



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting
Date: May 26, 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	Tim Ellis, Chair
10:10 – 10:40	Committee reports <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Committee• Science Advisory Committee• External Relations Committee<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Puget Sound Day on the Hill	Alan Clark Julia Parrish Nan McKay
10:40 – 11:10	Business items Welcome Ginny Broadhurst as Governor's Appointee Welcome new NW Straits chair and vice-chair MRC grant proposal submissions NW Straits communications position update State budget update NW Straits Commission Meeting – San Juan County, June 23, 2023	Lucas Hart Lucas Hart Sasha Horst Lucas Hart Lucas Hart Caitlyn Blair



agenda

11:10-11:15	Puget Sound Partnership Update	Laura Blackmore
11:15-11:20	NW Straits Foundation update	Don Hunger
11:20-11:50	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 June 23, 2023 at the Grace Episcopal Church on Lopez Island



**Executive Committee Meeting
May 15, 2023 11AM-12PM (Zoom)
Meeting Minutes**

Attendees

Committee Members: Nan McKay, Alan Clark (Committee Chair), Tim Ellis

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

Guests: Jeff Taylor, Tom Cowan

Absent: Julia Parrish, Jude Apple

Welcome Tim and Alan as the new Commission Chair and Vice-Chair!

Tom Cowan passed off the meeting leadership to Alan Clark and welcomed him as the new Vice-Chair of the Commission and Chair for the Executive Committee.

Incoming leadership orientation

Out-going NW Straits Commission leadership were invited to share their perspectives on ongoing topics the Executive Committee discussed over the last year to orient incoming Chair Tim Ellis and Vice-Chair Alan Clark.

Tom Cowan, former Chair of the Committee, shared that the Executive Committee serves several purposes; including supporting staff in decision making; and providing NW Straits Commission fiscal responsibility, which can include MRC project review to assure money is used toward robust projects. Jeff Taylor added that the Committee speaks for the whole NW Straits Commission on time sensitive issues, such as letters of support, when time is too short for the NW Straits Commission to review responses.

Tom also noted that the Committee has reviewed the history and intention of the Ecology – NW Straits Commission relationship. Tom recommended a memorandum of understanding be executed by the Department of Ecology and the NW Straits Commission to establish a clear understanding of the relationship between the two entities. Such a document would give current and future leadership at the Commission and Ecology a written reference document.

Day on the Hill debrief: Lucas Hart, Nan McKay, Jerry Masters and Jeff Taylor attended Puget Sound Day on the Hill in Washington DC.

Nan shared that Senator Murray is committed to working on reauthorization. Senator Cantwell's staff said she plans to co-sponsor. Meetings were also held with Representative Larsen, Representative Kilmer, and with staff from Representative Schrier and DelBene's offices. Representative Larsen was asked to sponsor a House companion bill. He is reviewing the Senate reauthorization bill to gain a better understanding of the legislation.

Retreat debrief

NW Straits Initiative structure was discussed as it relates to NW Straits Commission, Foundation, and MRC communications and partnerships. This is a carryover topic from the retreat. Lucas plans to talk with



Don to continue the conversation around building efficiencies into project planning and general communications.

NW Straits Commission Marine Program Discussion

Over the last several months, the Committee has discussed the NW Straits Commission Marine Program. The focus of these conversations has been on the growth of regional programs and the staffing support that is required at the NW Straits Commission to manage regional programs. At the March meeting, the Committee expressed support for adjusting the marine program to align with the NW Straits Commission's needs as we are now managing more regional projects. The Committee said they would like to see a description of what the Marine Program would look like, including criteria that could be used to select regional projects and partnerships. Lucas and Dana shared a written outline of the marine program that includes three sections: 1) MRC Project support; 2) Multi-MRC regional project support; 3) Broadscale regional project support.

Dana shared that she sees the document as a broad description and vision of marine programming criteria. The document helps serve as a guide for where the focus and energy of the NW Straits Commission is going, why, and how it will be executed. This document will also assist in guiding discussions surrounding the Strategic Plan, the growing role of regional projects, and clarifying collaborations with MRCs.

The Committee supported the document and suggested that it be reviewed by MRC staff, then brought to the Commission for consideration.

Staff updates

Jessica Owens will join the Commission as the new Communications Coordinator on June 1.



Commission staff highlights - [May 2023]

MRC Support

2021-23 MRC Grants: These grants are now in the final quarter for spending state funding, which expires June 30. Quarterly reporting and payment requests from the January-March period were reviewed and processed. Commission staff worked with San Juan MRC to execute an amendment to the scope of work.

2023 CDS MRC Grants: Projects are underway for these grant awards. The Commission has a semi-annual report due to NOAA in July. Commission staff will refer to quarterly reporting from MRCs for project status updates and may also be connecting with MRC staff and/or project leads for current information.

2023-25 MRC Grants: Commission staff completed consultations with each MRC for these project proposals. The MRC proposal deadline for these grants is May 25. Commission staff is working to collate project proposals and share them with the Science Advisory Committee for input.

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: Staff are developing a 2020-2023 Kelp Plan summary report, which will consist of a synthesis of the advances, lessons learned, and next steps of the actions within the Kelp Plan since its publication.

Kelp Monitoring: NWSC staff continue to work with MRC volunteers to gear up for the 2023 season. Additionally, NWSC staff have been holding meetings with MRC kayak leads to review sites, review 2022 data, and identify needs and preferences of the MRC for future monitoring.

