



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Date: July 28, 2023
Time: 10:00 AM- 3:00 PM
Location: Stevens Center at Padilla Bay
National Estuarine Research Reserve
Wi-Fi: Username: **ECY-Guest**
Password: **TSYgRhRX!**

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.

Today we are on the ancestral and current homelands of the Upper Skagit, Swinomish, Samish and Stillaguamish.

10:00 – 10:15 AM	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement June Meeting Minutes Approval	Tim Ellis, Chair
10:15-10:30 AM	Remarks from Ron Wesen	Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner
10:30-10:40 AM	Puget Sound Partnership update	Laura Blackmore
10:40-11:00 AM	Skagit MRC Presentation on Mt. Erie Rain Garden	Diane Hennebert



agenda

11:00-11:30 AM	Business Items <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introducing Antonio as our new VCC/Marine Nearshore Tech• Green crab outreach and trapping efforts• MRC Grant Update• Derelict Vessel Update• Forage Fish Survey Training	Allie Simpson / Antonio Jones Allie Simpson Sasha Horst Dana Oster Leah Robison
11:30-12:00 PM	Committee Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Committee<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Adopt Marine Program Description• Science Advisory Committee• External Relations Committee	Alan Clark Julia Parrish Nan McKay
12:00-12:30 PM	Speed Date with a Scientist – Eyes on Kelp	Jodie Toft, Hilary Hayford, Puget Sound Restoration Fund
12:30-1:30 PM	Working Lunch	
1:45-1:55 PM	Northwest Straits Foundation	Don Hunger
1:55-2:25 PM	MRC Reports	MRC Representatives
2:25-2:35 PM	Meeting highlights and action items	All



agenda

2:35-2:45 PM	Round table	All
2:45-3:00 PM	Public Comment	All
3:00 PM	Adjourn	

Next meeting: Zoom - Friday August 25



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June 23, 2023 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
In-Person Meeting, Lopez Island
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Elsa Schwartz (Island), Ahren Stroming (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Tom Cowan, Julia Parrish, Diane Hennebert (Skagit)

Commission Staff: Sasha Horst, Caitlyn Blair, Dana Oster, Lucas Hart, Jeff Whitty, Allie Simpson, Leah Robison, Jessica Owens

Others in Attendance: Mike MacKay (San Juan – Alternate), Karin Roemers-Klevin (San Juan), Sam Whitridge (San Juan County), Craig Smith (San Juan MRC), Jamie Stephens, Jane Fuller

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (NWIFC), Bob Cecile (Whatcom)

Welcome and Introductions: Tim Ellis led introductions and shared the Tribal Acknowledgement. Tom Cowan introduced San Juan Councilmember Jane Fuller.

MRC Presentations: The San Juan County MRC welcomed us with two presentations from MRC Staff member Sam Whitridge, and NW Straits Commission representative Christina Koons.

Sam presented at Odlin County Park where there is an eelgrass protection zone in place. Sam shared about the installation of the anchor out buoys at Odlin County Park, which occurred in February 2021. The buoys were placed to protect fragile eelgrass habitats from the impacts of recreational boat anchoring. MRC members conduct regular vessel monitoring at Odlin to observe how the anchor-out zone has impacted boating behavior at the park. In the first two years since the anchor out zone was installed, MRC members have observed no boats anchoring inside of the protection zone, which indicates the anchor-out zone has been effective. Eelgrass protection zones are being monitored around the county through the summer of 2023. Monitoring is also taking place at proposed protection areas like Eastsound, Blind Bay, and Bell Point.

Christina presented on the Dock Talks taking place summer of 2023 at the Port of Friday Harbor and Roche Harbor. A sign board illustrates the MRC logo, Be Whale Wise information, and the Whale Warning Flag is offered for free. If boaters see the flag, they are to slow to less than 7knts to reduce noise. Boaters must stay 400 yards out and turn off fish finders and depth sounders. The Whale Warning Flag began as a San Juan County MRC project in 2018. Since that time thousands



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of flags have been distributed, and the Be Whale Wise information has spread widely throughout the Salish Sea.

Christina mentioned the San Juan County Council wrote to the Honorable David Eby, Premier of British Columbia, with concerns about the Roberts Bank Terminal approval and the long term environmental and shipping mishap risks. The letter also requests a dedicated ETV (Emergency Towing Vehicle) be stationed in Sidney, British Columbia.

Christina shared that MRC members and San Juan County marine program staff lobbied successfully with Representative Debra Lekanoff for the passage of ESSB 537. It provides additional vessel related protections for Southern Resident killer Whales. By January 2025 recreational boats will be required to stay 1000 yards away from the whales. Frances Robertson (SJC Marine Project Manager) and Lovel Pratt (MRC member) attended the bill's signing by Governor Inslee.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

Kelp Plan Summary: Staff finished the draft 2020-2023 Kelp Plan Summary Report, which consists of a synthesis of the advances, lessons learned, and next steps of the actions within the Kelp Plan since its publication. The draft will undergo an open input period by a wide audience, including MRCs, in July before final publication.

Communications Plan: Jessica is working on the communications plan, google analytics, and is calling on NW Straits Commission members to share with her where they get their news and information for crowdsourcing purposes.

MRC Lead Staff Meeting Update: Lucas shared about the MRC and NW Straits Commission staff meeting held on June 12, 2023. A key discussion was around NWS Initiative-wide communication. Lucas is in conversation with Don and MRC staff members to have quarterly meetings to coordinate and bridge communication gaps, and to fill the desire to get together more frequently.

Kelp Indicator Data: Dana presented on the work of creating a floating kelp indicator in WA State. WA Department of Natural Resources, and NW Straits Commission staff and MRCs, alongside a diverse coalition of partners worked together to weave multiple data sources into one cohesive



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and first-of-its kind indicator of trends in canopy forming kelp in Washington state. Indicators are used as part of the Puget Sound Partnership's Vital Signs program to inform science and management actions. The newly developed indicator demonstrates an approach to working with different methods of monitoring and different ways of knowing to create a cohesive floating kelp indicator. Data sets include 17 MRC kelp kayak sites and DNR led monitoring via kayak and aerial surveys, along with local ecological knowledge and Indigenous sciences. To learn more about this project, visit this [link](#).

