



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Date: May 31, 2024
Time: 10:00 AM- 3:00 PM
Location: Camano Island Library, 848 N Sunrise Blvd, Camano Island, WA 98282
Zoom Option: [Click here for Zoom link](#)

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 Swinomish, Samish, and Tulalip Tribes.

Documents for NW Straits Commission Review:

- **April 2024 Minutes Approval**

10:00 -10:15 AM	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement April minutes approval Elections	Tim Ellis, Chair
10:15 – 10:20 AM	NW Straits Commission Elections	Tim Ellis, Chair
10:20 – 10:35 AM	Remarks from County Commissioner Melanie Bacon, District 1	Commissioner Melanie Bacon
10:35 – 11:00 AM	Department of Ecology’s new Coastal Resilience Initiative, what’s new and what’s coming	Jay Krienitz (WA Department of Ecology)
11:00 AM – 11:30 AM	Island MRC Presentation: “Building a Sense of Place”	Jill Lipoti, Island County MRC



agenda

11:30 – 11:45 AM	Retreat Update from ECO Resource Group	Sandra Davis and Dave Sales
11:45 – 12:00 PM	Business Items <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Puget Sound Day on the Hill	Lucas Hart and Dana Oster
12:00 – 12:45 PM	Working Lunch	
12:45 – 1:00 PM	Project Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DEI• Kelp Social Media Campaign• Derelict Vessel Update	Allie Simpson and Caitlyn Blair Jeff Whitty Dana Oster
1:15 – 1:45 PM	Committee Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Science Advisory Committee• Executive Committee• External Relations• Green Crab Ad-Hoc Committee	Julia Parrish Alan Clark Nan McKay Lucas Hart
1:45 – 2:15 PM	MRC Reports	MRC Representatives
2:15 – 2:30 PM	Public Comment	All
2:30 – 2:45 PM	Puget Sound Partnership	Laura Blackmore
2:45 – 2:50 PM	Meeting highlights and action items	All
2:50 – 3:00 PM	Round table	All



agenda

3:00 PM

Adjourn

Next meeting: Online over Zoom, June 28, 2024, from 10 AM – 12 PM



Minutes

April 26, 2024, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Christina Koons (San Juan), Ginny Broadhurst, Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Ken Collins (Island), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit), Nan McKay, Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin
Commission Staff: Leah Skare, Caitlyn Blair, Sasha Horst, Lucas Hart, Allie Simpson, Jessica Owens, Jeff Whitty, Dana Oster
Others in Attendance: Craig Thomas, Thomas Koontz, Don Hunger

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The March minutes were approved as written by consensus.

Tim shared that the NW Straits Commission elections for Chair and Vice Chair will occur at the May meeting. Please e-mail Nan McKay (nan.mckay10@gmail.com) with your nominations.

Use of Science in Ecosystem Recovery Partnerships in the Puget Sound: Tom Koontz and Craig Thomas from the University of Washington presented about how collaborative partnerships use science in the Puget Sound basin. Their presentation is not available to distribute, but they noted that MRCs can contact them if they would like a presentation.

Business Items

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

2024 NW Straits Initiative Retreat: Lucas shared that ECO Resource Group will be assisting with our retreat planning. The retreat conversations will inform the concept of what the NW Straits Initiative is today and how it has evolved over the last 25 years. Lucas shared the proposed timeline, as well as the process for selecting questions for individual interviews. Questions will be formed by representatives of the NW Straits Initiative, ECO Resource Group will refine the



Minutes

questions, and representatives from the NWSI will help finalize the questions. Results from the interviews will be shared at a later date.

DEI Update: Allie shared an update about the NW Straits Initiative's progress with Athena Group on an internal DEI assessment of the Initiative. A survey will be sent out in May for all NW Straits Initiative members. Allie and Caitlyn will be reaching out to the DEI project team to review the survey questions. We will continue to inform the NW Straits Commission on our progress.

Project Updates

Community Needs Assessment: Dana recommended everyone attend the Snohomish MRC meeting on May 15, 2024, from 6:30 – 8:30 PM. The UW Evans School will be presenting their summary of the community needs assessment at the Snohomish MRC meeting.

Senator Murray "Thank You" Video: Jessica shared the draft of the "Thank You" video for Senator Murray, which thanks Senator Murray for helping secure funding for 2024 and for her ongoing support of the NW Straits Initiative.

Kayak Kelp Monitoring: Jeff shared that the 2024 kayak monitoring season is kicking off. Commission staff is coordinating a workgroup, inclusive of MRCs, NW Straits Commission staff, and NW Straits Foundation staff. The goal is to share key notes, provide input, and share their experiences. The annual kayak kickoff will be on May 1, 2024, at Padilla Bay. Jeff is working on providing a kayak safety course at Bowman Bay. Please contact Jeff (whitty@nwstraits.org) for more information.

