

agenda

Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission

Date: August 25, 2023
Time: 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

To join the Zoom meeting, <u>CLICK HERE</u>. Meeting ID: 836 7622 8843 Meeting Passcode: 874471. For audio conference, dial: 253-215-8782 or <u>click here</u> 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.

Decision items for Commission review:

- MRC Grant proposals (included in premeeting packet) Seeking Commission approval
- July meeting minutes (included in premeeting packet)

10:00 — 10:10	Welcome and introductions	Tim Ellis, Chair
	Tribal acknowledgement	
	July Meeting Minutes Approval	
	April and May Meeting Minutes Approval*	
	*These minutes were previously reviewed but not recorded	
	in minutes as approved.	
10:10-10:20	Remarks from 40 th District Representative Debra	Representative
	Lekanoff	Debra Lekanoff
10:20-10:40	Committee Updates	
	Executive Committee	Alan Clark
	 Science Advisory Committee 	Julia Parrish
	External Relations Committee	Nan McKay



agenda

10:40-11:00	Business Items		
	 Conference Planning Update 	Caitlyn Blair	
	DEI Update	Allie Simpson / Caitlyn	
		Blair	
	Senator Murray Visit	Lucas Hart	
	 Social Marketing for Voluntary No-Anchor Zones 	Sasha Horst	
11:00-11:15	2023-2025 MRC Grant Approval	Sasha Horst	
11:15-11:20	Northwest Straits Foundation	Don Hunger	
11:20-11:25	NW Indian Fisheries Commission Cecilia Gobin		
11:25-11:30	Puget Sound Partnership update	Laura Blackmore	
11:30-11:50	MRC Reports	MRC	
11100 11100		Representatives	
11:50-11:55	Meeting highlights and action items	All	
11:55-12:00	Public Comment	All	
12:00 PM	Adjourn		

30-minutes post-meeting open discussion – join if you'd like. Next meeting: In Person at the Coupeville Library, Friday September 29, 2023



July 28, 2023 10:00 AM-3:00 PM 10441 Bayview Edison Road, Mount Vernon, Padilla Bay Reserve Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Ginny Broadhurst, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Tom Cowan, Elsa Schwartz (Island), Nan McKay, Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Laura Blackmore, Julia Parrish

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger, Ron Wesen (County Commissioner), Jen Johnson (Skagit), Jodie Toft (Puget Sound Restoration Fund), Hilary Hayford (Puget Sound Restoration Fund), Pete Haase, Craig Smith (San Juan)

Absent: Alan Clark (Clallam), Cecilia Gobin, Christina Koons (San Juan)

<u>Welcome and Introductions:</u> Tim welcomed the group with introductions and the tribal acknowledgement.

The Commission approved the June Commission meeting minutes by consensus.

Pete Haase, Skagit MRC and Padilla Bay Foundation board member welcomed Commissioners and attendees to the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Remarks from County Commissioner Ron Wesen: Commissioner Ron Wesen shared his thanks to the Commission for inviting him to attend this meeting. He shared that he has been a Commissioner in Skagit County for 15 years, and he is proud to support the NW Straits Commission, Skagit MRC, and the partnerships that have been fostered during his time as a County Commissioner.

Skagit MRC Presentation: Diane Hennebert with the Skagit MRC presented on the MRC's Mt. Erie Elementary School Rain Garden. This project connected many partners such as the NW Straits Foundation, Boeing, the Anacortes School District, and others to implement a rain garden at Mt. Erie elementary school. Diane shared the process of what the implementation looked like, from excavation with the City of Anacortes, to the planting party with Azusa Garden Centre and the NW Straits Foundation. Diane also worked with the Skagit Watershed Council to coordinate education and outreach for the students at Mt. Erie elementary school. Diane mentioned that some of the lessons learned from this project included improving communication with the school district maintenance staff and to set up a regular volunteer schedule to keep up with the long-



term care of the rain garden. Overall, Diane shared that the work was worth seeing the community of students that came together to participate in a project that allowed them to be outside the classroom.

For more information about the Mt. Erie elementary school rain garden, contact Diane Hennebert (diane@cityofanacortes.org) and see the link to the presentation here: (Mt. Erie Rain Garden Presentation)

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

Introducing Antonio as our new Veterans Conservation Corps/Marine Nearshore Tech: We welcome Antonio back as the VCC/Marine Nearshore Tech and we are looking forward to his return on staff at the NW Straits Commission.

Green crab outreach and trapping efforts: Allie updated the group on the ongoing European green crab outreach and trapping efforts. Allie participated in a local radio interview with Skagit Talks where she highlighted the impacts the WCC Crew has had on trapping efforts and the experiences they gained through being part of invasive species trapping and removal. Link to Allie's interview here: (Skagit Valley College Community Radio Archive (ksvr.org)). The episode is from Thursday July 6, 2023.

Allie and Leah shared the work that the NW Straits Commission has been participating in for green crab trapping efforts with the multi-agency coordination group. This was the first time they presented to this group.

Recently, the NW Straits Commission worked with the Skagit MRC on creating an outreach letter that targets landowners. The letter was sent to 500 landowners in Skagit County who own shoreline in Fidalgo Bay, Samish Bay, and on the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's reservation. Nine people from the Skagit MRC, Taylor Shellfish, Samish Indian Nation, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Washington Sea Grant, WA Department of Natural Resources, and the NW Straits Commission collectively signed the letter, which came with outreach cards. A special thanks to Lynne Wenberg Davidson with the Skagit MRC and her great work assisting with the outreach to landowners.

Allie also shared that WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has created green crab outreach materials in Spanish that are available upon request. Please contact Allie Simpson (simpson@nwstraits.org) if you would like these materials.



Leah updated the NW Straits Commission on the number of green crabs caught. The NW Straits Commission has caught 11 in Chuckanut Bay, 15 in Birch Bay, 103 in Drayton Harbor, and 107 in Samish Bay. All green crab caught are frozen and sent to WA Sea Grant for research purposes.