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the Committee discussed strategies for improving Northwest Straits Commission, Foundation, and MRC communications.

External Relations Committee: Nan reported on the follow-up she is doing with Senator Murray, Senator Cantwell, and Congressman Larson after Puget Sound Day on the Hill. Congressman Larson has agreed to lead a NW Straits Commission reauthorization bill in the House of Representatives.

Ahren is working on a summary of the key themes and next steps from the from Puget Sound Day on the Hill, which will be available for public review next month.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia shared that the Committee is working through reading MRC project proposals. The Committee is meeting on June 29, 2023 where they will review and provide recommendations and feedback to MRCs. The Committee is looking forward to working more directly with the MRCs.

Partner Updates:

Puget Sound Partnership: Ahren shared with the group that there have been challenges and barriers in accessing state and local grant funds. In response, the Partnership is creating a strategic funding team to reduce the barriers for applying to grants. Ahren shared that the Puget Sound Partnership is hiring new staff for their strategic funding team and are working on a website for Progress Indicators. The Partnership is scoping and developing Progress Indicators in collaboration with local, state and Tribal partners. To learn more about the Progress Indicators, visit this [link](#).



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MRC Updates:

Clallam - Alan Clark

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

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC onboarded three interns (MRC Assistant, Crabber Outreach Coordinator, and Rain Garden Community Coordinator) in mid-late May who have already accomplished a ton of work in a short amount of time. The MRC has finalized interviews and has offered a fourth internship (Storm Surge Monitoring Program Coordinator).
- The MRC completed contracted side scan sonar surveys on May 23 and 24 and began ROV derelict crab pot removal operations in a portion of Port Townsend Bay the week of June 6-13, recovering a total of 13 pots. Removal operations will resume on closed dates of the recreational crabbing season.
- The MRC conducted an Olympia oyster population survey on June 5 at the North and partial South Powerlines Sites in Discovery Bay with the help of community volunteers. Results show a nice bell curve, indicating a healthy population with continued recruitment; average density of 324 Olympia oysters per square meter; and an estimated total population of 123,000 individual Olympia oysters.

Island County – Elsa Schwartz

- White paper – SLR/Resiliency
- Cornet Bay and Hoypus Point Stewardship Event

San Juan County – Christina Koons

- The San Juan MRC was represented at the bill signing ceremony with Governor Inlslee on May 15th as he signed ESSB 5371
- The ECB Local forum was a great success, with MRC members presenting about oil spill risk and prevention, including the increased importance of a transboundary emergency response towing vessel (ERTV), as well as supporting increased protection of marine habitats for threatened and endangered species from vessel traffic impacts.



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- The June MRC meeting was held in person at the San Juan Island Grange and included a cake break to celebrate the ending term of two long-time members: Phil Green and Megan Dethier.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- Snohomish County and the MRC welcomed their Marine Ecology Intern Ariel Shiley. Ariel will work on a variety of projects throughout this summer.
- Crabber outreach is scheduled for the first two weekends of crabber season at the Everett Marina 10th street boat launch.
- The Snohomish MRC in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers and City of Everett is hosting a post-4th-of-July breach clean up on Jetty Island on July 7th.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Bowman Bay Work Party: Skagit MRC and NWSF co-hosted a plant maintenance kick-off event at Bowman Bay on June 15th combined with a forage fish spawning survey and nearshore monitoring. There was an article about the event in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- School Rain Garden: Partnered with the Skagit Watershed Council's Drain Ranger Program to present to two different classes at the Mount Erie Rain Garden in Anacortes including hands-on stormwater science activities for students and a demonstration of how rain gardens work.

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- Brian Allan, Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF), joined the June MRC meeting and provided insight on the pilot Olympia oyster project in N. Chuckanut Bay and the potential of continuing restoration in Drayton Harbor. There is a need to gather basic information to identify test plot locations in Drayton, which may include the inside of Semiahmoo Spit and the tide waters of California Creek.

Minute Approval: The Commission moved to approve the May meeting minutes.

Meeting Highlights and Action Items:

The Commission identified the following key highlights:

- Ahren shared that the Puget Sound Partnership is hiring new staff for their strategic funding team and are working on a website for Progress Indicators. The Partnership is



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scoping and developing Progress Indicators in collaboration with local, state and Tribal partners. To learn more about the Progress Indicators, visit this [link](#).

- Dana presented on the Floating Kelp Indicator. To read more about this project, visit this [link](#).
- San Juan MRC has been holding talks about responsible fueling and best practices for recreational boating.
- Staff finished the draft of the 2020-2023 Kelp Plan Summary Report, which consists of a synthesis of the advances, lessons learned, and next steps of the actions within the Kelp Plan since its publication. The draft will undergo an open comment period by a wide audience, including the MRCs, in July before final publication.
- Councilmember Jane Fuller shared with the group about the vital roadways in San Juan County, and the affects sea level rise may have on these roadways. She is interested in discussing further about mitigation strategies and solutions with the San Juan MRC and NW Straits Commission.

Round Table:

- Allie shared the importance of the European Green Crab molt search survey courses, and the benefits courses give NW Straits and MRC staff and members for identifying Green Crab molts.
- Jeff shared that Jefferson County MRC is transitioning to hybrid meetings to accommodate all members of the MRC.
- Elsa wants to explore oyster recycling as a method of obtaining shells for oyster restoration.
- Sasha shared there are more opportunities for communications and outreach between members of the NW Straits Commission, MRCs, NW Straits Foundation and the public now that Jessica is beginning to work on analytics and the communications plan for the NW Straits Initiative.
- Alan shared his thanks about being in San Juan County and opening his eyes to the high number of boaters that use the area for recreation, fishing, subsistence purposes, and more.
- Ginny shared that the Kelp Canopy Indicator is especially inclusive of Indigenous Knowledge. This project sparked her interest in scheduling a webinar about the Robert's Bank terminal.
- Diane shared that she is looking forward to Skagit County hosting the next NW Straits Commission meeting on July 28.