San Juan Vessel Turn-In Event

Dana and Christina shared the successes of the San Juan County vessel turn-in event in Friday Harbor. Fourteen vessels were removed and deconstructed in partnership with the NW Straits Commission, Department of Natural Resources, and the Port of Friday Harbor.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the Committee discussed mitigation funds at the last meeting. Ahren Stroming will be attending a future meeting to share about the Puget Sound Partnership Conservation Credit Fund. The Committee also discussed the NW Straits Commission mission statement as it appears in the 1998 Murray Metcalf report. The Committee would like to review this mission statement to evaluate what, if anything, has changed since it was written.

External Relations Committee: Nan shared that several MRC members and Lucas will be attending Puget Sound Day on the Hill and they are starting to schedule meetings with

Minutes

representatives. The Committee is hoping to set up meetings with legislators from the NW Straits region.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia shared that at the recent Committee meeting, they discussed social science workshops for MRCs. They also discussed how this workshop could influence the Committee feature session at the 2024 NW Straits Initiative conference.

Green Crab Ad Hoc Committee: Lucas shared that April 29, 2024, is the next meeting. The Committee will have more updates at the May Commission meeting.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

- A planting event was held at Ediz Hook on March 26 and March 28, 2024, in partnership with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Clallam Conservation District. 59 volunteers planted 3,000 plants and sowed 5 pounds of seed over two days.
- The MRC hosted Max Showalter and Cynthia Harbison during the April meeting to discuss the [kelp and eelgrass health plan](#) from DNR, and MRC members and staff provided feedback and relevant local connections.

Island – Ken Collins

- The MRC hosted a stewardship event at Cornet Bay and Hoypus point on April 10, 2024.
- MRC member Kirk Larsen and MRC staff Kelly Zupich joined the South Whidbey School District Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) class to conduct a mock forage fish survey at Keystone Farm.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC interviewed four candidates for the MRC Coordinator position.
- Eelgrass protection summer spar buoys were deployed on April 7, 2024.
- Two yards of cultch were spread in the south end of Discovery Bay on April 15, 2024, for Olympia oyster restoration.
- The Digging for Dinner event will be held on April 27, 2024, in Quilcene.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The Free Vessel Turn-In Event was a smashing success – literally! Thanks to strong partnership with NWSC, DNR, and Port of Friday Harbor at least 14 vessels have been removed and deconstructed from county waters. Watching long-time, dilapidated boats make the transition from potential marine debris to safely surrenders and dismantled makes all the difference for local marine waters.
- The Spring Great Islands Clean Up happened on April 20, 2024, with activities on all four ferry serviced islands and independent cleanups were coordinated on several outer



Minutes

islands including Waldron, Yellow, Stuart, and Decatur. The remaining debris were picked up via boat and taken to the transfer station on April 22, 2024. MRC members diligently spread the word, including outreach to marinas and hanging fliers for boaters to participate as well.

Skagit – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- **Kids on the Beach** – Concrete High School participated on April 10, 2024. Two classes of 10th grade Physical Science students and one class of 11th grade Environmental Science students participated in the Kids on the Beach program at Padilla Bay. Every student was involved in data collection including density and diversity of intertidal organisms at three locations along a transect line. They also collected weather, water temperature and substrate composition data.
- **Pinto Abalone Restoration** – The Puget Sound Restoration Fund partnered with the Seattle Aquarium and Samish Tribe to help with surveys and out planting this year. Surveys took place February-March. Out planting will take place in April and June. It is anticipated that more than 10,000 juvenile abalone will be out planted to at least 10 different recovery sites, 4 of which will be in Skagit County.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC, WSU Beach Watchers, and Tulalip Tribes hosted an Earth Day beach clean-up at Mission beach on April 22, 2024, from 10 AM – 12 PM.
- A subset of the MRC is planning to resume monthly forage fish sampling at Howarth Park on April 27, 2024.

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- On April 19, 2024, the MRC had their first Beach Seine with Kids at Boulevard Park with Lummi Nation School. 60 students were able to attend.
- The MRC is organizing the Wildcat Cove project to provide posters and cards to educate the public about the impacts of launching their boats on eelgrass.

Partner Updates

NW Straits Foundation: The NW Straits Foundation refreshed the Passport to Marine Adventure application through donor funding. Kayla Mrozik is working to update the application to share with the public. The NW Straits Foundation spring celebration is May 5, 2024, at the Edmonds Yacht club.

NW Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared that the NW Indian Fisheries Commission is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to amend the regional conditions of shoreline armor permitting. They will likely share a special public notice in the coming weeks about the comment period, which will be open for thirty days. Stay tuned for the notice. Cecilia also shared the film



Minutes

Fish Wars that was screened at the 50th anniversary of the Boldt Decision event will be premiering at the Seattle International Film Festival. Please visit this [website](#) for more information.