MRC Grant Update: Sasha shared that the grant timeline is on schedule. Since the last NW Straits Commission meeting in June, we have submitted comments to the MRCs regarding their grant proposals for the next two-year cycle. MRCs are in the process of meeting with Sasha and Dana to discuss the remaining logistics and follow up questions, and Sasha will be compiling agreements for the \$192,000 that each MRC will receive per year for the next two years. This includes funding from EPA via the Puget Sound Partnership, and state funding from the 2023-25 biennium. For the NW Straits Commission meeting in August, all project proposals will be shared for review and approval by the Commission. Another set of grant agreements will follow to award NOAA funding to MRCs from the second round of Congressionally Directed Spending.

Derelict Vessel Update: Dana shared with the group that Congressionally Directed Spending funds are being used in 2023 to do derelict vessel removal. Derelict vessel removal at the NW Straits Commission was made possible through an interagency agreement with WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and a workgroup developed with tribal partners and all seven MRCs. To date, DNR has removed 9 out of 11 vessels prioritized by the workgroup. The remaining two on the list are scheduled for removal in August. One of the removed vessels, the Windjammer, was blocking the intertidal zone where the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community would like to install another clam garden. Jessica Owens created a video to showcase the importance of the removal of the Windjammer vessel. See the link here to the video: (Windjammer Vessel Removal July 2023).

Forage Fish Survey Training: Leah shared that Kate Olson and Phill Dionne from WDFW are hosting a Forage Fish Training on August 30 at Padilla Bay Reserve in the Stevens Center. The training will teach new volunteers about the program and protocols, and current volunteers are encouraged to attend as well. To sign up for this training, please use the following link: Forage Fish Suvey Training sign-up. Contact Leah Robison (robison@nwstraits.org) for more information.

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee: Lucas shared that the Executive Committee recommended adoption of the Marine Program Description. The Committee also discussed strategic planning and recommended formation of an ad hoc strategic planning committee. Lucas noted that a joint staff meeting for the NW Straits Commission, NW Straits Foundation, and MRCs will be held on September 6 at the Padilla Bay Stevens Center.



The NW Straits Commission discussed adoption of the proposed Marine Program Description. Tom Cowan noted the importance of the description for the future of collaboration within the NW Straits Initiative. The NW Straits Commission approved the Marine Program Description by consensus with the request that language be added to acknowledge coordination with partners such as the NW Straits Foundation.

External Relations Committee: Nan shared that the Committee continues to prioritize efforts to move forward with reauthorization and appropriations. The Committee is hoping Senator Cantwell will co-sponsor the reauthorization bill with Senator Murray.

The Committee is working on planning for Senator Patty Murray's visit the first week of August. Senator Murray is planning to do a site visit to Lone Tree at Swinomish on August 7. She is interested in hearing about the collaborative efforts between Swinomish Tribal Community and Skagit MRC.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia reported that the Committee met on June 29 at the University of WA in Seattle for an initial meeting to provide feedback on MRC project proposals. Julia shared that she is looking forward to the ways the Committee can assist MRC and NW Straits Commission staff with restructuring project reports to establish a simpler process for reporting on the projects. The Committee reviewed 15 proposals out of the total 46 that were submitted.

<u>Speed Date with a Scientist – Eyes on Kelp: Puget Sound Restoration Fund</u>

Jodie Toft and Hilary Hayford from the Puget Sound Restoration Fund presented on an initiative titled "Eyes on Kelp", which establishes bull kelp enhancement tools to continue monitoring and growing bull kelp in WA State. Bull kelp enhancement has been a vital tool for resource managers to consider the next steps in kelp conservation. This project began with a concern about bull kelp, as it is the only canopy forming kelp located inland in WA State.

In partnership with NOAA, MRCs, tribal nations, universities, the NW Straits Initiative, and other state agencies, the Puget Sound Restoration Fund initiated this project to connect existing work around kelp conservation and to expand the reach of current canopy kelp-focused projects. Index sites have been set up throughout the southern Salish Sea, establishing buoys with monitoring equipment, as well as annual scuba surveys of the index sites. The PSRF is hoping for this project to expand across transboundary waters into the northern Salish Sea in British Columbia. For more information on the "Eyes on Kelp" Initiative, please contact Jodie Toft



(<u>iodie@restorationfund.org</u>) or Hilary Hayford (<u>hilary@restorationfund.org</u>) and see the link to the slides for their presentation: (<u>Link to PSRF Presentation here</u>).

Partner Updates:

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura shared that the House bill for appropriations has allocated \$54 million for the Puget Sound Geographic Program. She also mentioned that the Senate bill has \$57 million for Puget Sound Geographic Program. Laura shared that the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund has appropriations at \$65 million.

NW Straits Foundation: Don shared that the Foundation has pulled a total of 550 derelict crab pots. Don, Brooke, Sasha, and Jessica met about communications and how to enhance the NW Straits Foundation's reach to the public. Don shared that the Clayton Beach project is in the scoping phase, and they are getting support from the Samish Indian Nation. This will be one of the largest shoreline projects in Puget Sound with around 1,200 feet of shoreline restoration projected. As the project moves to the construction phase, there will be room for partners to get involved with the project.

MRC Updates:

Clallam – from MRC Report

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Elwha Beach surveys are randomly occurring. These surveys are documenting people/dog use as well as counting dog waste not in CMRC's provided waste can.
- Shellfish biotoxin surveys happen bi-monthly.
- Sound Toxin training was attended by 2 MRC members. The sampling training was held at Feiro Marine Life Center.
- New outreach coasters were designed and ordered.

Island County – Elsa Schwartz

- Working on a white paper on sea level rise and resiliency
- Shore Friendly Outreach continues

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

The MRC contracted Hood Canal Oyster Company 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.

San Juan County – Craig Smith

- The MRC has recommended 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 MRC.
- 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.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- 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.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- 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.