Green Crab: NWSC staff presented to both the Salish Sea Conservation Corps and Whatcom MRC on green crab impacts and trapping efforts. Multiple SSCC members and the high school student hosted by Whatcom MRC participated in field trapping efforts in Drayton Harbor. NWSC staff participated and presented at the Molt Search Survey Workshop in Birch Bay to help train community scientists on using a systematic protocol to detect and report green crab molts. Trapping continues in Samish Bay and Drayton Harbor with over 30 green crabs captured in each bay.

Derelict Vessels: Planning continues for potential derelict vessel turn-in events. The Wanderlust in Whatcom County was scheduled for removal.



Commission staff highlights - [May 2023]

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: The Request for Qualifications and Quotations (RFQQ) for a contractor to develop a social marketing campaign closed on May 25. Bids are now being evaluated for responsiveness and will be scored by an evaluation team over the next week. It is anticipated that the contract will be in place by mid-July. The May Salish Sea Eelgrass Protection Workgroup meeting featured discussion on broad eelgrass surveys to identify extent of habitat to protect by informing recreational boaters.

Operations

Staff: Welcome Jessica Owens as the new Communications Coordinator! Jessica begins on June 1. She will be joining us to implement our existing communications plan, as well as a prioritized list of additional communications tasks.

Budget: The 2023-25 State Operating Budget was signed and will go into effect as of July 1, 2023. This budget includes funding to the Dept of Ecology for MRCs and regional funding for kelp actions. There is also funding to WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife for European green crab work that will come to the Commission via an interagency agreement that is now in progress. Commission staff is working on preparing agreements to route the kelp funding to partner entities.

Meetings Attended

Allie attended: Green Crab Web Tool Focus Group with WA Sea Grant 5/1; Whatcom MRC meeting 5/4; DEI Meetings with Caitlyn 05/08 & 05/11; DEI Coordination Meeting with Ecology DEIR team 5/10; SSCC Green Crab Presentation 5/10; Salish Sea Eelgrass Protection Workgroup 5/11; Molt Search Training Workshop 5/20

Dana attended: Salish Sea Eelgrass Protection Workgroup 5/11; NMFS Assessment tools for nearshore submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) habitats 5/22; PS Kelp Research and Monitoring Workgroup 5/24; DNR Kelp and Eelgrass Health Plan Workgroup 5/25

Jeff attended: Olympia Oyster Core Team meeting 5/2; Presented to Salish Sea Stewards 5/9; Transboundary Kelp Node meeting 5/16; Snohomish MRC meeting 5/17; WDFW NFMS Nearshore Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Tools webinar 5/22; PS Kelp Research and Monitoring Workgroup 5/24

Leah attended: Green Crab Web Tool Focus Group with WA Sea Grant 5/1; Whatcom MRC meeting 5/4; SSCC Green Crab Presentation 5/10; Field Training with SSCC Members 5/17-5/19; Molt Search Training Workshop 5/20



Commission staff highlights - [May 2023]

Lucas attended: San Juan County Council presentation 5/2; External Relations Committee 5/3; Green Crab planning meeting 5/5; Puget Sound Day on the Hill 5/8-5/11; ECB meeting 5/18

Sasha attended: External Relations 5/3; PS Day on the Hill livestream 5/10; Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone Workgroup 5/11; Clallam MRC meeting 5/16

Caitlyn attended: Island MRC Meeting 05/02; Executive Committee 05/15; Incorporating Indigenous Knowledges Webinar 05/04 & 05/18; DEI Meetings with Allie 05/08 & 05/11; NW Straits Commission Meeting 05/26

Northwest Straits Foundation May 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*

Juvenile Salmon at Cornet Bay

The Cornet Bay seining team hit the jackpot on May 1st having caught and released a total of 10,620 fish! From this incredible haul, 99% was accounted for by juvenile salmon totaling 10,554 juvenile chum salmon and 10 juvenile Chinook salmon. Other fish captured include English sole, juvenile flatfish and sculpins, pacific staghorn sculpins, shiner perch, and starry flounders. Pictured below is just one of the 10 sets the team performed this day:



One of Cornet Bay's incredible hauls: 10,620 fish, 99% being juvenile salmon.

NWSF Welcomes Ellen Goudie

We are delighted to extend a warm welcome to Ellen Goudie, our new Nearshore Conservation Assistant. Ellen will play a vital role in collaborating with our Foundation staff to foster stewardship of restoration sites. Additionally, she will contribute to our impactful Shore Friendly landowner program, which strives to mitigate the adverse effects of bulkheads and inspire shoreline residents across the Northwest Straits region to embrace and practice responsible stewardship. We're excited to have Ellen on board, working alongside us to create a brighter future for our coastal ecosystems.

Some might recognize that Ellen was a member of the Salish Sea Conservation Corps! We are excited to offer her this position to help support her career in Marine Conservation.



Ellen Goudie planting Dunegrass at Hoypus Point.

Nearshore Fish Monitoring at Clayton Beach: Snorkel Surveys

Northwest Straits Foundation staff members Jason Morgan, Lisa Kaufman, and Haley Sherman commenced nearshore fish use monitoring at future restoration site Clayton Beach on April 28th, 2023. With snorkels and masks, they carefully observed the behavior and presence of nearshore fish along the shoreline armoring. This monitoring effort will persist seasonally, spanning up to 10 years post-restoration, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the site's ecological recovery.



Jason Morgan and Haley Sherman ready for a snorkel survey.

Puget Sound Lost Crab Pot Prevention Plan Workshops

In a collective effort to safeguard the Puget Sound, Jason Morgan participated in two workshops alongside stakeholders. Their aim? To assess the triumphs of the Puget Sound Lost Crab Pot Prevention Plan and forge innovative strategies, ensuring minimal impact from pot loss. State and tribal shellfish managers, recreational and commercial crabbers, marine traffic experts, gear manufacturers, and representatives from the Clallam, Jefferson, Skagit, and Whatcom MRCs united, continuing the conversation of positive change.