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- Nan shared her gratitude for the accomplishments of the San Juan County MRC that Christina and Sam shared in their presentations, as well as Initiative-wide accomplishments.
- Ahren is interested in learning more about the roads and infrastructure along shoreline after Councilmember Jane Fuller mentioned the impacts of sea level rise on roads like the one near Crescent Beach on Orcas Island.
- Christina thanked everyone for attending the meeting.
- Lucas thanked everyone and mentioned that Dana, Sasha, and Allie are working on selecting and contracting with a social marketing consultant to develop a social marketing campaign and toolkit to support voluntary no-anchor zones.
- Tim thanked the San Juan County MRC for their presentations and hosting the June Commission meeting.

Public Comment

- Jamie shared, with reference to vessel traffic, Haro Strait in San Juan County, and Turn Point in particular, is heavily used for tanker traffic, difficult to navigate and the most likely site of an incident or spill. Cost and responsibility are creating a challenge with US based shipping companies when discussing the posting of an additional Emergency Response Towing Vessel (ERTV) near Haro Strait because an estimated 70% of ships are coming to or from Canada. It might be reasonable for a Canadian ERTV to be stationed in Sydney, BC to support an appropriate response time near Haro Strait.
- Councilmember Jane Fuller shared that as a councilmember, she is proud of the work she is doing with San Juan County on local marine policy.

*The next meeting is in person at Padilla Bay on July 28, 2023



Commission staff highlights - [July 2023]

MRC Support

2021-23 MRC Grants: MRCs are in their final quarter of these two-year awards, with the state funding now complete/expired and the EPA/Puget Sound Partnership funding carrying through September 30. Final progress reports, project reports, and any data collected will be due as of the end of September.

2023 CDS MRC Grants: Commission staff reviewed deliverables and payment requests for quarterly submittals. Several MRCs have requested extensions for these awards due to project delays. Those extensions are pending as we do not currently have approval for a no-cost extension of the NOAA award funding these grants.

2023-25 MRC Grants: Commission staff compiled feedback from internal reviews and the Science Advisory Committee reviews and shared that back to MRC staff to provide to project leads and their MRCs. Follow up meetings to discuss the proposals are now underway. Once any revisions are submitted by MRCs, Commission staff will proceed with creating grant agreements, starting with the EPA/Puget Sound Partnership and state funded agreement scheduled to begin October 1. The NOAA-funded award is anticipated to have a start date of January 1, 2024.

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: The draft 'Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan: Status Update' report was finalized. This report highlights advances in Puget Sound kelp conservation and recovery since 2020, and reports on the general status, lessons learned, and recommend next steps for the Kelp Plan's actions. The draft report was sent out for review by Puget Sound kelp partners on July 14th. This input opportunity will remain open until August 14th.

Kelp Monitoring: MRCs are well underway in their kelp kayak monitoring efforts, with data already being reported for 6 of the 21 beds that will be monitored in 2023 (some having already completed their second survey for the year!). Things appear to be going well, with only a couple of rescheduled surveys due to poor conditions (e.g., high winds).

Green Crab: Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) partnered with Commission staff for a radio interview with Skagit Talks to cover WCC's role in green crab removal. An additional WCC crew assisted with trapping efforts in Samish Bay to help cover more area and provide new experiences for the second crew. Commission staff presented to the green crab Multi-Agency Coordination Group to highlight the Commission's role in local coordination for green crab trapping efforts. Veterans Conservation Corps intern started and has already begun



Commission staff highlights - [July 2023]

helping with trapping efforts. This year, the Commission has removed the same number of green crabs from both Samish Bay and Drayton Harbor with 103 green crabs removed from each site.

Forage Fish: Commission staff coordinated with WDFW staff to plan a Forage Fish Survey Training for August 30th at Padilla Bay. The training is for new or existing volunteers to learn about the forage fish project sampling protocols.

Derelict Vessels: Derelict vessels prioritized by the MRC and partner workgroup continue to be removed. In Island County, south of the Langley Boat launch, a sailboat that has become partially buried in the intertidal beach was removed mid-June. Plans are in place to remove two vessels prioritized by the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, one blocking access to the tribal fishing doc, and the Windjammer, that has been sunk since 2009 and is impeding planning for a potential clam garden site. The workgroup will convene late July for a mid-year check in on removals to date, review the budget, and discuss next priorities. Planning is also ongoing for a potential derelict vessel turn in event in Spring 2024 co-hosted with the Makah Tribe and DNR.

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: Commission staff facilitated a virtual Transboundary Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone Workgroup meeting. The meeting covered ways to conduct vessel monitoring efforts.

Operations

Staff:

Budget: The funding for MRCs from the 2021-23 state budget has now expired. Any funding not used by MRCs is no longer available. State funding included in a kelp proviso for 2023-25 started as of July 1, 2023. Commission staff is working with kelp partners to execute grant agreements. This includes Samish Indian Nation, Puget Sound Restoration Fund, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Reef Check Foundation, and Squaxin Island Tribe. An interagency agreement for green crab trapping activities coming to the Commission via the WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife is underway and expected to be fully executed soon. This is also state funding for the July 2023-June 2025 period.

Meetings Attended

Allie attended: Skagit Talks Radio Interview with WCC 7/5; Green Crab collaboration meeting with Padilla Bay 7/5; San Juan County MRC Meeting 7/6; Green crab collaboration meeting with Padilla Bay 7/7; MAC Group meeting 7/12; Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone Workgroup 7/13; Green crab meeting with WDFW 7/13; WCC Green Crab Field



Commission staff highlights - [July 2023]

Work/Training Week 7/17-7/20; Interview with Northern Light Newspaper 7/24; Green crab meeting with WDFW 7/24

Dana attended: NWSC Science Advisory Committee in person meeting 6/29; Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone Workgroup 7/13; MRC Derelict Vessel Workgroup meeting 7/24

Jeff attended: Snohomish County MRC Meeting 07/19

Leah attended: Green Crab Field Work 7/5-7/7; Green Crab collaboration meeting with Padilla Bay 7/5; Green Crab meeting with WDFW 7/24

Lucas attended: NWSC Science Advisory Committee in person meeting 6/29; Green Crab collaboration meeting with Padilla Bay 7/5; Rep. Larsen staff meeting 7/6; Green crab collaboration meeting with Padilla Bay 7/7; Shoreline resilience meeting with Ecology 7/11; MAC Group meeting 7/12; Swinomish vessel removal media planning meeting 7/12; Sen. Murray staff meeting 7/13; Green crab meeting with WDFW 7/13; Sen. Murray staff meeting 7/20; Derelict vessel workgroup meeting 7/24; External Relations meeting 7/19