Whatcom - Bob Cecile

- 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.



Round Table: Time was allotted for the Commission round table.

<u>Public Comment:</u> No public comment

*The next meeting will be held virtually on August 25, 2023.



Commission staff highlights - [August 2023]

MRC Support

2021-23 MRC Grants: The 2021-23 state funding has now expired, and MRCs are in the final quarter of this two-year agreement. All project reporting and expenditures must be complete by September 30, 2023 or shortly after during the grant closeout process.

2023 CDS MRC Grants: NOAA has responded that it is too early to request a no-cost extension for our current award, so MRC grants with projects that need extension cannot be extended at this time. Commission staff will submit another no-cost extension request in late September.

2023-25 MRC Grants: Commission staff and the Science Advisory Committee reviewed MRC project proposals and provided feedback to MRCs. MRCs are in the process of resubmitting any revised proposals, and Commission staff is preparing the draft grant agreements for the awards funded by the EPA/Puget Sound Partnership and Washington State general funds, which are scheduled to begin October 1. A draft project list for these grants is provided in the Commission meeting materials for review and approval at the August 25 meeting.

The new NOAA funding agreement that will support the 2023-25 MRC grants has not yet been executed. Commission and MRC staff will work towards preparing those agreements for an anticipated January 1, 2024 start date.

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: The 2020-2023 Kelp Plan Status Update Report opportunity for input closed on Aug. 14th. Staff continue to work through all the comments and update the report as appropriate. Staff also continue to collaborate with other initiatives and workgroups on collaborative communication tools to improve knowledge sharing and awareness of kelp efforts.

Kelp Monitoring: MRC kayak groups continue to do an amazing job. All have gotten out at least once, with most having one final survey scheduled for late August-September. Staff are working with WA DNR to update and integrate MRC data into WA DNR's Floating Kelp Indicator, which includes adding additional sites that now have five years' worth of data and data from 2022.

Green Crab: Commission staff partnered with DNR for a 3-day trapping effort in a Fidalgo Bay. While only 1 green crab was captured, it was the first live green crab found in Fidalgo Bay. Since April, Commission staff have removed 119 green crabs from Samish Bay and 109 green



Commission staff highlights - [August 2023]

crabs from Drayton Harbor. Commission staff are partnering with Skagit MRC to host a green crab focused outreach booth at Fidalgo Bay Day.

Forage Fish: Commission staff coordinated with WDFW staff to plan a Forage Fish Survey Training for August 30th at Padilla Bay.

Derelict Vessels:

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: A contractor was selected for the social marketing campaign for the voluntary no-anchor zone program, and a contract is in the process of being executed. The social marketing campaign will provide a toolkit for partners to use and to promote behavior change (anchoring outside of eelgrass beds) at voluntary no-anchor zone sites that do not have buoys installed as a visual cue.

Operations

Staff:

Budget: The Washington state 2021-23 funding expired as of June 30. Funding from the 2023-25 biennium is now available and will be encumbered in MRC grants and directed to Padilla Bay Reserve for administration of several Skagit MRC projects. Additional state funding from the 2021-23 kelp proviso is also now in use as well as being encumbered with the kelp proviso partners, including Puget Sound Restoration Fund, Reef Check Foundation, Samish Indian Nation, Squaxin Island Tribe, and Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. An amendment to the US Fish and Wildlife Service grant is underway to shift the existing budget and scope of work.

Meetings Attended

Allie attended: Green Crab Data App meeting with WDFW 7/26; Drayton Harbor Eelgrass Survey meeting 7/26; Presented on DEI at Skagit MRC meeting 8/10; Fidalgo Bay Day 8/26

Dana attended:

Jeff attended: NWSC Conference Kelp Panel Meeting 08/08; Snohomish Annual Potluck Picnic 08/16; Clallam MRC Meeting 08/21; NWSC Meeting 08/25

Leah attended: Green Crab Data App meeting with WDFW 7/26; Joint trapping effort with DNR in Fidalgo Bay 8/14-8/16; Fidalgo Bay Day 8/26; Forage Fish Survey Training 8/30



Commission staff highlights - [August 2023]

Lucas attended: External Relations 9/9; NWSI Conference Planning Meeting 8/16, 8/23; Project discussion meeting with NWSF and Maritime Center 9/17; Executive Committee 8/21; Congressional staff meeting 8/22

Sasha attended: Science Advisory Committee 7/31; Senator Murray site visit 8/7; External Relations 8/9; Conference Planning Committee Meeting 08/16; Executive Committee 8/21

Caitlyn attended: NWSI Conference Planning Meetings (Individual) 08/01, 08/03, 08/04, 08/08, 08/15, 08/23; Conference Planning Committee Meeting 08/16; Executive Committee Meeting 08/21; NW Straits Commission Meeting 08/25; Forage Fish Survey Training 08/30

Jessica attended: NWSI Conference Planning Meetings (Individual) 8/04, (honorarium) 8/23; ECY communications 8/24; External Relations Meeting 8/25; NW Straits Commission Meeting 8/25

County: Clallam

Month/Year: August 2023 Submitted by: Rebecca Mahan

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

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Elwha Beach surveys are randomly occurring. These surveys are documenting people/dog use as well as counting dog waste not in CMRC's provided waste can.
- Shellfish biotoxin surveys happen bi-monthly during the summer months.
- Sound Toxin sampling is taking place once a week.
- New outreach coasters have been received and MRC members are distributing them to local businesses.
- Kayak based kelp surveys are taking place Aug. 14 & 15.

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

August MRC meeting will be held 8/21/23.

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): Kayak based kelp bed surveys taking place the week of Aug.14 & 15 at Freshwater Bay and Clallam Bay

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.

Educational/Outreach coasters are being distributed to local businesses by MRC members.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.): The Clallam MRC is working with a local graphic artist to get an updated Clallam logo and posters for tabling events.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info): I have attached the front and back of our three new coasters.



