin drafting a Scope of Work (SOW) for the MRC 2023-2025 RFP. The draft will be discussed at the April 19th MRC meeting, and the Subcommittee will work to finalize the draft in early May. A final draft will be revised and voted on at the May MRC Meeting.

No updates for:

- Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention

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

Upcoming Events:

- Crabber Subcommittee Meeting May 2
- Port Susan Subcommittee Meeting May 8
- MRC Presentation to Beach Watchers May 11
- MRC Report to Snohomish County Council on May 16
- MRC Meeting May 17 at 6:30pm
- Forage Fish Sampling May 15 and 18

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: March 2023

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- In partnership with Tulalip Tribes and WSU Beach Watchers, we are planning an Earth Day beach cleanup on April 22nd. This cleanup will utilize the Escaped Trash Protocol and be held at Mission Beach.
- The Oil Spill subcommittee received over 100 oil spill kits donated by Washington Sea Grant, which they plan to hand out along with spill education materials. They plan to combine this outreach with crabber outreach events.

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

The MRC is currently recruiting new members and specifically looking for applicants who can represent Economic Interests and Local Government Interests. There is also one vacant At-Large Position.

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

The MRC conducted forage fish monitoring on February 22nd.

Elisa Dawson met with the Meadowdale monitoring team on February 23rd.

MRC Staff and members attended the NWSC meeting on February 24th.

MRC Member Allan Hicks tabled with Island MRC at the Shore Friendly Workshop on February 25th.

Elisa Dawson met with the Meadowdale monitoring team to discuss vegetation monitoring on March 2nd.

Elisa Dawson attended the American Society of Civil Engineers North Branch meeting on March 2nd.

Joycelyn Blue met with WSU Beach Watchers and Tulalip Tribes representatives on March 7th to plan for the upcoming Earth Day cleanup event.

MRC Staff attended the Council General Legislative Session on March 8th to confirm reappointments of MRC members.

The Marine Vegetation Subcommittee held a meeting on March 14th.

Joycelyn Blue met with WSU Beach Watchers on March 15th to purchase ETAP supplies.

MRC Staff attended the NWSC 2023-2025 RFP Information Session on March 15th.

The MRC hosted their monthly meeting on March 15th. The meeting had a presentation by Washington Scuba Alliance on their Tire Reef Removal project and the MRC reviewed their 2022 Annual Report.

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): The Port Susan Subcommittee and MRC members are currently reviewing the outline for the Story Map and providing comments to ESA. ESA will then begin drafting the Story Map based on the comments received.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): Staff completed an on the water inventory for derelict vessels on March 6th.

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, Howarth Park, and Meadowdale. Upcoming forage fish sampling is planned on March 22nd and April 10th/12th.

Nearshore Restoration: The Meadowdale Monitoring Team has begun taking data for year 1 monitoring. Streamflow data has been being collected over the last several months, and biological data collection will start this spring. There are still some plantings to go in this Spring, and data on year 1 for the plantings has been scheduled for September 2023.

Outreach: A beach cleanup in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers is scheduled for March 23rd. In partnership with Tulalip Tribes and WSU Beach Watchers, we are planning an Earth Day beach cleanup on April 22nd. This cleanup will utilize the Escaped Trash Protocol and be held at Mission Beach.

Marine Water Quality: Review of the Intergovernmental Services Agreement with ORCA (Ocean Research College Academy) has been completed by Snohomish County and signed. The contract is currently awaiting signature from ORCA, and then will be finalized by the County once signature is complete. The agreement is expected to be finalized in the latter half of March 2023.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring: The subcommittee met on March 14th to begin brainstorming a Scope of Work (SOW) for the MRC 2023-2025 RFP. The team brainstormed many ideas related to marine vegetation projects and lumped them into “buckets” of styles of project ideas. The Marine Vegetation subcommittee proposed prioritizing Tier 1 style projects first which would focus on policy related projects, then Tier 2 outreach projects, and finally Tier 3 additional data gathering projects. The idea is to pick 1-2 ideas to focus on for the first year of the NWSC 2023-2025 Grant, which can then be built on with additional ideas for Year 2. Next, the Subcommittee will share highlights from meeting with entire MRC at MRC meeting on 3/15 and solicit any feedback. Additionally, Elisa will send out a Doodle Poll for times in late afternoon (4-5PM) in early April to have our next meeting where we will begin to draft a SOW based on the brainstorming done so far + feedback from MRC at March Meeting.

Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: The subcommittee received over 100 oil spill kits donated by Washington Sea Grant, which they plan to hand out along with spill education materials. They plan to combine this outreach with crabber outreach events.

No updates for:

- Crabber Outreach

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

Upcoming Events:

- MRC Meeting April 19 at 6:30pm
- Forage Fish Sampling March 22 and April 10th/12th
- Puget Sound Marine Vegetation Workshop March 23
- Beach Cleanup Event March 23
- Earth Day ETAP beach cleanup April 22

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

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: APRIL 2023

Submitted by: Austin Rose

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

- Austin provided a presentation to the Whatcom County Council on April 18. The presentation highlighted the MRC's successes and challenges with projects in 2022. Austin began the presentation with a short Northwest 101, which was much appreciated. This presentation was timely as the County Council approved and signed a support letter for the Northwest Straits reauthorization on April 11.
- DNR is currently planning for the removal of the vessel in the Bellingham tidelands with the cost estimate at \$60,000 which is right on target with the CDS funds of \$62,000. It is currently unknown when this work will start, but DNR is in the planning stages for the removal.
- The MRC will be partnering with the Whatcom County PIC program and Whatcom County Health on an outreach event at the beach entrance to North Chuckanut Bay on May 25. This will provide an opportunity for MRC members and these partner agencies to provide updates on water quality, answer septic system questions, Olympia oyster restoration and European Green Crab.

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

n/a

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

The MRC held their April meeting on April 6. Highlights included:

- A high-school junior from Ohio, Jana Gustin, will be visiting Bellingham May 8 – 19. Jana is very passionate about marine sciences and has interest in attending Western Washington University. Jana will be job shadowing with the MRC during her visit, and helping with a variety of activities occurring during that time. Jana joined the meeting to introduce herself.
- Dana Oster provided an update on the effort to expand the voluntary no-anchor zones, and mentioned that buoys provide the best visual cue, but are also difficult to maintain. Dana provided a three-tier approach to manage this issue including promotion of the best recreational boating practices for anchoring away from eelgrass, virtual voluntary no-anchor zones, and physical voluntary no-anchor zones (installing buoys in larger areas where buoy maintenance is possible). Next steps include a social marketing campaign to develop messaging and toolkits, an eelgrass monitoring plan, and revisiting the sites and tiers for appropriate protection. Drayton Harbor has been raised as another area of interest for eelgrass protection. There is interest in getting a more thorough survey of eelgrass along with documentation of boat usage in Drayton Harbor. MRC members that live in the area have shared concerns about water quality and boat anchorage.
- Dana also shared a future project possibility to work with DNR on county-wide marine vegetation surveys. The goals of these surveys are to create an inventory of marine vegetation to assess trends for eelgrass where possible, provide local planners with information about kelp/eelgrass beds, and to create eelgrass maps for key areas to target for voluntary no anchor zones. It will be key to determine priority stretches of shoreline in Whatcom County for these efforts. DNR won't be available until summer of 2025 to help with these surveys, so

there is a bit of time to determine funding and strategies.

- Eleanor Kirtley introduced Green Marine, which is a voluntary certification program, a benchmarking tool to measure performance (15 performance indicators), and a partnership initiative among stakeholders. Performance indicators are reviewed and revised each year. The Port of Bellingham joined Green Marine in February of 2023. This program has had many benefits to the Port including verifying that the Port is going above and beyond what is required, complimenting existing programs, providing guidance for future work and allowing for continuous improvement, and allowing for information sharing of best practices.
- Austin provided a presentation to the Whatcom County Council on April 18. The presentation highlighted the MRC's successes and challenges with projects in 2022. Austin began the presentation with a short Northwest Straits 101, which was much appreciated. This presentation was timely as the County Council approved and signed a support letter for the Northwest Straits reauthorization on April 11.