Sasha attended: NWSC Science Advisory Committee in person meeting 6/29; External Relations 7/19; MRC Derelict Vessel Workgroup meeting 7/24

Caitlyn attended: San Juan County MRC Meeting 07/06; Executive Committee Meeting 07/17; Derelict Vessel Workgroup Meeting 07/24; NW Straits Commission Meeting 07/28

Jessica attended: External Relations Committee Meeting 7/5 & 7/19; San Juan County MRC Meeting 7/06; Padilla Bay Staff Meeting 7/11; NW Straits Commission Meeting 7/28



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

Attendees

Committee Members: Alan Clark, Nan McKay, Julia Parrish, Jude Apple, Tim Ellis

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

Marine Program: Dana updated the Committee on the revised draft of the NW Straits Commission Marine Program description that was shared with the Committee in April 2023. The updated draft incorporates the feedback and suggestions from the Committee. The Committee reached consensus in moving forward with bringing the updated and revised Marine Program draft to the NW Straits Commission for final review and adoption.

Strategic Plan: The NW Straits Initiative strategic plan is up for renewal in 2024. Lucas shared his thoughts about how to proceed with strategic planning around benchmarks, which are in the draft NWS Commission reauthorization bill. In the past, the NW Straits Initiative created a Strategic Planning Committee to assist plan development.

The Committee discussed several ideas of utilizing benchmarks in connection with the themes that are in the current strategic plan. The Committee agreed that a planning committee would be helpful in crafting the new plan. A strategic planning discussion could also be brought to the 2024 NWSI retreat. Lucas will begin thinking about forming a strategic planning committee.

NWSI Structure: The Committee continued its conversation from past meetings about NWSI structure and areas of opportunity to improve NWSC-MRC-NWSF collaboration. Lucas shared that he is talking with Don Hunger and they are pursuing joint NWSC-MRC-NWSF staff meetings to build connections across the Initiative. The first meeting will be held in September 2023. The Committee shared that they would like to continue identifying and defining what effective communication looks like within the NW Straits Initiative, avenues for improving communication and engagement strategies internally, and defining the role of each NW Straits Initiative member organization.

NWSC Marine Program Description

The NWSC Marine Program has three focus areas: 1) Local MRC projects and programs, 2) Regional MRC projects and programs, and 3) Broadscale regional initiatives. The role of the NWSC in each of these areas is described below. The marine program exists to support the NWS Initiative mission and vision. The roles of the NWSC Marine Program may vary by project and staff capacity but are generally outlined below.

- 1. Local MRC projects and programs:** This work is carried out by MRCs in their local communities, sometimes in collaboration with other partners. Current examples include: Port Susan MSA update (Island & Snohomish MRCs); Rain Garden installation and management (Jefferson & Skagit MRCs); Beach Seine with kids (Whatcom MRC); Pigeon Guillemot monitoring (Clallam MRC); and Plastic Free Salish Sea (San Juan MRC).
 - a. NWSC Marine Program role:
 - i. Provide technical assistance to MRCs during the project development and planning phase, provide input on project proposals, review reports, and communicate with project leads as needed.
 - ii. Lead Science Advisory Committee MRC project review and input process to support advancing sound science in MRC projects.
 - iii. Provide support, where possible and applicable, to MRCs to ensure projects and data are integrated in the broader recovery context and community.
 - iv. Assist in supporting communications through newsletter articles, publications, reports, Story Maps, videos, etc.
 - v. Provide educational opportunities and resources for MRCs on issues of concern, such as symposia (e.g., climate symposium series), training/workshop opportunities, or assistance with compiling resources.
- 2. Regional MRC projects and programs:** These projects and programs are rooted in MRC priorities and have grown to include multiple MRCs. Regional projects are typically centrally coordinated by the Marine Program and may involve coordination with additional partners. Current examples include: Forage fish spawn surveys, bull kelp monitoring via kayak, Olympia oyster restoration, and development of voluntary no-anchor zones.
 - a. NWSC Marine Program role:
 - i. Track MRC ideas and concerns, evaluate program management feasibility, and identify strategies for multi-MRC engagement.
 - ii. Provide project/program coordination, implementation, and training support across multiple MRCs.
 - iii. Establish and maintain external partnerships to support regional programs. For example, recruit technical support and integrate programs and related data/outcomes into regional initiatives.
 - iv. Communicate data and outcomes back to volunteers (e.g., kelp monitoring data workshops).
 - v. Considerations for what constitutes a regional project or program include, but are not limited to:

1. Are multiple MRCs taking part in, or looking to take part in the project or program?
 2. Are there regional project or program coordination needs around planning, shared methods/protocols, and synthesis/analysis/reporting?
 3. Do NWSC Marine Program staff have the capacity to provide regional coordination and the applicable knowledge to provide technical assistance, or the capacity to bring in partners (who also have capacity) with expertise?
3. **Broadscale leadership on regional marine priorities:** NWSC Marine Program can serve as a regional leader/convener on select NWSC priorities. Priorities may be emerging issues or other regional needs that cannot be fulfilled by other organizations. Recent examples include authorship and coordination of the Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan, convening agency representatives to discuss statewide kelp policy issues, derelict vessel removal, and green crab trapping coordination in north Puget sound.
 - a. NWSC Marine Program role:
 - i. Convene partners around regional initiatives or emerging issues.
 - ii. Represent NWSC on regional recovery efforts.
 - iii. Pursue opportunistic grants to engage in the issue at hand.
 - iv. Co-create projects/programs/initiatives with MRCs and NWSC and leverage external partnerships with subject matter expertise to carry out proposed work.
 - v. Considerations for NWSC engagement and leadership include, but are not limited to:
 1. Does the NWSC staff have the capacity and expertise to lead or engage?
 2. Does the topic fit within the scope of available NWSC funding, or are additional funds needed?
 3. Is this a priority of the NWSC and is there a clear connection to the mission and strategic plan?
 4. Is there a clear niche the NWSC can fill and is there a clear and unique value provided from NWSC leadership and/or involvement?