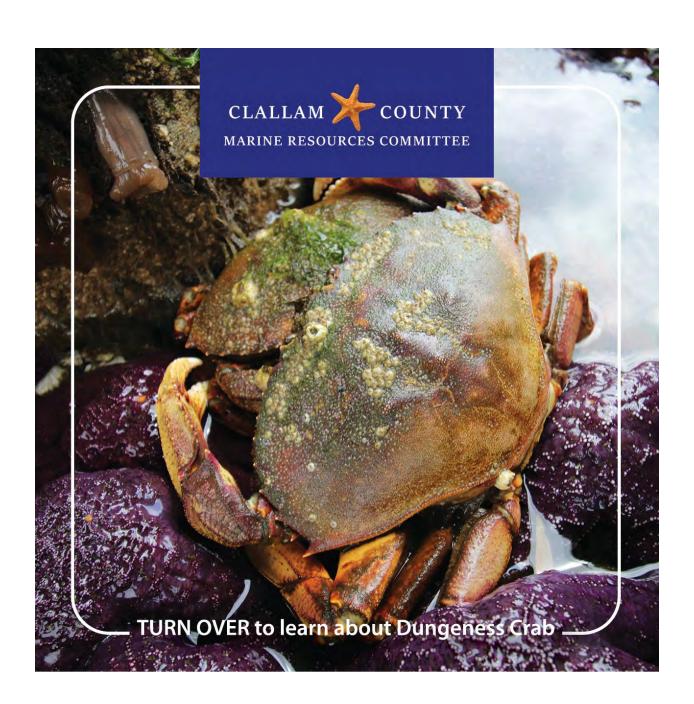
Amazingly enough, Dungeness Crabs can be found at depths up to 750 feet! They are very resilient and can even re-generate lost appendages – but recent invasions of European Green Crabs are a problem!

How do you prevent a lost crab pot from "fishing" and killing crabs? Scan the QR code to find out!

Clallam County Marine Resources
Committee uses science and community
involvement to protect marine critters like
Dungeness Crab and eliminate invaders like
Green Crabs. To learn more or volunteer,
find us on Facebook or clallamcountymrc.org



© 2023 CMRC Photo credit: Kenny Clarkson This project funded in part by the U.S. EPA through the Northwest Straits Initiative





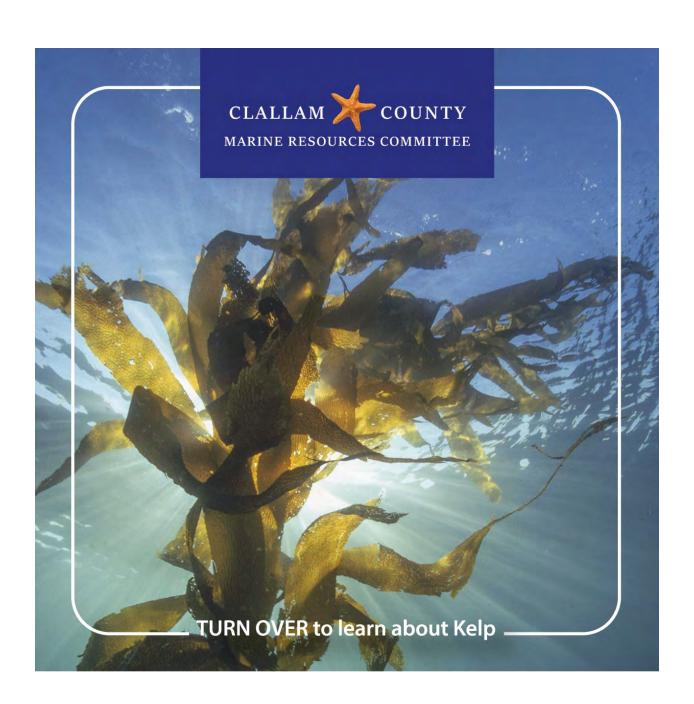
Kelp (sometimes called "seaweed") use photo-synthesis to make oxygen and store carbon underwater like trees do on land! Bull Kelp forests grow tall each spring and die off each winter, playing a key role in the ecosystem supporting many other marine species.

How do sea otters help protect Kelp forests? Scan the OR code to find the answer!

Clallam County Marine Resources
Committee uses science and community
involvement to protect and restore marine
resources including Kelp. To learn more or
volunteer, find us on Facebook or
clallamcountymrc.org



© 2023 CMRC Photo credit: Jack Drafahl from Pixabay, 2022
This project funded in part by the U.S. EPA
through the Northwest Straits Initiative





The Olympia Oyster is the only oyster native to the U.S. west coast, but they are rare now. Instead, you will find the larger Pacific Oyster (introduced from the Japan Sea) in our bays and at most restaurants!

How can you tell the difference between the Olympia and Pacific oysters? Scan the QR code to find the answer and learn more!

Clallam County Marine Resources
Committee uses science and
community involvement to restore
marine critters including Olympia
Oysters. To learn more or volunteer,
find us on Facebook or clallamcountymrc.org



© 2023 CMRC Photo credit: Rebecca Mahan, 2021 This project funded in part by the U.S. EPA through the Northwest Straits Initiative

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: August 2023

Submitted by: Monica Montgomery

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

- The MRC organized a shell spread workday on July 31 and with the help of five community volunteers, the MRC Coordinator, and two MRC members (Neil, Gordon), we distributed shell from the remainder of the 1,200 bags delivered to the Powerlines restoration site in Discovery Bay.
- The MRC, with the help of the rain garden intern, organized rain garden maintenance work parties at the NW Maritime Center (Aug 1) and Jefferson County Courthouse (Aug 10), created a StoryMap featuring the MRC's network of 18 rain gardens, and posted ads in the local newspapers to encourage community members to steward or "adopt" a rain garden.
- The MRC is actively recruiting new members: District 1 Rep/Alt, District 3 Rep/Alt, and Marine Science, Research and Education Rep/Alt.