Crabber Workshop – June 23rd

Mark your calendars and save the date! The Northwest Straits Foundation has an exciting announcement: a virtual crabber workshop in partnership with WDFW on June 23rd from 6 to 7 PM. Get ready for an engaging session where valuable insights and information will be shared. Stay tuned for upcoming details, including registration information. Don't miss out on this opportunity to enhance your knowledge and connect with fellow crabbers.

Salish Sea Conservation Corps Work Party and Celebration

On May 20th, we celebrated the remarkable Salish Sea Conservation Corps members! We met at Waypoint Park in Bellingham at 11am to assist in managing invasive vegetation and erosion at the SSCC adopted site. Around 12:30pm, we headed over to Kulshan Trackside for a joyful gathering, spending time reminiscing about the achievements of the SSCC members during their program.



SSCC members, SSCC Mentors, Foundation Staff, Foundation Board, and friends gather to steward Waypoint Park. .

Shore Friendly Funding to Continue:

With the closing of the State legislative budget process, we are now confident that the Shore Friendly program will be funded for another two years. This program that spans all counties across Puget Sound and sponsored by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Estuary & Salmon Restoration Program utilizes a multi-pronged approach to reach waterfront owners through education and incentives in an effort to build relationships and change perspectives about shoreline living. We are excited to continue to provide assistance and resources for landowners as they make decisions that can help in our efforts to restore and protect the diversity of habitats and species that rely on persistent stewardship.

Shore Friendly Workshops

The Skagit and Whatcom Marine Resources Committees joined the Foundation to host our third and forth *Living with Sea Level Rise* workshop in Anacortes on April 29th and May 20th. On one of the first beautiful, sunny days of spring, 18 shoreline landowners came out to learn the effects that climate change and sea level rise will have on their properties. Adaptations including vegetation, drainage management, and relocation of homes were all part of the presentations provided by Andrea MacLennan of Herrera Environmental Consultants and Jeff McCord of Nickel Bros.

Site visit scheduling will continue through the summer. Interested landowners can sign up [here](#) for individual site assessments or neighborhood beach walks.



Andrea MacLennan of Herrera Environmental Consultants presents to Skagit County shoreline homeowners.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: May/ 2023

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- South Whidbey School District ALE Forage Fish Class
- Penn Cove Water Festival
- Whidbey 101

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

- Our MRC and Board of Island County Commissioners has approved Kelly Webb, Patrick Havel, Kirk Larsen, Greg Easton, and PaulBen McElwain to serve on our committee. Welcome!

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

Previous Meetings/Events:

- Apr 27: SWSD Forage Fish Class
- Apr 29: Whidbey 101
- May 2: MRC Meeting
- May 13: Penn Cove Water Festival

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- May 23: Cornet Bay/Hoypus Point Stewardship Event
- May 25: Exec MRC Meeting
- Jun 6: MRC Meeting - Camano

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

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

Monitoring – Forage Fish: 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, and Hidden Beach.

Bull Kelp Surveys: Volunteer training will take place in early June on Whidbey and Camano. New team members have been recruited for Hoypus and Possession Point.

Port Susan MSA: No update

Education – SWSD Forage Fish Class: In early January we went into the South Whidbey School District (SWSD) ALE Program classroom to teach the 5th-8th grade students about the importance of forage fish and each student was able to work with learning how to identify the different types of forage fish eggs found in our area. On April 27, we did a follow up class at Hidden Beach to allow the students to learn

the importance of data collection and how to collect forage fish egg samples. The students had lots of amazing questions which lead to great discussions and ideas about how this type of research could be applied to other subjects. We look forward to continuing a relationship with the SWSD ALE program into the future.

Education – Whidbey 101 and Penn Cove Water Festival: Between these two events we got the opportunity to talk to lots of families about our work in Island County. Each event was geared to a bit difference audience. As our members work these events, we are taking notes and refining what our needs are regarding our booth display items. We will be ordering new supplies soon!

Stewardship – Cornet Bay: We are working out a plan with WA State Parks and the NWSF for watering Cornet Bay phase #2 and the Hoypus Point sites this summer. In addition, we will be hosting our first stewardship event this year. We will focus on weeding and taking stock of what needs to be worked on this year. Spray was carefully applied to the Canada thistle which has spread through phase #2 of Cornet Bay.

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):



Forage Fish Class – Hidden Beach

Photo by Kelly Zupich



MRC Member – Andi Kopit at the Penn Cove Water Festival

Photo by Clea Barenburg

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: May 2023

Submitted by: Rebecca Mahan

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

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Three Olympia oyster surveys have occurred.

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)

May MRC meeting was held 5/15/23.

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/JST tribal have been purchasing oyster shell to be placed as substrate for future Olympia oyster recruitment.

Several Clallam MRC members continued to collect the monthly Forage fish samples at Cline Spit and Ediz Hook and Elwha beaches East and West.

Clallam MRC continues to supply doggie waste bags on the levee west of the Elwha River mouth.

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 Rebecca Mahan of Olympia oyster surveys in Sequim. In first photo is MRC member Ann Stafford and JST's Natural Resource Technician Jarrett Burns.





MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: May 2023

Submitted by: Monica Montgomery

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

- The MRC organized a Digging for Dinner event featuring Camille Speck (WDFW) on April 23 at the Quilcene WDFW Tidelands. The event provided education to 39 participants about Salish Sea clams, where to find them and how to harvest safely and sustainably.
- In partnership with Puget Sound Restoration Fund and WDFW, the MRC organized community presentations to share about Olympia oyster restoration opportunities in Kilisut Harbor and to solicit input from Marrowstone community members, on May 4 (virtual) and May 7 (in-person with a beach walk). Over 20 tideland owners have expressed interest in beach walks with biologists and further exploration of possible restoration efforts.
- With the help of WSU Extension, Native Salvage Plant Foundation, groundskeeping staff and three volunteers, the MRC installed a new rain garden at the Old Alcohol Plant Inn in Port Hadlock.

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

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 6 – No-Anchor Zones work swapping PT winter floats with summer buoys (work from boat)
May 7 – “Olympia Oyster Restoration in Kilisut Harbor” in-person presentation with beach walk
May 11 – Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone workshop
May 13 – No-Anchor Zones work swapping PT winter floats with summer buoys (dive)
May 16 – Rain garden installation at the Old Alcohol Plant Inn (Port Hadlock)
May 16 – JCMRC and NWSI kelp kayak monitoring discussion

Upcoming Events/Meetings

May 22 – MRC executive committee meeting
May 23 & 24 – Side scan sonar surveys in Port Townsend Bay
May 27 & 28 – MRC tabling Hood Canal Fjord Fest
May 30 – MRC DEI meeting
June 1-16 – ROV derelict crab pot removal operations in Port Townsend Bay
June 5 – Olympia oyster population survey at Powerlines site (Discovery Bay)

June 6 – “Searching for Seaweed” public education event
June 6 – MRC monthly meeting
June 12 – MRC staff retreat
June 17 or 18 – Kelp kayak survey 1
June 20 – MRC executive committee meeting

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) did not survey in April but plans to survey May 22.
- **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The Project Lead (Sarah) surveyed on April 24 with the help of one MRC member (Troy) and one volunteer (Mark).
- **Kelp:** The project lead, Solenne, met with NWSC staff, Jeff Whitty, on May 16 regarding Jefferson MRC kelp data. The team is planning its first survey of the season for June 17 or 18.
- **Storm surge monitoring:** The team met on May 18 to discuss intern candidates and is beginning to schedule interviews.

2. Rain Gardens:

- With the help of WSU Extension, Native Salvage Plant Foundation, groundskeeping staff and three volunteers (including MRC member Frank and a WSU Master Gardener), the MRC installed a new rain garden at the Old Alcohol Plant Inn in Port Hadlock. This totals 18 rain gardens to date. The MRC is planning one more installation before shifting the project’s focus on maintenance.
- The rain garden intern begins on May 24, and will help with assessing rain garden maintenance needs across Port Townsend for prioritizing rain gardens for work parties this summer.

3. Education & Outreach:

- The MRC organized a Digging for Dinner event on April 23 at the Quilcene WDFW Tidelands with 39 participants (of 50 registered). Of 8 responses to a post-event survey, all respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they learned how to harvest clams safely/sustainably and that going forward, they will check the WA shellfish safety map before harvesting and implement sustainable harvesting practices learned at the event (specifically, checking the harvest season for a particular beach, adhering to harvest limits, and filling in holes). One respondent wrote, “The event was great! I learned so much, and loved that I was able to apply what I learned immediately to dig for my dinner! I really appreciated having so many volunteers and DFW staff on-hand to answer questions and create a safe, friendly learning environment.” Respondents suggested future topics on harvesting geoducks, seaweed, razor clams and shrimping, as well as opportunities to learn about more critters and conservation efforts.
- The crabber outreach intern, Ally, began on May 19 and is working on organizing this year’s crabber workshop.
- The MRC will be tabling the Hood Canal Fjord Fest, sharing education about shellfish and sustainable harvesting practices, on May 27 and 28.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- The team is working on logistics for a large shell spread event, now planned for early June.
- The team is recruiting volunteers for an Olympia oyster population survey to take place on June 5.
- The MRC and PSRF partners mailed postcards to shoreline property owners along Kilisut Harbor, and along with WDFW, hosted community presentations on the potential for Olympia oyster restoration work in Kilisut Harbor on May 4 (virtual) and May 7 (in-person with beach walk). This outreach effort resulted in over 20 tideland owners expressing interest in scheduling beach walks with biologists to explore restoration opportunities.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- Gordon and Troy went out on May 6 to swap the winter floats with summer buoys, working from the boat. The team (Gordon, Troy, Bryan) went out again on May 13 to dive on some of the buoy anchors to finish swapping out the floats, totaling 11 summer buoys now marking the eelgrass bed ahead of the busy boating season.

6. Mapping Lost Crab Pots:

- The MRC has contracts finalized and permit and approvals for side scan sonar surveys and ROV derelict crab pot removal operations in Port Townsend Bay.
- The team will be doing side scan sonar surveys in Port Townsend Bay on May 23 and 24.

7. Internships:

- The MRC has onboarded two interns, for crabber outreach and the MRC assistant. A third intern will start on May 24, and the Storm Surge Monitoring team is setting up interviews.

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 will have its third meeting on May 30.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info): All photos by Monica Montgomery unless otherwise noted

April 23 – Digging for Dinner event





Camille Speck (WDFW) presenting on how to safely and sustainable harvest clams.



Troy McKelvey (MRC Chair and Recreational Rep) digging!