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: July / 2023

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- White Paper – SLR/Resiliency
- Shore Friendly Outreach

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

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

Previous Meetings/Events:

- June 30: Cornet Bay & Hoypus Point Stewardship Event

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- July 21: Cornet Bay & Hoypus Point Stewardship Event
- August 1: MRC Meeting Hybrid
- August 30: Cornet Bay & Hoypus Point Stewardship Event
- September 9: Bowman Bay MRC Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

Funding updates (newly awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): WA State Parks is providing a water truck for watering Cornet Bay and Hoypus Point.

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, and Hidden Beach.

Bull Kelp Surveys: The new team members for Hoypus and Possession Point are getting set up and ready for their first survey.

Port Susan MSA: We are working to get the contract approved through the county so we can get the Port Susan Brochure designed to promote the Port Susan project and proper shoreline stewardship.

Stewardship – Cornet Bay: We hosted our second stewardship event of the summer. The site is looking very good overall. There was a big patch of weeds that we focused our energy on and got most of it removed. Watering at Cornet and Hoypus is taking place weekly now thanks to the use of WA State Parks watering trucks. Our next stewardship event will be out at Hoypus on July 21.

Water Quality Testing: None at this time.

Shore Friendly Outreach: In partnership with Ann Prusha, the Shore Friendly Coordinator for Island County, we are getting a workshop planned for October 2023 and developing packets to go to realtors' offices for shoreline homeowners. Additionally, we have received multiple proposals for our Shoreline Armoring Survey. Our hope is to get a contract signed in the next few weeks to start work.

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.):

Advisory - White Paper: Our MRC in collaboration with the Island County Commissioners are working to develop a white paper featuring Climate Resilience and Sea Level Rise. Barbara Bennett is taking lead and spending countless hours working through the details. We will be asking multiple partners and departments to review and give feedback before we present this to the Board of Island County Commissioners this fall.

Advisory – Crosswalk: Our MRC in collaboration with the Island County Planning Department will be working to develop a crosswalk from the Comprehensive Management Plan to the Shoreline Management Plan to cover important topics like Sea Level Rise and Bluff stability. The Comprehensive Plan will be worked on over the next couple of years.

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



Hoypus Point Watering Truck

Photo by Kelly Zupich



Hoypus Point Restoration Site

Photo by Kelly Zupich

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: July 2023

Submitted by: Monica Montgomery

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

- The MRC contracted Hood Canal Oyster Co. to deliver 1,200 bags of clean Pacific oyster shell to the Powerlines Site in South Discovery Bay. With just one workday, about half of the bags are now emptied. We anticipate just one or two more workdays to finalize spreading shell here and look forward to next year's population survey.
- The MRC conducted its first kelp linear extent survey, spanning from Beckett Point in Discovery Bay to Point Hudson, along the north and east shores of Marrowstone Island, and through the Port Townsend Ship Canal, documenting bull kelp beds that are not recorded in the WA DNR Marine Vegetation Atlas.
- The ROV derelict crab pot removal team resumed removal operations on July 11, 12, and 19, recovering a total of 16 pots to date and training new robotics students on operating the ROV in marine waters.

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

June 20 – MRC executive committee meeting

June 29 – Forage fish survey at Adelma Beach

July 1 – Dock outreach targeting recreational crabbers at Port Townsend Bay

July 6 – Hood Canal Oyster Co. delivered 1200 bags of shell at Powerlines Site (South Discovery Bay)

July 6 – ROV debrief meeting

July 11 – Check-in meeting with interns

July 11 – ROV derelict crab pot removal operations in Port Townsend Bay

July 12 – ROV derelict crab pot removal operations in Port Townsend Bay

July 13 – Rain garden work party at Franklin/Adams

July 13 – Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone meeting

July 14 – Rain garden work party behind WSU Office

July 14 – Executive Committee meeting

July 15 – First kelp survey at North Beach

July 17 – Spread shell at Powerlines Site

July 17 – MRC DEI subcommittee meeting and meet and greet with consultant

July 18 – Kelp linear extent survey (Beckett Point around Marrowstone Island to Port Townsend Channel)

July 18 – MRC social gathering at Dabob Bay

July 19 – ROV derelict crab pot removal operations in Port Townsend Bay

July 20 – Communications meeting with Jessica (NWSC) re: ROV StoryMap

July 21 – Forage fish survey at Dabob Bay

Upcoming Events/Meetings

July 25 – Rain garden work party at the NW Maritime Center

July 26 – ROV derelict crab pot removal operations in Port Townsend Bay

July 31 – Spread shell at Powerlines Site

August 1 – Spread shell at Powerlines Site

August 1 – MRC monthly meeting

August 12 or 13 – Second and last kelp survey at North Beach

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) sampled on June 29 with the help of one volunteer (Cindy).
- **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The Project Lead (Sarah) surveyed on July 21 with the help of the MRC Coordinator, 1 MRC member (Troy), and 1 community volunteer (Anne).
- **Kelp:** The project lead, Solenne, conducted a kayak-based survey with the MRC Coordinator and 3 community volunteers (Yewah, Declan, Jonathan) on July 15, coupled with drone photos by John Gussman. On June 18, Solenne, the MRC Coordinator, MRC Assistant intern (Amelia), and 1 MRC member (Betsy) conducted a linear extent survey spanning from Beckett Point to Point Hudson, the north and east shores of Marrowstone Island, and within the Port Townsend Ship Canal to document observations of bull kelp presence. The MRC documented bull kelp in areas that are not recorded in the WA DNR Marine Vegetation Atlas, e.g., between Beckett Point and Cape George.
- **Storm surge monitoring:** The MRC Coordinator is finalizing hiring paperwork with the selected intern and working on determining a delayed start date.

2. Rain Gardens:

- The rain garden intern, Isabelle, organized rain garden work parties on July 13 (Franklin/Adams in Port Townsend), attended by 1 MRC member (Frank), and on July 14 (WSU office in Port Hadlock), attended by 1 MRC member (Janette) and 3 community volunteers (Pam, Jesse, Allison). Volunteers did some light weeding, added supplemental plants, and mulched.