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

The MRC formed an MRC Member Recruitment subcommittee (Nam, Jeff, Sarah, Joanie, Heidi, Gordon) to review applications and interview candidates for the following positions: District 1 Rep/Alt, District 3 Rep/Alt, and Marine Science, Research and Education Rep/Alt. The MRC is actively recruiting with the deadline for the first round of application reviews set for Sep 8. See <u>Jeffersonmrc.org</u> for the <u>vacancy announcement</u> and <u>application</u>.

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

Past Events/Meetings

July 24 - Derelict vessel workgroup meeting

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

July 31 – Shell spread workday at Powerlines Site in Discovery Bay

August 1 – Rain garden work party at the NW Maritime Center

August 1 – MRC monthly meeting

August 3 – Recovered crab pot assessment

August 8 – Hauled derelict crab pots to the county solid waste facility

August 10 – Rain garden work party at the Jefferson County Courthouse

August 12 – Second and last kelp survey at North Beach

August 14 – Education and outreach subcommittee meeting

August 14 – MRC SMP Update subcommittee meeting

August 15 – Shoreline landowner outreach workshop meeting

Upcoming Events/Meetings

August 17 – MRC derelict vessel subcommittee meeting

August 22 - MRC executive committee meeting

August – Forage fish survey at Siri's Cove (Dabob Bay)

September 5 – MRC monthly meeting

September 6 - NWSC/NWSF/MRC staff meeting

September 8-10 – Tabling Wooden Boat Festival

September 14 – Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone meeting

September 19 – MRC executive committee meeting

September 22 – Strait ERN LIO quarterly 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) has decided to discontinue monitoring forage fish at this site, after nearly seven years of monitoring (since 11/21/2016).
- Forage fish Dabob Bay (Index): The Project Lead (Sarah) plans to survey later this month.
- **Kelp:** The second and final survey of the year was on August 12, with the help of project lead (Solenne), MRC Coordinator, and 2 community volunteers (Declan, Yewah).
- **Storm surge monitoring**: The MRC Coordinator is finalizing hiring paperwork with the selected intern, with a set start date of September 25.

2. Rain Gardens:

- The MRC rain garden intern, Isabelle, organized a weeding and mulching work party on August 1 at the NW Maritime Center, with the help of the project lead (Janette), MRC Coordinator, and MRC member Frank.
- The MRC organized a workday on August 10, weeding and mulching the Jefferson County Courthouse rain garden with the help of a Master Gardener (Ellen), the rain garden intern (Isabelle) and MRC Coordinator. The project lead (Janette) and Ellen also watered the rain garden days prior, to give established plants a drink and to ensure ease of pulling weeds.
- The rain garden intern, Isabelle, will be completing her internship on August 18.
- Isabelle drafted <u>a StoryMap to feature the MRC's rain gardens</u>, which we plan to continue adding details to over time, and published ads in <u>The Leader</u> and <u>Peninsula Daily News</u> to direct folks to a Google Form to sign-up to steward or "adopt" a rain garden.
- The next and final rain garden installation is set for either September 20 or 21, and will be located near the Swan School, on 23rd and Kuhn St. in Port Townsend.

3. Education & Outreach:

- The subcommittee (Joanie, Frank, Sarah, Brenda, Brent) met on August 14 to discuss plans for targeted messaging and interactive activities for tabling the Wooden Boat Festival (set for Sep 8-10).
- The crabber outreach intern, Ally, will be completing her internship on August 18.
- The MRC Coordinator and Janette met with NWSF staff on August 15 to plan the upcoming shoreline landowner outreach workshop, tentatively set for October 21.

4. Olympia Oysters:

 The MRC organized one last workday on July 31 to spread shell from the remainder of the 1,200 bags delivered at the Powerlines site in South Discovery Bay. The project lead (Neil), MRC member Gordon, MRC Coordinator and five community volunteers spent the morning cutting open the remaining shell bags, distributing shell, and hauling out emptied bags.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

• A Coupeville resident reported that an eelgrass protection NAZ buoy (from Port Townsend) ended up on their shoreline property. The Island MRC Coordinator helped to retrieve it.

6. Mapping Lost Crab Pots:

- The MRC and Sea Dragons had one final day of removal operations on July 26, removing one final pot (total of 17 pots removed) from Port Townsend Bay. The team hosted Lucas Rabin, shellfish biologist with The Tulalip Tribes, who are working on developing their own ROV lost pot recovery program.
- An article on the project was published in the local Port Townsend newspaper on August 2.
- With the help of Jessica Owens (NWSC), the team finalized edits to the project StoryMap to share widely: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1befb7cae32f49e89d8595d8ae884d38.
- On August 2, MRC member Troy helped the MRC Coordinator to assess which of the 17 recovered pots
 could be reused and donated versus disposed of. On August 8, the MRC Coordinator and MRC member
 Jeff hauled pots to the County's solid waste facility. The MRC Coordinator contacted the Port Gamble
 S'Klallam Tribe about one recovered pot with their tag on it and is working on coordinating its return.

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 has been asked by Commissioner Brotherton to provide recommendations on the County's SMP Update. The MRC formed a SMP Update Review subcommittee (Janette, Nam, Neil, Troy, Brent) with Gordon taking lead. The subcommittee met on 8/14 to get the team up to speed and has begun drafting recommendations.
- The DEI subcommittee is polling for a meeting time in late August.
- The derelict vessel subcommittee (Heidi, Sarah, Brenda) plan to meet on August 17 to discuss new vessels in Jefferson County to add to the updated list of vessels to be considered for removal in 2023.

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

All photos by Monica Montgomery unless otherwise noted. See photos below:



Volunteers bundling up emptied mesh shell bags to haul out.



Distributed shell on the left, shell bags to be emptied on the right.



Community volunteers, Cathryn and Cyndi, hauling emptied shell bags.