Doug Rogers (WDFW) providing an oyster shucking demonstration



Camille Speck (WDFW) providing a demonstration of her oyster shucking method



Sarah Fisk (District 3) and Joan Hendrick (District 3 Alt) assisting the Digging for Dinner event



Participants practicing their new shucking skills

May 6 – Port Townsend Eelgrass Protection No-Anchor Zone maintenance



Photo by Gordon King



Photo by Troy McKelvey

May 16 – Rain Garden installation in Port Hadlock





Frank Handler (Dist 2 Alt) putting Zone 3 plants into the rain garden



Completed rain garden – photo by Bob Simmons

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: May 2023

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge

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

- The spring Great Islands Cleanup event was held on April 22nd. This year a total of 301 people collected 4,574 pounds of litter on Shaw, Orcas, San Juan, Stuart, Decatur, Sucia, and Lopez Islands
- There was no May MRC meeting and instead MRC members attended the boat-based Salmon Recovery site visits on May 4th. This year we visited shoreline armor sites on Lopez and Orcas.

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

We recently hired Katie Johnson to fill the Project Coordinator role that was vacated when Tyler Davis was promoted to a Marine Project Manager role in February. Katie started in early May and will be assisting with MRC project coordination, reporting and outreach.

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

- Marine Managers Workshop- April 4th-5th
- April MRC Meeting- April 6th
- Great Islands Cleanup- April 22nd
- Stewardship Network Meeting- May 3rd
- San Juan Salmon Recovery Site Visits – May 4th
- Derelict Vessel Patrol- May 11th
- UW Friday Harbor Labs Open House- May 13th
- San Juan Local Forum- May 18th

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):

The spring Great Islands Clean-up event was held on April 22nd. This year a total of 301 people collected 4,574 pounds of litter on Shaw, Orcas, San Juan, Stuart, Decatur, Sucia, and Lopez Islands. Volunteers picked up everything from the smallest bits of micro-plastic to huge chunks of Styrofoam.

In its role as the Salmon Recovery Citizens Advisory Group (CAG), San Juan MRC members attended the annual Salmon Recovery site visits on May 4th. This annual event is a great opportunity for MRC members to get out into the field to visit important nearshore sites for salmon recovery. This year we visited potential shoreline armor removal sites on both Lopez Island and Orcas Island. The CAG will be scoring and evaluating the project proposals in the coming months.

The Marine Managers Workshop (MMW) held in early April was a huge success. We are continuing to evaluate the feedback we received, but it is clear that there is a strong desire to hold this event every two years. We are planning to include a 2025 MMW event as part of our NWSC grant application. In order to evaluate our progress in delivering on the MSA Plan and to identify gaps in implementation and opportunities for adaptive management.

Derelict vessel patrols have been occurring on a regular basis. So far this year there have been more marine patrols and fewer derelict vessels identified. Areas of focus have included Friday Harbor and Blind Bay. We are working on finalizing an outreach video to get the community involved with vessels of concern and direct folks to the vessel-turn-in program that DNR is running.

The MRC hosted a table display at the May 13th UW Friday Harbor Labs event. This event is a great opportunity to connect with the local community and to highlight the work of the MRC.

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 the San Juan LIO to plan for the Ecosystem Coordination Board (ECB) Local Forum, which will be held on May 18th. MRC Member Lovel Pratt, along with San Juan County staff, will present to the Ecosystem Coordination Board on Vessel Accident and Oil Spill Prevention in the San Juans, including:

- the impacts of a Salish Sea oil spill,
- the potential for an emergency response towing vessel (ERTV) to protect the shared waters of San Juan County and neighboring U.S. and Canadian jurisdictions from a catastrophic oil spill
- Salish Sea Vessel Traffic projections

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



MRC Member Phil Green on a recent Derelict Vessel Patrol. *Photo Credit: Tyler Davis*





Photos of the Great Islands Cleanup. *Photo Credits: Katie Fleming*

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: May 2023

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The Snohomish MRC hosted an Earth Day event on April 22 in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers and Tulalip Tribes. This cleanup utilized the Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol and was held at Mission Beach. Around 30 volunteers were in attendance and a total of 145 lbs of trash was removed from the beach.
- The Crabber subcommittee and members of the Oil Spills subcommittee decided to again do crabber outreach for the first two weekends of crabbing at the Everett Marina. In addition to handing out crabber information and supplies the committee will add oil spill kits donated by Washington Sea Grant and Snohomish County oil spill phone number magnets. The subcommittee is also developing a short survey of yes/no questions to get a bit more information from the public on crab pot loss/prevention of loss.
- A college intern has been hired by Snohomish County to assist the Marine Program this summer. The intern will start in June and work through September.

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.

A college intern has been hired by Snohomish County to assist the Marine Program this summer. The intern will start in June and work through September.

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

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.

Julie Schlenger attended a two-day Puget Sound Lost Shellfish Prevention Plan workshop on April 19 and 26.

Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue met with NWSC staff to discuss the 2023-2025 grant on May 1.

The crabber subcommittee met on May 2 to plan for summer outreach.

Joycelyn Blue met with Kate Olsen (WDFW) on May 3 to exchange forage fish samples and supplies.

The marine vegetation subcommittee met to finalize the scope of work for grant submission on May 4.

Elisa Dawson attended the Kelp Policy Advisory Group meeting on May 4.

The marine vegetation subcommittee met with the consultants to review the draft Port Susan story map on May 8.

Elisa Dawson presented to the WSU Beach Watchers about the MRC and MRC projects on May 11.

Natasha Coumou, Elisa Dawson, and Joycelyn Blue presented on the 2022 MRC accomplishments to the Snohomish County Executive on May 12.

Julie Schlenger assisted with the European Green Crab Molt Survey Outreach workshop held on May 13.

Forage fish monitoring was completed on May 15 and May 18.