3. Education & Outreach:

- On July 1 (opening day of the recreational crabbing season), the crabber outreach intern, Ally, along with 2 MRC members (Roy, Troy) conducted dock outreach at the Port Townsend Bay boat ramp. They handed out 27 crabber outreach packets and reported positive interactions and interest in the educational messaging and ROV pot removal efforts. Most interactions were with Jefferson County residents and seasoned crabbers.
- Ally is finalizing assessment of surveys from the June 15 crabber workshop.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- On July 6, Hood Canal Oyster Co. delivered 1,200 bags of clean Pacific oyster shell to the Powerlines Site in South Discovery Bay. On July 17, the MRC Coordinator, MRC Assistant intern, and 2 MRC members (Neil, Gordon) worked on emptying nearly half the bags and spreading the shell. The MRC Assistant, Amelia, is working on organizing volunteer workdays for July 31 and August 1 to spread shell from the remaining bags.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- Project lead, Troy, attended the July 13 Salish Sea No-Anchor Zones meeting.

6. Mapping Lost Crab Pots:

- The MRC and Sea Dragons resumed removal operations on July 11, 12 and 19 (closed days of the recreational crabbing season), removing 3 additional pots (a total of 16), while providing opportunities for new students to work with the ROV.

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 (Nam, Neil, Roy; MRC Coordinator, Bob-WSU, Kara-Strait ERN LIO) met on July 17, hosting a meet and greet with a local consulting company to explore their services and training opportunities for the MRC to learn, self-assess, and adapt its practices and processes to better represent and serve East Jefferson County in its marine conservation efforts.

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

July 6 – Hood Canal Oyster Co. delivered 1200 bags of shell at Powerlines Site (South Discovery Bay)



Photo by Neil Harrington



Photo by Neil Harrington



Photo by Neil Harrington

July 14 – Rain garden work party behind the WSU Office



Photo by Isabelle Jones



Photo by Isabelle Jones

July 15 – First kelp survey at North Beach



Drone photo by John Gussman



Drone photo by John Gussman



Photo by John Gussman



Photo by John Gussman

July 17 – Shell spread workday at the Powerlines Site



Photo by Monica Montgomery



Neil, Amelia, Gordon – Photo by Monica Montgomery



Nearly half the bags emptied and shell spread – Photo by Monica Montgomery

July 18 – Kelp linear extent survey (Beckett Point around Marrowstone Island to Port Townsend Channel)



Kelp bed at Beckett Point – Photo by Monica Montgomery



Solenne, Betsy, Amelia – Photo by Monica Montgomery

July 19 – ROV derelict crab pot removal operations in Port Townsend Bay



William, Oscar, and Logan prepping the ROV to dive – Photo by Monica Montgomery



Logan training a new student, Kevin, with the ROV – Photo by Monica Montgomery



Sea Dragons (Everest, Oscar, Niko, Logan) prepped and ready for the next dive of the day – Photo by Monica Montgomery

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: July 2023

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

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

- SJCMRC has recommend Dave Checkley to join the committee. Dave's background as a biological and fisheries oceanographer and professor at the Scripps Institute makes him a desirable candidate to join the committee.
- Plastic Free July is underway with the launch of Adopt-a-Road, sister program to Adopt-a-Beach, unleashing a public plastic film recycling bin at the local market, and a social media campaign to highlight the importance of reducing plastic consumption.

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

With Phil Green and Megan Dethier finishing their terms at the end of June, three candidates were interviewed to fill in their wake. All three had interesting backgrounds and areas of expertise ranging from commercial whale watching to biological fisheries and oceanography. Dave Checkley has been recommended to join the committee. The solo remaining position will remain open until filled, as the committee has decided diversity amongst the islands to be a priority.

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

- NWSC Meeting on Lopez Island – June 23rd
- Government to Government Training - June 23rd
- Plastic Free Salish Sea subcommittee meeting – June 27th
- MRC/CAG/LIO Meeting – July 6th
- Oil Spill Prevention and Response subcommittee meeting – July 10th

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

No new funding to report for this month.

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

Dock talks have been continuing as the summer season ramps up. Many folks are recognizing the flag, asking great questions, and engaging well with our outreach efforts. The last of the flags for sale went out to Fisheries Supply and Marine Education and Research Society in BC. July 3rd was the busiest day yet out at Roche Harbor. In fact, later in the afternoon several orcas swam into the harbor and flags went up! Two more outings are planned for July and MRC members will assist with outreach.

Plastic Free Salish Sea will be launching Adopt-a-road, sister program to adopt a beach, inspiring islanders to steward a roadway gathering trash and debris. Plastic Free July is underway, and we are putting outreach materials on Facebook and Instagram to raise awareness of the importance of reducing plastic consumption. The plastic film recycling bin at Friday Harbor Marketplace will be ready to go at the end of the month.

San Juan County Department of Environmental Stewardship staff, with the help and support of MRC members, wrapped up derelict vessel patrols in June before peak boating season. The final patrol on June 14th revisited about 90% of all the areas previously surveyed over the last 8 months to get a final update on the status of as many vessels in our database as possible (we also added two more vessels to the database on this patrol). This means we have a fully-updated comprehensive DV database heading

into the peak summer months, when we switch to a more reactive approach (responding to emails and phone calls) until restarting patrols in September/October for the 2023-2024 season. Heading into peak boating season, our final tally for our efforts over the last 8 months of patrols: 5 vessels of concern removed, 11 VoCs resolved, 12 remaining VoCs (tracking down owners), and 23 vessels remaining on our watchlist.

The oil spill prevention and response subcommittee met on July 10th. Discussion revolved around funding to help update educational materials and signage at marine fueling stations. The MRC has plans to increase efforts for safe fueling practices and will incorporate these activities into the workplan for next year. Connecting with fuel dock management and seeing what their needs are around safe fueling practices are the next steps for 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.):

We have some good news about the Jackson's Beach piling removal project. Permits have been approved and the county is ready to secure a contractor through the established bid process. Once a contractor has been selected removal activities will occur during the fall 2023 fish window as specified by state and federal permits. The removal of 100+ creosote coated pilings and overwater structures will significantly improve known habitat for forage fish.

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



Marta Green tagging a DV. Photo Credit: Tyler Davis

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: July/2023

Submitted by: Tracy/Diane

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

- European Green Crab outreach letters and rack cards have been mailed to 505 Samish and Padilla Bays shoreline property owners in collaboration with 8 organizations and tribes.
- MRC-Salish Sea School Intern, Dana Flerchinger and four students grades 7th-12th, are collecting forage fish survey data at 3 locations at the Fidalgo Bay Resort through Sept. They are finding lots of eggs so far including some mystery eggs they hope to identify.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): The MRC voted to make the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Cynthia Nielsen to the MRC.