Community volunteers and MRC members (Neil, Gordon) after a morning of handling oyster shells and muddy shell bags.

August 1 – Rain garden workday at the NW Maritime Center



Frank, Isabelle, and Janette posing after weeding and mulching.

August 8 – Derelict crab pot haul



Jeff posing with the first of two loads of recovered derelict crab pots headed to the county solid waste facility.

County: Island

Month/Year: August / 2023 Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- Shore Friendly Outreach
- Stewardship Cornet Bay and Hoypus Point

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:

- July 21: Cornet Bay & Hoypus Point Stewardship Event
- August 1: MRC Meeting Hybrid

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- August 30: Cornet Bay & Hoypus Point Stewardship Event
- September 9: Bowman Bay MRC Volunteer Appreciation Picnic
- September 30: Camano 101
- October 7: Shore Friendly Workshop Oak Harbor Library
- October 14: Orca Recovery Day Planting and Weeding for Whales Cornet Bay / Hoypus Point

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):

<u>Monitoring – Forage Fish</u>: 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.

<u>Bull Kelp Surveys</u>: Surveys are underway at most of our sites. The Possession Point Team has struggled to schedule days that have safe kayaking conditions.

<u>Port Susan MSA:</u> Our contract has been approved for our work with ESA so we can get the Port Susan Brochure designed to promote the Port Susan project and proper shoreline stewardship. Additionally, we have been attending planning meetings with Snohomish to continue work on the story map and website updates.

<u>Stewardship – Cornet Bay</u>: We hosted our third stewardship event of the summer. The Cornet Bay site is looking very good overall. We dedicated a couple of hours to removal of weeds in the Phase #2 area. Then we headed out to Hoypus and removed some vetch and trailing blackberry that was encroaching on our new plantings. The plants are looking very healthy, and the survival rate so far is high.

Watering at Cornet and Hoypus is taking place weekly now. Our next stewardship event will be on Aug 30 at Cornet Bay.

<u>Water Quality Testing:</u> The team has been working hard to get the proposal and budget for the 2023-25 grant cycle finalized.

Shore Friendly Outreach: This month we chose the contractor that we want to move forward with for the shoreline armoring survey. We are now in process with Island County to get the contract approved and signed. Our hope is to get the survey started by September 1. Additionally, the plans for the upcoming Shore Friendly Workshop are coming together. Most of the speakers are booked and the location will be in Oak Harbor at the Coupeville Library.

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):



Cornet Bay Restoration – Gumweed

Photo by Kelly Zupich



Hoypus Point Restoration - Silverweed

Photo by Kelly Zupich

County: San Juan County **Month/Year:** August 2023

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

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

- The SCJ MRC has a brand-new blog Currents! This will be a light, fun way to connect with the community and share the stories of the projects the MRC is working on. Check it out here.
- Summertime outreach on Plastic Free Salish Sea initiatives have gone well with tabling at the county fair and the launch of the plastic film recycling bin pilot at the local grocery.

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

Dave Checkly has been formally approved by council to join the MRC. He attended the August meeting as a member of the public and will be officially serving on the MRC at the next meeting in September. We have conducted several more interviews for the remaining available position and find ourselves with the good problem of having outstanding candidates. We hope to choose someone and more forward in the coming months.

Christina Koons and Karin Roemers-Kleven have each been elected to serve another term as Chair and Vice-chair respectively.

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

- DV Subcommittee July 24th
- Plastic Free Salish Sea subcommittee meeting July 25th
- MRC/CAG Meeting August 3rd
- San Juan County Fair Aug 16-19th
- Next MRC meeting: **In person** Sept 7th @ San Juan Island Grange

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):

In its role as the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) for salmon recovery, the MRC completed its final scoring for the salmon recovery projects submitted for funding in 2023. Thanks to the efforts of the San Juan MRC, San Juan County was able to fund three shoreline armor removal projects (2 on Lopez, 1 on Orcas) for a total of nearly \$295,000 in funding. These projects will restore valuable shoreline habitat for salmon and forage fish in San Juan County for the benefit of the marine environment and the species that rely on it for their survival.

The SCJ MRC has a brand-new blog - Currents! Which can be found here. This will help us to engage with the community, tell interesting stories, share photos and more. Our first post is about the new logo for our county and the story behind the design. We plan to have members submit short blogs that we can use to promote and highlight the projects and people of the MRC. Upcoming posts include reflections

from past members, an update on the creosote piling removal happening at Jackson's Beach, and a recap of outreach at the county fair.

Summertime has been a great time for the MRC to engage with visitors and locals about issues affecting our marine waters. Education about the SRKW and passing out whale warning flags has been going well. We have talked to 100s of people and passed out many flags. MRC members and volunteers helped to table the MRC booth at the San Juan County Fair. Over four days we engaged with many people to discuss the projects of the marine resource committee and offer resources. We signed folks up for the adopt-a-beach and adopt-a-road program and promoted our Plastic Free Salish Sea initiative.

The plastic film recycling bin pilot has been well received by the community. In fact, it must be emptied every single day (sometimes twice!) as it gets full quickly. Engagement with the public has been positive, but it is alarming to see just how much plastic film is being consumed on San Juan Island.

The derelict vessel prevention subcommittee met in late July. Given that we have a new Derelict Vessel Program Coordinator (Kari Koski) and a new MRC DV subcommittee lead (Adam Parrott), this meeting was an important opportunity to clarify roles and responsibilities and review priorities.

Vessel surveys in anchor out zones have continued throughout the summer.

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 hosted two presentations at the August meeting. The first was a presentation by Washington State Parks about the expansion of mobile pumpout services in Puget Sound, and the second was a presentation by WDFW on Sea Duck hunting in San Juan County. Both presentations were very informative and in particular, the Sea Duck hunting presentation brought attention to a topic that there was very little awareness about among MRC members and staff.