Natasha Coumou, Elisa Dawson, and Joycelyn Blue presented on the 2022 MRC accomplishments to the Snohomish County Council on May 16.

Joycelyn Blue and Elisa Dawson along with other Snohomish County staff met with ORCA to discuss the QA/QC plan on May 16.

Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue met with the consultants for the Port Susan project on May 17.

The MRC monthly meeting was held on May 17.

Julie Schlenger participated in an oil spill deployment drill at Point Wells on May 24.

Joycelyn Blue and Elisa Dawson met with the Meadowdale Monitoring workgroup on May 25.

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): The subcommittee reviewed the draft story map and provided feedback. ESA will revise and provide a second draft of the story map.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): Approval to move forward from DNR and Snohomish County for the removal of 6 vessels. Two vessels need access agreements from the Tulalip Tribes which a contract is currently being reviewed and signed by the tribes. Additionally, two of the vessels are on private tidelands and the Tulalip Tribal Police are helping Elisa get in touch with the homeowners' association which owns the property. Once access agreements have been signed for these four vessels, vessels will be posted. Ideally in June.

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 June 14 and 15. Samples from the year thus far were delivered to WDFW and sediment samples were also delivered to the Snohomish County Materials lab.

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. Once plants are installed, final as-builts will be collected.

Outreach: Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. The last event was the Earth Day event on April 22 held in partnership with Tulalip Tribes. This cleanup utilized the Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol and was held at Mission Beach. Around 30 volunteers were in attendance and a total of 145 lbs of trash was removed from the beach.

Crabber Outreach/Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: The subcommittee met on May 2 and discussed plans for summer outreach. The group decided to again do outreach for the first two weekends of crabbing at the Everett Marina. In addition to handing out crabber information and supplies the committee will add oil spill kits donated by Washington Sea Grant and Snohomish County oil spill phone number magnets. The subcommittee is also developing a short survey of yes/no questions to get a bit more information from the public on crab pot loss and prevention of loss.

Marine Water Quality: SWM staff reviewed the draft QA/QC plan and met with the ORCA team to discuss revisions on May 16.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring: The subcommittee met on May 4 to finalize the Scope of Work (SOW) for the MRC 2023-2025 RFP. The final version was voted on and approved at the May 17 MRC meeting. Dates for kelp monitoring for summer 2023 are being finalized.

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:

- ORCA School student presentations June 8
- Forage Fish Sampling June 14 and 15
- MRC Meeting June 21 at 6:30pm
- Crabber Outreach Early July

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



Julie Schlenger, a Snohomish MRC Member (middle), and other volunteers picking up trash at the Earth Day beach cleanup of Mission Beach. Photo credit: Joycelyn Blue



Some of the plastic trash collected at the Mission Beach event sorted according to the ETAP (Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol) process. Photo Credit: Joycelyn Blue

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: May/2023

Submitted by: Tracy/Diane

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

- Salish Sea Stewards Social and Data Sharing Event held May 9th at Padilla Bay. It was a great turnout with around 35-40 in attendance. Five speakers presented some of the data that volunteers have been collecting on forage fish, bull kelp, March Point Heronry, beach seining, intertidal monitoring, etc. Presentations were followed by a potluck social.
- Shoreline Landowner Workshop held April 29th at Seafarer's Memorial Park in Anacortes. Excellent presentations by Herrera and Nickel Brothers! Although it was a low turnout with only around 15 shoreline property owners in attendance, they were all engaged and asked a lot of great questions. Several were from the same neighborhood and were interested in getting a technical site visit.

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):

- **May 11-** Skagit MRC's monthly meeting via Microsoft Teams (9am-11am). Former MRC Member Russell Barsh gave a presentation on the marine research program of the Kwiáht Center for the Historical Ecology of the Salish Sea and shared some key findings. Skagit MRC reviewed the MRC project prioritization results and voted on the Executive Committee's proposed 2023-2025 MRC budget.

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 wrapped up on **April 25th**. 24 new volunteers joined the growing network of Salish Sea Stewards in Skagit County (over 325). Several have already started volunteering. A data sharing and social event for all SSS was held May 9th at Padilla Bay. It was attended by around 35-40 Salish Sea Stewards. Erin Merklien, the new SSS Volunteer Coordinator is now leading the Salish Sea Stewards Facebook and social media campaign. The Salish Sea Stewards host two Facebook pages which have been renamed and reorganized. The [Salish Sea Community Science Group](#) Facebook page will act as a discussion page relating to community science in the Salish Sea where anyone can contribute relevant content. The [Salish Sea Stewards Program](#) Facebook page will focus on the Salish Sea Stewards training program of the Skagit MRC in partnership with PBNERR where anyone can comment but cannot post content.
- 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 portable grill, popcorn machine, and Shannon Point Marine Center's touch tank have been reserved. We've sent out initial "save the date" emails to organizations for tabling and got around 20 responses from those who said they are interested in participating. The event planning committee meets monthly. We have several volunteers already signed up to help with the event. There will be a fish seining demonstration, a touch tank, educational booths, kid friendly craft tables, a no host salmon BBQ, Taylor shellfish, and

Samish indigenous themed art and some Salish storytelling. There will also be a mermaid to teach kids about the wonders of the Salish Sea and what they can do to protect it.