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):

- Derelict Vessel Removal
Austin received an email indicting that DNR is currently planning for the removal of the vessel in the Bellingham tidelands with the cost estimate at \$60,000 which is right on target with the CDS funds of \$62,000. It is currently unknown when this work will start, but DNR is in the planning stages for the removal.
- Beach Seine with Kids (BSWK)
The first BSWK program occurred on April 14 with fourth grade classrooms from the Lummi Nation school. Lummi Elder and retired Skookum Hatchery Manager, Bill Finkbonner spoke to the students about the history of salmon fishing using fish traps and reef net gear. He spoke about the important role of salmon hatcheries in providing sustainable populations. 22 students were split into two groups. One group went to observe the Lummi Natural Resources crew, set the beach seine net. The other group was entertained by the eight Salish Sea Conservation Corps college students who provided an activity on the marine food chain and bioaccumulation. The net was deployed, and the students recorded the set time and weather on their field forms. When the net came in the students saw 18 small chum salmon. These were like those reared in their classrooms. These were displayed in a viewing container and in the buckets provided for the catch. Students were then able to observe the LNR crew count and measure the chum and recorded these on their forms. A large and colorful sculpin was also caught.
- Chuckanut PIC
The MRC will be partnering with the Whatcom County PIC program and Whatcom County Health on an outreach event at the beach entrance to North Chuckanut Bay on May 25. This will provide an opportunity for MRC members and these partner agencies to provide updates on water quality, answer septic system questions, Olympia oyster restoration and European Green Crab.
- Marine Vegetation – Eelgrass at Wildcat Cove, Larrabee State Park
MRC staff met with Casey Pruitt, DNR to discuss a survey of the eelgrass in Wildcat Cove, Larrabee State Park this summer. DNR has been contracted to survey eelgrass at Clayton beach, Larrabee State Park in late August, and it is likely that another day will be added to their work in order to include Wildcat Cove. This will provide survey continuity along the Larrabee State Park shoreline, which is what State Park prefers. DNR is going to attempt to complete 3m transects in the focus zone around the boat launch, and 10m transects in the rest of the cove out to where vegetation is not detected (deep water zone). MRC staff have discussed splitting the eelgrass assessment into two parts, 1) would cover the boat survey by DNR to provide eelgrass data and continuity along the shoreline of Larrabee State Park, and 2)

part could involve boots on the ground eelgrass assessment surveys several times throughout the summer to quantify/ photo document the eelgrass coverage and potential damage that may occur as a result of boat use in the area. The later could provide more insight into the potential damage to the eelgrass meadow as in addition to establishing baseline data. MRC staff are gathering quotes from DNR and WWU for the surveys and will be posting a Request for Proposal to local social marketing consultants to begin framing an education and outreach campaign.

- MRC staff have connected with Triangle Associates – formally Veda Environmental – about facilitating a MRC retreat in late August/early September.

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

The MRC will join the Northwest Straits Foundation to host a Shore Friendly workshop on May 20 in Blaine.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: MARCH 2023

Submitted by: Austin Rose

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

- The part-time temporary staff position to support the administration of the MRC has been filled. Dana Flerchinger will begin work at Whatcom County on March 20, for ~20 hours per week.
- The MRC has an opportunity to present their 2022 annual report to the County Council at the April 18 Surface Water Work Session (10:30 – 12:00pm).
- The MRC will likely be collaborating with City of Bellingham and the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) on outreach to residents in the Chuckanut watershed. The City and NSEA are conducting restoration along Chuckanut Creek related to habitat damage caused by visitors to Arroyo Park, where Chuckanut Creek runs. The MRC has planned outreach to the community, providing water quality updates along with other project info.

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

The part-time temporary staff position to support the administration of the MRC has been filled. Dana Flerchinger will begin work at Whatcom County on March 20, for ~20 hours per week. Dana also works as an Assistant Teacher for The Salish Sea School, and just wrapped up a position as a Marine Naturalist with Outer Island Excursions – both out of Anacortes. Dana has worked as an Environmental Scientist with Fulcrum Consulting where she conducted field work including hazardous building materials inspections, soil, sediment, and water sampling, indoor air quality investigations, moisture and mold assessments and remediation, environmental site assessments, and exposure monitoring. At University of San Diego, Dana worked as a research intern funded by a Hollings Scholarship collecting behavioral observation data on whales and whale watching vessels to assess potential costs associated with whale watching activities.