MRC members continue to be involved in advocacy around the need for an ERTV to be stationed in inland waters of the Salish Sea in order to prevent an oil spill from a commercial vessel traveling through Haro Strait and Boundary Pass. MRC staff and Cindy Wolf, our County Council Marine Program liaison, will attend a meeting of the Ad Hoc Transboundary Caucus in late September to highlight this important San Juan County priority.

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



Left: MRC Volunteer, Melissa Smith, helping community members sort plastic recycling. Right: Making eco-bricks at the county fair for PFSS! Images Katie Johnson.



Island children helping to make an eco-brick at the county fair. Photo credit: Frances Robertson

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: August 2023

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The Port Susan subcommittee met on August 14 and reviewed the webpage updates. The final webpage and story map will be announced in a September press release.
- The MRC had their annual picnic on August 16 at Mukilteo Lighthouse Park. Everyone enjoyed the social time and the sunny weather.

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):

Ariel Shiley and Elisa Dawson participated in the ORCA research cruises on July 20.

Joycelyn Blue and Elisa Dawson met with Jessica Owens on July 27 to discuss MRC communication strategies.

Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue met with Sasha Horst and Dana Oster on August 1 to check in on the upcoming grants.

The MRC held their annual picnic on August 16 in place of their regular meeting.

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 August 14 and reviewed the webpage updates. The final webpage and story map will be

announced in a September press release. They discussed the upcoming presentation to the Snohomish Watershed Council on September 27. Elisa coordinated with the Snohomish Conservation District (SCD) to have Port Susan outreach materials available at the SCD booth at the Stanwood Camano Fair.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): 7 derelict vessels in the Snohomish Estuary will be removed this fall by a contactor. Elisa attended the NWSC-MRC derelict vessel workgroup mid-year check in on July 24. Additional funds are available for more derelict vessel removal, and Elisa has submitted suggested vessels for this list.

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. Forage fish sampling occurred on August 16 and 21 and is scheduled for September 14 and 18.

Nearshore Restoration: The Meadowdale monitoring team met on July 26. An RFP for a consultant to help with future years of monitoring at Meadowdale is expected to be released in September. The WSU Beach Watchers conducted nearshore monitoring at Meadowdale on August 2 and held a beach walk on August 3. MRC Staff assisted with the nearshore monitoring.

Outreach: Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly.

Crabber Outreach/Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: None

Marine Water Quality: SWM staff are scheduled to join on data collection cruises with ORCA students throughout the summer. The group is meeting with Ecology to discuss the ORCA QA/QC plan on September 24. Ariel Shiley and MRC staff met with subject experts within Snohomish County to determine which factors would be best included in a marine report card.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring: Kelp monitoring is currently being conducted for summer 2023. MRC staff monitored the Hat Island Kelp beds on August 14. Later in August the kelp monitoring team will visit the Edmonds kelp bed again. Additionally, the MRC was notified by divers in Mukilteo that there is some new kelp in an area north of where monitoring has typically occurred in Mukilteo. The Monitoring team will go out in late August to monitor this new kelp area.

In September the monitoring team plans to monitor only 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:

- Green Crab Molt Search Training online August 23
- MRC/NWSC/NWSF staff meeting September 6
- Forage Fish Sampling September 14 and 18
- Next MRC Meeting September 20

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

County: Skagit

Month/Year: Aug/2023 Submitted by: Tracy/Diane

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

- The Foundation and MRC hosted a compost and mulching event at Bowman Bay on August 3.
 The plants are looking much better with weekly watering. The October 12th MRC meeting will be combined with a planting party at Bowman Bay.
- The bay-wide Olympia oyster population survey which takes place every 5 years in Fidalgo Bay is now complete. There was a recent article in the Skagit Valley Herald.
- Skagit MRC formed a subcommittee to develop a strategic plan for expanding our MRC membership and filling diversity and representation gaps. The subcommittee will hold its first meeting in October.

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

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

- **Aug 10** Monthly MRC meeting. Allie Simpson shared information about what the Commission is doing to address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- 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):

- <u>Salish Sea Stewards</u>: We now have around 360 trained Salish Sea Stewards in the program.
 Over 800 volunteer hours were recorded in July! The SSS Volunteer Coordinator continues to
 work on outreach and keeping the volunteers informed and engaged. A field trip to
 Washington Park is planned for late August to explore tide pools. The kick-off meeting to start
 planning the 2024 Stewards training will be held in October. There is already a waiting list for
 next year's training program.
- 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. Everything is all lined up and ready to go. New this year is a Samish story hour & crafts with QR codes that translate the marine animal into the Coast Salish language (with pronunciation). Also new this year is an eco-friendly mermaid. Other activities: crafts, coloring contest, face painting, games, displays, touch tank, beach seining demo, giant whale skull, seafood samples, and no-host salmon lunch. More to report next month.
- <u>Forage Fish Surveys</u>: Surveys continue at the 3 Index sites, the Bowman Bay restoration site, and Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve. There haven't been any mass spawning events in Fidalgo Bay like we typically observe this time of year. July was the last survey at the Kukutali project site after completing 5 years of surveying. The surf smelt population appears to be doing well at Kukutali.
- MRC- Salish Sea School Intern: The Intern, Dana Flerchinger, and four students (7th grade, 8th grade, 9th grade, and 12th grade) have been surveying forage fish once a month at 3 locations along the Fidalgo Bay RV Resort since June: shaded, partially-shaded, and full-sun sites. They will continue sampling through September and compile the findings into a summary report.
- <u>Kids on the Beach</u>: Planning for the fall program will start soon. With the recent teacher turnover at several of the schools, it will likely take a little more outreach to get the new teachers on board with the Kids on the Beach program.