- Forage Fish Surveys: Surveys continue at the 3 Index sites and 2 restoration sites. Several folks from the latest Stewards class are helping and some may become "regulars."
- MRC- Salish Sea School Intern: MRC Project Lead Pete Haase met with the Salish Sea School Director Amy Eberling on May 15th to finalize the plan and schedules for the intern and young students doing forage fish surveys this summer/early fall.
- Kids on the Beach: The spring program was completed in April with 75 6th graders from Sedro-Wooley at Bay View State Park. Planning for the fall program is underway.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: Surveys at the 4 kelp bed locations will start in June. 12 volunteers will be helping with the surveys this year including one new kayaker from the 2023 Salish Sea Stewards class. Newly established survey protocols will be practiced this year. The Skagit kelp kayaker all teams in-person meeting was held April 28th at a team member's house. The kayak team recently conducted a reconnaissance of 2 potential new kelp beds to survey in the future. Adding a new survey site would be at least a five-year commitment, so the decision will not be made lightly.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Plant maintenance will be starting up soon under the management of the Northwest Straits Foundation. The plants continue to struggle at this site. State Parks has water trucks that are kept full for fire suppression that NWSF staff has been trained to use for watering the plants this summer. The Foundation plans to water heavily and host several plant maintenance work parties this summer.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Puget Sound Restoration Fund is finishing up field work. We hope to have more information to share next month.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: MRC member Paul Dinnel attended the Pacific Estuarine Research Society Conference in Bellingham, where they had a presentation about the transfer of oyster seed from Fidalgo Bay into Padilla Bay that he co-authored. Padilla Bay Reserve is transferring another batch of native oyster seed into 3 different locations in Padilla Bay to assess the best locations. Paul also collected half-a-dozen oyster recruitment bags from last year. It was a successful spawning year with about 2 oysters per shell and is the top 3rd highest recruitment we've seen in Fidalgo Bay. Recruitment appears to be increasing on the west side of the bay. In late June, we will be working with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund crews to collect samples for a bay-wide population estimate completed every 5 years.
- Green Crab Outreach: As part of our outreach plan, we will be sending letters to Padilla Bay and Samish Bay shoreline landowners where European green crabs have been detected to increase awareness of the issue and what they can do to help. Skagit County's GIS Department provided a mailing list of over 500 shoreline property owners. The letter has been drafted and will be sent to the NWSC, Washington Dept of Fish and Wildlife, Washington SeaGrant, Padilla Bay NERR, and Taylor Shellfish to co-sign. In addition to the letter, we will also be hosting a European green crab outreach table at community events like Fidalgo Bay Day.
- School Rain Garden: The MRC Project Lead Diane Hennebert has been in contact with the Between Two Worlds program with the Swinomish and La Conner School District. They suggested a great spot for a rain garden at La Conner Elementary and connected Diane with the school principal to coordinate a site visit to check it out.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle: The Interlocal Agreement between the County and City of Anacortes has been drafted but has temporarily been put on hold to look into the possibility of extending the grant to better align with the project timeline. A meeting to develop the education/outreach plan will be held after the Agreement gets signed.
- Clayton Beach Restoration: Design work has begun as the Northwest Straits Foundation waits on funding from an agreement with BNSF. The Foundation completed a snorkel survey where they saw some chum salmon.

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):

Skagit Shore Friendly Workshop, April 29th at Seafarer's Memorial Park, Anacortes



Photo Credit: Brooke Friesen



Photo Credit: Haley Sherman

Salish Sea Stewards Data Sharing Social Event, May 9th at Padilla Bay



Photo Credit: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: MAY 2023

Submitted by: Austin Rose

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

- Staff are working to organize a MRC retreat is late September early October. Triangle Associates (formally Veda Environmental) is available and interested in facilitating.
- The MRC will work with David Wallin, Western Washington University, to conduct eelgrass surveys by drone 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 Wildcat Cove, Larrabee State Park. In addition, DNR will be conducting a survey in late August, and will attempt to complete 3m transects in the focus zone around the Wildcat Cove boat launch, and 10m transects in the rest of the cove out to where vegetation is not detected (deep water zone).
- The annual Olympia oyster survey in N. Chuckanut Bay occurred on May 8 and May 10 with the help of two different groups of students enrolled in the Bellingham Technical College Fisheries and Aquaculture Program. Very few LIVE Olympia oysters were found within the test plots. The MRC is considering abandoning the pilot restoration project in N. Chuckanut Bay and transitioning their efforts to Drayton Harbor. The success of Oly oyster restoration efforts in Drayton led by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) is visible. Brian Allan, PSRF, will be joining the June MRC meeting to discuss their work in Drayton and ways the MRC could consider adding to the project.

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 May meeting on May 4. Highlights included:

- Leah Robison and Allie Simpson provided an update on the European Green Crab (EGC) Regional Project. Drayton Harbor was identified as a hot spot in 2019 and consistent trapping efforts have been conducted in that area since 2020. An updated management plan has been created and core sites have been identified to help inform EGC abundance and distribution over time as well as establishing a baseline dataset of other species that are being caught in the traps. Washington Sea Grant Crab Team was vital in the early detection of EGC in Drayton Harbor, which led to a rapid response by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). The core site observations in Drayton Harbor reflected a lower capture rate in 2022 than 2020, 2022 had a dramatic increase starting in early September (due to young of the year being large enough to enter traps resulting in a spike in captures), and trapping for a majority of the season was the lowest it has been since trapping began. Whatcom MRC and NWSC collaboration ideas include: outreach materials and outreach booths, advocating for trapping in areas important to the MRC, helping to connect with volunteers and other partners, and promoting the new WSU/Sea Grant Molt Search program.
- Staff are working to organize a MRC retreat is late September early October. Triangle Associates (formally Veda Environmental) is available and interested in facilitating.
- The committee is determining their capacity to host their booth at community events this summer. MRC materials will be at Blaine Oyster Fest (May 20), What's the Point (June 17), and Whatcom Water Week

(September 9-17).