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

- **July 13-** Monthly MRC meeting. Dana Flerchinger presented an update on the MRC-Salish Sea School Intern project and Jason Morgan presented an update on the joint NWSF/MRC projects in Skagit County.
- **Aug 26-** Fidalgo Bay Day at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes from 11am to 3pm.

Funding updates (newly - awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments):
No updates.

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

- Salish Sea Stewards: The advisory committee is working on establishing internal rules and procedures. The kick-off meeting for planning the 2024 Stewards training will be in October. About 1/3 of the stewards training spaces are filled already!
- 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. Friends of Skagit Beaches will be running the passport activity and the coloring contest. Around 25 organizations plan to have educational booths. There will also be a touch tank, giant whale skull, beach seining demonstration, an eco-friendly mermaid, Samish storytelling, a word scavenger hunt, and crafts with QR codes that translate the animal's name into Samish language. 2 restaurants will be serving complimentary chowder, and Taylor Shellfish will have complimentary samples of oysters and mussels cooked on the grill by volunteers. We're in the final stretch, getting food permits, finishing up with preparing supplies, and getting passport questions.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Surveys continue at the 3 Index sites. Forage Fish surveys at Bowman Bay are scheduled in conjunction with Bowman Bay plant maintenance work parties. We bring the interpretation stand and do the sample processing as well. We have not found any evidence of spawning at Bowman Bay this year. July is the last survey at Kukutali.
- MRC- Salish Sea School Intern: The Intern, Dana Flerchinger, and four students have begun surveying forage fish at 3 locations along the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort: shaded, partially-shaded, and full-sun sites. Students (7th grade, 8th grade, 9th grade, and 12th grade) have been sampling, processing with the vortex separation method, and looking under the microscope. Found lots of eggs so far. Some hatching! One of the students found some mystery eggs and is currently working on identifying them. They will continue sampling through September and compile the findings into a summary report. One of the kids in the intern program participated in a

modified forage fish survey several years ago with Island View Elementary. Another kid in the intern program is planning to attend Rice University for their biology program. It is nice to see the impacts of these projects – it makes it worth all the hard work.

- Kids on the Beach: No update. Planning for the fall program will likely start later this summer.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: June and July Kelp surveys have been completed at all 3 sites: Coffin Rocks, Shannon Point, and Biz Point. The kelp bulbs at Shannon Point were sparsely spread out, but healthy. The Biz Point kelp bed condition was similar to last year's survey. Kelp bed at Coffin Rocks appears to be very healthy.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: The Bowman Bay Stewardship Days are in full swing! Since June 8th, the Northwest Straits Foundation, along with MRC volunteers, has been diligently watering and weeding every Thursday. The team has divided the area into six zones, allowing us to systematically remove weeds such as grass, dandelion, blackberry, and non-native species, zone by zone. Every Thursday we have managed to get 1 to 4 contractor bags of weeds. We would love to have more hands out there from 9 am to 12 pm every Thursday.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: The WDFW PSRF dive teams successfully outplanted 4900 juvenile abalone (1- and 2-year-old cohorts) to 6 sites in late April. 4 sites were in San Juan County and 2 new sites in Skagit County waters. Collected new broodstock for spawning in the hatchery. The first induced spawn produced 75,000 larvae. Field work is now complete and data is currently being analyzed. The report will be finalized in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: On June 20th, four Puget Sound Restoration Staff led 7 volunteers on a successful survey of the eastern side of Fidalgo Bay. The oyster population appears to be doing well. Two more surveys will be held August 2nd and 3rd. Volunteers also surveyed the seed plots planted at Cap Sante 5 years ago, but they did not find a single oyster.
- European Green Crab Outreach: The 2023 EGC Plan is to target outreach to landowners along shorelines off Chuckanut, Edison, Samish and Padilla Bays where there has been an increased detection of EGCs. In collaboration with many co-authors, the EGC Homeowner Outreach letter, along with WDFW EGC identification rack card and wallet card, was finalized and mailed to 505 shoreline property owners. A big thank you to: Skagit MRC, NWSC, WDFW, DNR, Sea Grant, PBNERR, Taylor Shellfish, Samish Indian Nation and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community leaders for their endorsement and signature on the letter.
- School Rain Garden: No update. Work is anticipated to begin this fall.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle: Project is on hold until the grant extension is confirmed.
- Clayton Beach Restoration: The restoration project is on-pause until we hear back from the railroad. Even though none of the workers will be on the railroad property, State Parks does not want to move forward without the railroad's consent. Pre-restoration monitoring is moving forward. NWSF staff have been completing snorkel surveys of juvenile salmonids. The site is currently only accessible by boat because a footbridge is under construction, cutting off land access. However, due to windy weather conditions, it has been challenging to kayak and some surveys have been cancelled. Once we have foot access, forage fish surveys will be scheduled.
- Crabber outreach and Derelict crab pot removal – Crabber outreach materials have been delivered to 9 businesses in Mount Vernon, Anacortes, and Burlington. In 2022 the NWSF removed 335 pots in the Anacortes area, the majority of which were commercial pots. This year surveys found 230 derelict pots with the majority of gear loss caused by vessel conflict. We are trying to figure out how to reduce loss. 121 derelict pots in the lower Samish Bay area have been identified for removal this 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.): NA

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

MRC-Salish Sea School Intern – Forage Fish Survey Research Project
Photo Credit: Dana Flerchinger



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: July 2023

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The story map for the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area is complete. Next the Snohomish MRC webpages will be updated, and the story map added.
- Crabber and oil spill outreach occurred on July 1-2 and 8-9 at the Everett Marina. Volunteers reached 554 people and handed out both crabber gear and oil spill kits.

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. Interviews for new members are expected to occur this fall.

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

Joycelyn Blue and Ariel Shiley went out with the Beach Watchers to learn the Beach Environmental Assessment, Communication & Health (BEACH) sampling process on June 26.

Joycelyn Blue and Ariel Shiley participated in a Kayak Safety Basic Rescues course on June 28.

Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue met with Jonathan Robinson on June 27 to debrief the 2023 WSU Beach Watchers training.