- <u>Kayak Kelp Surveys</u>: June, July, and August kelp surveys have been completed at all 3 sites: Coffin Rocks, Shannon Point, and Biz Point. Kelp beds appear to be in great shape.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: The Bowman Bay plant maintenance is in full swing! The NWSF is managing this project for the MRC this year. Since June 8th, the Foundation, the MRC and a small handful of volunteers, have been diligently watering and weeding every Thursday. The team has divided the area into six zones, to systematically remove weeds and water zone by zone. The weekly watering has greatly improved the plant survival rate! The Foundation and MRC hosted a compost and mulching event on August 3. 3 NWSF staff, MRC staff, and 4 volunteers hauled buckets of compost and mulch into two of the six zones. A planting party is tentatively scheduled for October 12th, which will be combined with or in lieu of Skagit MRC's monthly meeting.
- <u>Pinto Abalone Recovery</u>: Field work is now complete, and data is currently being analyzed. The Puget Sound Restoration fund has had a difficult time inducing spawning this year. There are fewer juvenile abalone in the lab than what they usually have. They will continue working on hatchery production for future outplants. The report will be finalized in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: The five-year bay-wide Olympia oyster population survey in Fidalgo Bay is now complete. The surveys took place on June 20, Aug 2, and Aug 3 and were led by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund with the help of MRC member Paul Dinnel and several volunteers. Preliminary data indicates the oyster population is doing very well. The area near Sharp's Corner had an amazing number of oysters! After the data analysis is complete, Paul will work on the final report. There was a recent article in the Skagit Valley Herald about the Olympia Oyster Restoration project.
- <u>European Green Crab Outreach</u>: European Green Crab outreach materials and letters were
 mailed to 505 Padilla Bay and Samish Bay 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.
 The MRC, NWSC, WDFW, and SeaGrant will be co-hosting a European Green Crab outreach
 booth at Fidalgo Bay Day this year with fun games and activities.
- School Rain Garden: MRC Project Lead Diane has been in touch with the Principal at the La Conner School as well as the Swinomish and has gone out to look at the site and the different options for the rain garden. Construction will take place this fall. Continued maintenance, especially during the first two years, will be important for the success of the rain garden. We hope to recruit one or two volunteers to steward the rain garden sites during the summer months when school is out. Diane will be meeting with Jefferson County MRC and the NWSF to discuss different options for maintenance.
- <u>Fidalgo Bay Trestle</u>: The MRC's portion of the project is currently on hold until the grant
 extension is confirmed. The City of Anacortes now has an Interlocal Agreement in place with
 the Samish Indian Nation and is beginning the Request for Qualifications process for the
 geotechnical analysis and project engineering design. The City hopes to have the engineering
 contract in place by the end of October which will give us a more realistic timeline for the
 MRC's education and outreach component.
- <u>Clayton Beach Restoration</u>: BNSF signed the letter of consent allowing the NWSF to move forward with the project. The Foundation hosted a tour with Congressman Rick Larsen on Friday August 18th, to garner support. Skagit MRC member Pete Haase also attended the tour.

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):

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: AUGUST 2023 Submitted by: Austin Rose

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

- The MRC is drafting a letter to the Birch Bay community as more EGC have been found in that
 area. The intent of the letter is to keep the public informed on how to identify and report an
 EGC sighting.
- The MRC retreat has been scheduled for October 21, 9-1pm, at the Squalicum Boathouse. The retreat will be facilitated by Hilary Wilkinson, Triangle Associates.

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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):

- There was no July MRC meeting due to summer holidays. The next meeting is scheduled for September 7.
 Agenda items include:
 - update on the 2025 Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan from Whatcom County Planning and Development Services
- The MRC retreat has been scheduled for October 21, 9-1pm, at the Squalicum Boathouse. The retreat will be facilitated by Hilary Wilkinson, Triangle Associates.

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

Two drone surveys of the eelgrass extent in Wildcat Cove, Larrabee State Park, have been completed by David Wallin, Western Washington University. One last survey will be conducted during the low tide in late August. The first survey was completed just before crabbing season opened, and the second two days after the opening. Evidence of damage can be seen from the images included in this report. DNR has also completed their boat survey to collect bathymetry data and to map presence and absence of eelgrass along 10m transects throughout Wildcat Cove and 3m transects along the boat launch. A summary report outlining their findings is expected within the next few weeks.

Kelp Surveys

Three kelp surveys have been completed at SW Lummi Island, Aiston Preserve, and Cherry Pt/Gulf Rd. Kelp seems relatively healthy at all locations, but beds were much narrower than previous years. Survey volunteers have also observed a plethora of marine life among the kelp forests including kelp crabs, harbor seals, forage fish, and egg yolk and moon jellyfish. Two additional surveys, one at Point Whitehorn and another survey at Cherry Point/Gulf Road, are scheduled to occur at the end of August and early September.

• Chuckanut PIC

Whatcom County and the Whatcom Conservation District are working on a proposal to the EPA lab for some eDNA work over the next year. The project would likely start next spring and will focus on sites that have long-standing questions. These are typically sites where we are trying to rule out human sources, but some are broader than that. Two marine sites in N. Chuckanut that have had consistently high fecal coliform counts and increasing fecal coliform counts over the past year as compared to other locations were chosen for this eDNA work. Additionally, 2-3 freshwater sites around the bay will be

included to ascertain septic compliance within those areas.

• <u>Derelict Boat Removal – Wanderlust, Bellingham Bay tidelands</u>

DNR has obtained a HPA permit WDFW to do a land based removal. Because this planning/permitting process has taken a while, DNR wanted to renew/verify permission with the property owner again for access to do the removal.

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

The MRC is drafting a letter to the Birch Bay community as more EGC have been found in that area. There has been an increase in EGC found N. Chuckanut Bay and Post Point (Bellingham Bay) also. The intent of the letter is to keep the public informed on how to identify and report an EGC sighting.

Photos:

Beautiful day at Cherry Pt. Happy kelp volunteers! Photo credit: Dana Flerchinger



Fun photo from Cherry Pt. kelp survey. Photo credit: Dana Flerchinger



Left: a screenshot of the 7/14 drone flight of Wildcat Cove. Right: a screen shot of drone footage on 7/17 (two days after crabbing season opened).