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

The MRC held their March meeting on March 2. Highlights included:

- Volunteers are needed to help with European Green Crab monitoring in N. Chuckanut Bay this summer. The Crab Team has a number of trainings coming up, which are listed on their [website](#).
- The MRC received an update from a community member about the proposed [Jones Subdivision “The Woods at Viewcrest”](#). Three topics were highlighted: the existing stormwater outfall pipe, the designations of North Chuckanut Bay, and the need for an Environmental Impact Statement.
- The projects prioritized for the 2023-2025 grant round were reviewed. It was suggested that the MRC monitor boats anchoring in Drayton Harbor to inform the need for a voluntary no-anchor zone, which could be set up as a virtual tool for boaters, as opposed to physical buoys. This monitoring could be a subset of the HABs project being conducted in Drayton Harbor.
- There is funding available within the CDS grant to support a facilitated retreat. Members expressed interest in having a retreat, particularly for newer members that started on zoom.
- Historically, a notebook has been provided to MRC members including several procedural documents (meeting policies and procedures, strategic plans, work plan, etc.). Members expressed interest in having that again. Information can also be found on the MRC website [here](#).
- The MRC has an opportunity to present to the County Council at the April 18 Surface Water Work Session (10:30 – 12:00pm).

- Councilwoman Galloway mentioned the new Whatcom County Climate Action Manager will be introduced at the March 7 Council session. This person will be working to implement the Whatcom County Climate Action Plan. There is an effort to get a representative from DNR to talk to Council about the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Management Plan. Kaylee mentioned that she is working with Representative Lekanoff to support the Net Ecological Gain bill.

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):

- Beach Seine with Kids (BSWK)

The BSWK planning team met on February 28 to review 14 applications received from schools hoping to participate in the Beach Seine with Kids program. Class selection was primarily focused on logistics (dates and class size) with the goal of accommodating as many students as possible. Classes accepted: Lummi Nation – 30 students – April 14th, Happy Valley – 68 students – April 28th, and Roosevelt – 68 students – May 12th. 166 students total for 2023!! The second and third session will have the beach seining in addition to activity stations set up at the Boulevard Park Pavilion to accommodate the number of students. The Northwest Straits Foundation Salish Sea Conservation Corps students will help with the stations. Classrooms that applied in 2022 but were not able to participate took precedence. 2023 will include both and pre and post event classroom visit.

- Chuckanut PIC

The City of Bellingham – in partnership with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) - is beginning restoration at Chuckanut Creek in Arroyo Park, Bellingham. One of the fresh water sample sites had to be adjusted slightly upstream, as access to the original sample site is blocked for the restoration. There is an opportunity for the MRC to collaborate on community outreach in the area sometime in late Spring. Most of the outreach the MRC does is directed to the Chuckanut Village. The focus is on septic systems (County incentive programs), pet waste, and not leaving food out for wild animals. The MRC would like to host an event at the beach entrance to share their WQ data with the community and talk about other the work the MRC does in the bay (Olympia oyster restoration).

The Washington State Department of Health was awarded [\\$5.5 million in funding](#) has been awarded to 11 proposed projects that aim to restore and protect shellfish habitats across Puget Sound. One of the projects is the Whatcom County PIC program which includes the MRCs work in Chuckanut Bay. The unfortunate news is that after the last meeting with DOH (2019) an increase in fecal bacteria results at some of the marine stations have been detected. This is similar to patterns seen in some of the other shellfish areas- likely around Covid and the extreme weather we've experienced. However, it takes us a bit off track of the previous thoughts of reopening the recreational area on the NW side of the embayment. Whatcom County Public Works PIC staff, MRC staff and Whatcom County Health will meet in April to discuss strategies for the upcoming year.

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 [National Marine Educators Association \(NMEA\)](#) conference is being held in Bellingham July 23 – 27. The work of the NMEA aligns with MRC interests and projects. There is opportunity for MRC members to lead a field trip, or provide a presentation during a conference session.

Bellingham Technical College (BTC) is hosting an Open House at the Perry Center in Bellingham on Tuesday, March 21 from 12-3pm. BTC is co-hosting the [American Fisheries Society's WA-BC Chapter](#)

[meeting](#) in Bellingham March 20-23.

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CONFERENCE**

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