- The Northwest Straits Foundation, Birch Bay Watershed and Aquatic Resources Management District (BBWARM), and the Whatcom MRC are partnering to host a Shore Friendly Workshop “Living with Sea Level Rise” on May 20 at the Blaine Boating Center 9:30am – 2:00pm. The workshop will include presentations by Andrea MacLennan, Herrera Environmental Consultants and Jeff McCord, Nickel Bros (House Moving Company)

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 second BSWK event occurred on April 28, with 68 fourth grade students from Happy Valley Elementary. Students were divided into two groups: the Coho and the Chum. The Northwest Straits Foundation Salish Sea Conservation Corps students led an education activity (“the food-chain game”, highlighting bioaccumulation as well as the food chain) with the groups of students not on the beach observing the beach seine. As students ate their lunch, they were attentive to Lummi Speaker, Paul Cline, who shared stories about his family’s long history of fishing salmon, the Treaty of Point Elliot, and the many field projects at Lummi Natural Resources (spawner surveys, river smolt trapping, and beach seining). The students were thrilled about the total batch of 2 juvenile chinook, 2 coho, 16 chum, and 31 shiner perch.

The third and final BSWK event occurred on May 15, with 68 fourth graders from Roosevelt Elementary School. The guest speaker was Frank Lawrence III, Lummi Natural Resources, Deputy Director. He gave the students accounts of his experience fishing as a small child. The seining was completed at Boulevard Park W., which provided an example of a “restored beach”. 1 chinook and 42 chum were 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, 4-6pm. Postcard invitations were sent to approx. 770 residents in the Chuckanut watershed and adjacent neighborhoods. Updates on Chuckanut Bay water quality, septic system information and maintenance incentives, shellfish and biotoxin monitoring, the MRC Olympia oyster restoration work and European Green Crab info will be shared.

- Marine Vegetation – Eelgrass at Wildcat Cove, Larrabee State Park

DNR has been contracted by the Northwest Straits Foundation to survey eelgrass at Clayton beach, Larrabee State Park in late August, and another day will be added to their work in order to include Wildcat Cove – to inform the MRC’s Social Marketing for Eelgrass Preservation project and survey continuity along the Larrabee State Park shoreline. DNR is going to attempt to complete 3m transects in the focus zone around the Wildcat Cove boat launch, and 10m transects in the rest of the cove out to where vegetation is not detected (deep water zone).

The MRC will work with David Wallin, Western Washington University, to conduct eelgrass surveys by drone 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.

A request for proposals from qualified marketing firms to provide support for a social marketing campaign - to encourage boaters to reduce and avoid damage caused to eelgrass beds during boat launching activities – closed on May 12. Two firms submitted a proposal. Staff reviewed proposals and chose to work with Peak Sustainability in Bellingham. Work will begin on June 1.

- Olympia oyster restoration

The annual Olympia oyster survey in N. Chuckanut Bay occurred on May 8 and May 10 with the help of two different groups of students enrolled in the Bellingham Technical College Fisheries and Aquaculture Program. Several dead clams were noted and very few LIVE Olympia oysters were found within the test plots. The MRC is considering abandoning the pilot restoration project in N. Chuckanut Bay and transitioning their efforts to Drayton Harbor. The success of Oly oyster restoration efforts in Drayton led by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) is visible. Brian Allan, PSRF, will be joining the June MRC meeting to discuss their work in Drayton and ways the MRC could consider adding to the project.

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

- MRC Staff met with NWSC staff regarding surveying eelgrass in Drayton Harbor in effort to collect up-to-date data, provide baseline info to inform potential damage to eelgrass habitat from European Green Crab and the need to establish a voluntary no-anchor zone. The MRC will be collecting vessel presence and boater behavior data this summer. There is potential to gain help with boater observations from the Port of Bellingham and Drayton Harbor Oyster Company.
- MRC Staff will be participating on the WRIA 1 Combined Review Team (CRT) for the 2023 Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) grant round. The role of the WRIA 1 CRT is to review and rank local salmon recovery projects proposed for funding by the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and recommend the ranked list to the WRIA 1 salmon recovery lead entity, which is the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Board. The work of reviewing the local applications, evaluating how well they fit the local habitat recovery strategy, and producing a recommended ranking to the WRIA 1 Board falls to the Combined Review Team. The Board or its Management Team reviews the recommendations and approves the final ranked list that is to be submitted to the SRFB. Information on this review process will be relayed back to the MRC.
- MRC projects have been added to the Salmon Recovery Implementation Plan workbook. This workbook has been developed to collect information to develop a 10-year Implementation Plan as part of the plan update process. The ultimate purpose of the product that is developed from this information is for use by the SRST during adaptive management annual/biennial check ins. Are you doing what you said you would? If not, why?
- MRC Staff have been participating on the Whatcom County Coastal and Riverine Compound Flood Vulnerability Risk Assessment workgroup. A draft action plan as been developed from the study, that provides a summary of recommendations and identifies potential next steps to reduce the County' vulnerability to impacts from sea level rise and compound flooding. A final product is anticipated in June and will be shared with the MRC.

Photos:

Top left: forage fish survey volunteers. A beautiful day of the Squalicum shoreline. Top right: 4th grade students viewing seine catch at Boulevard Park. Bottom left: Job shadow, Jana Gustin, using vortex

method to process forage fish sediment grab. Bottom right: Bellingham Technical College students conducting Olympia oyster population survey in N. Chuckanut Bay. *All photos taken by Dana Flerchinger*