Elisa Dawson participated in the June 29 Kelp and Eelgrass Working Group meeting.

Elisa Dawson, Joycelyn Blue, and Ariel Shiley met with other Snohomish County staff on July 17 to discuss current shoreline monitoring efforts specific to shoreline modifications and marine vegetation.

The MRC held their monthly meeting on July 19.

Elisa Dawson attended the presentation of the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)'s Vision 2050 Award for the Meadowdale Beach restoration on July 19.

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 met on June 28th and gave feedback on the final draft of the story map. After a few final details the consultant delivered the final product. Next, the MRC webpage on Port Susan will be updated and the Story Map will be added to the page.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): A contractor tour was conducted on July 10. SWM is working on getting bids for the removals from contractors, and removal is expected to occur in August-September.

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 July 20 and 24.

Nearshore Restoration: Monitoring Signage for Meadowdale has been completed and printed. Signs will be installed in kiosks in late July. The next monitoring team meeting is July 26.

Outreach: Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. The Jetty Island beach cleanup was completed on July 7 in partnership with the City of Everett. Over 50 volunteers collected 123 lbs of trash.

Crabber Outreach/Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: Crabber and oil spill outreach occurred on July 1-2 and 8-9 at the Everett Marina. Volunteers reached 554 people and handed out both crabber gear and oil spill kits.

Marine Water Quality: SWM staff are scheduled to join on data collection cruises with ORCA students throughout the summer.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring: Kelp monitoring has been scheduled for summer 2023. Schedule below:

July we monitor all of our kayak-based sites.

July 13 Mukilteo. Meet at Lighthouse Boat Ramp at 7:30AM

July 17 Edmonds. Meet at Brackett's Landing at 10AM

July 18 Meadowdale. Meet at Brackett's Landing at 9:30AM. This day is a long paddle.

Dates we're holding as backup in case of weather and needing to change plans are 7/14 and 7/19.

August we monitor anywhere we found a kelp bed (typically only Edmonds) a second time by Kayak. Then we go out by motorboat to monitor Hat Island.

August 14 Hat Island vessel monitoring

August 15 is back up for Hat Island

August 28 Edmonds. Meet at Brackett's at 8AM.

Hold July 29 and July 30 as backup dates in case of any changes needed.

September we will just monitor Hat Island by motorboat. This comes after a request from Tulalip Tribes after they did some observations and found that the bed might develop more after August.

September 26th we plan to monitor Hat Island again.

Holding September 27th as a backup date.

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:

- Forage Fish Sampling July 20 and 24
- MRC Annual Picnic Aug 16 at Meadowdale Beach Park (in place of regular meeting)

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



Beach Cleanup on Jetty Island. Photo Credit: Snohomish MRC.



Crabber Outreach in Everett. Photo Credit: Snohomish County MRC

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: JULY 2023

Submitted by: Dana Flerchinger

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

- Peak Sustainability has been hired as the social marketing campaign consultant for eelgrass preservation in Wildcat Cove in Larrabee State Park. MRC staff and Peak Sustainability had their kick-off meeting on July 13th and will be working together closely on the project.
- Western Washington University began drone surveys in Wildcat Cove on July 14th and will continue monthly flights through September to assess potential changes to eelgrass meadows throughout the summer.

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

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

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

- MRC retreat planning for the fall has begun. Staff are working with Triangle Associates and MRC members to determine retreat timeline, outcomes, and goals. Current topics of interest include membership roles and responsibilities, the project selection process, why members joined the committee, how to build on membership activity, and individual interest in MRC projects.
- Austin Rose participated in a combined review team of community and technical reviewers to provide review of local salmon recovery projects. The team created a ranked list of recommendations, and because more money was allocated this year, all projects were funded. The projects included a South Fork riparian acquisition project by Whatcom Land Trust, Middle Fork Nooksack Creek Reach design 3 and 5 via Lummi Nation, and North Fork Nooksack Below Boulder-Lone Tree Reach design by the Nooksack tribe.
- The Beach Stewards program needs more volunteers to keep up with demand, especially at Birch Bay State Park.
- The MRC will not be meeting in August due to summer vacations

What's the Point Event

- The MRC participated in the "What's the Point Event" at Point Whitehorn. Several members of the community attended the event and engaged with the beach naturalists.

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):

- Marine Vegetation – Eelgrass at Wildcat Cove, Larrabee State Park
The MRC has finalized contracts with Peak Sustainability, Western Washington University (WWU), and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). David Wallin at WWU completed the first drone survey for eelgrass assessment in Wildcat Cove on July 14th just before the opening of the crabbing season and will be conducting monthly drone surveys through September. MRC staff also had a kick-off meeting with Peak Sustainability to determine the social marketing strategy for eelgrass preservation at Wildcat Cove. DNR will be conducting a single and multibeam survey in late August to assess eelgrass abundance and bathymetry within Wildcat Cove.
- Chuckanut Pollution Identification and Correction Program (PIC)

MRC staff met with staff from Whatcom County Health and the Whatcom County PIC program about the potential of reopening N. Chuckanut Bay for recreational shellfish harvest. The county will be reaching out to the WA Department of Health (DOH) soon to share current data and discuss options in an attempt to get a conditional opening on the north side of the bay. In the meantime, MRC staff need to replace some of the sites based on inaccessibility and are looking into seasonal analysis and the potential for source tracking (using eDNA). County Health also provided a map of known OSS failures/pollution sources that could be impacting water quality and will continue to ensure folks are getting septic systems evaluated.

- Olympia Oyster Restoration

There have been MRC member discussions indicating support for continuation of Olympia Oyster plots in Chuckanut Bay, while also attempting to establish potential new plots in Drayton Harbor. To investigate potential plots in Drayton Harbor, the MRC plans to contact Brian Allen with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund at the end of the summer when he has availability. In the meantime, the MRC is continuing ceramic tile placement at 2 sites in Chuckanut Bay to assess for Olympia Oyster larval recruitment. Dana Flerchinger analyzed the June tiles and no Olympia Oyster larval recruitment was observed.

- Harmful Algal Bloom (HABs) Monitoring

MRC staff have continued to assist with weekly HABs monitoring in Semiahmoo Maria and Birch Bay Marina. Dana Flerchinger has begun training on phytoplankton identification so she is able to assist the team with analysis.

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.