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura shared that Puget Sound Day on the Hill is from May 13-17, 2024, and they are looking forward to advocating for reauthorization and appropriations for the NW Straits Initiative.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

DRAFT



Commission staff highlights - [May 2024]

MRC Support

2023 CDS MRC Grants: No new updates on these agreements at this time.

2023-25 MRC Grants: These grants are in the final quarter for fiscal year 2024 state funds, and all MRCs are encouraged to review budgets closely to ensure spending is on track. Island and Jefferson MRCs are in the process of amending these agreements for budget and scope adjustments before fiscal year end.

2023-25 CDS MRC Grants: These awards are currently in progress on a calendar year schedule. No new updates at this time.

MRC Meeting Attendance: Clallam (May 20) – Leah; Skagit (May 9) – Jeff; Snohomish (May 15) - Leah, Jeff, Sasha, Dana; Whatcom (May 2) - Jeff, Dana, Lucas

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: Staff met with the Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee and reviewed ongoing work regarding sequencing of 65 Kelp Plan actions. Staff also continued to prepare for a Kelp Plan social media campaign that will run for the remainder of the year, to inform and engage potential partners and Puget Sound residents with kelp or the Kelp Plan. Jeff attended the Transboundary Kelp Node Workgroups (May 21, 28) and the International Kelp Mappers Meeting (May 2-3). Allie, Jeff, and Leah attended the WA State Kelp Research and Monitoring Workgroup (May 15).

Kelp Monitoring: The 2024 Kayak Kickoff was held on May 1 at Padilla Bay to prepare volunteer kayakers for the upcoming season. Caitlyn, Dana, Allie, Leah, and Jeff attended this kickoff event. The event was attended by ~40 participants from MRCs, NW Straits Commission, Vashon Nature Center, UW, and Samish Indian Nation Dept of Natural Resources. A recording of presentations is [available here](#).

European Green Crab: Staff hosted or coordinated multiple green crab trapping and outreach cooperative efforts including coordinating a trapping effort with Padilla Bay staff and Taylor Shellfish for trapping west Samish Bay and Alice Bay. Staff also hosted a green crab Molt Search Training for the Skagit Conservation District and assisted WSU extension with a public Molt Search Training for Whatcom County residents. Allie and Leah attended the North Puget Sound EGC Technical Workgroup (May 1), the EGC Molt Search Training for Skagit Conservation District (May 1), and the Collaboration: EGC settlement & post-settlement



Commission staff highlights - [May 2024]

substrates meeting (May 14). Leah attended the European Green Crab Data App Meeting with WDFW (May 16), and Allie attended the EGC Molt Search Public Training (May 11).

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: Staff continue to work with the social marketing consultants to create the partner toolkit. The Commission hosted a Salish Sea Eelgrass Protection meeting with partners in Washington and British Columbia to continue collaboration on eelgrass protection strategies when working with recreational boaters. Dana, Allie, Sasha, and Jessica attended the No-Anchor Zone Design Meetings (May 9, May 15, May 23) and the Transboundary Salish Sea Eelgrass Protection Workgroup (May 9).

Derelict Vessels: A vessel turn-in event in Skagit county is being advertised for July. Staff are working with partners to establish roles, agreements, and prepare for another event. Outcomes are being collected from the San Juan vessel turn in event. Highlights include a total of almost 50 tons of material being collected and 97% was recycled! The Libertad, a derelict sailboat in Island County was removed in partnership with Island MRC and DNR.

Operations

Staff: Leah Skare is now moved to a Project Coordinator position (Environmental Specialist 2).

Budget: Commission staff worked with Padilla Bay staff to revise the interagency agreement with WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife for European Green Crab work that slightly increases the reimbursement value in both years of the current biennium (2023-25).

DEI: In coordination with our consultant, Athena Group, Commission staff has moved forward with phase one of an internal organizational assessment of the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Initiative. All members of the Commission, MRCs, and Foundation have received an email invitation to provide input. A presentation on the results of phase one will be shared at the June meeting of the Commission. Staff also continued to attend Path Toward Equity Trainings through May, and four staff attended an Environmental Justice dialogue series on May 21.

Other Meetings Attended

- MRC website development meetings (May 10, 16, 23) Jessica, Sasha
- PSEMP Marine Birds, Mammals, Forage Fish & Food Webs (May 16) -- Leah
- Blue Robotics Emergency Technology/ROV Workshop (May 25) – Jeff
- Puget Sound Day on the Hill briefing (May 1) – Lucas, Dana
- Puget Sound Day on the Hill (May 13-16) – Lucas, Dana
- Hope for the Salish Sea Planning Meeting (Salish Sea Institute) (May 6) – Lucas



Commission staff highlights - [May 2024]

- Salish Sea Institute Advisory Board (May 7) – Lucas
- Ecosystem Coordination Board (May 9) – Lucas
- Kelp and Eelgrass Health and Conservation Plan Advisory meeting (May 20) – Dana, Jeff

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: May 2024

Submitted by: Rebecca Mahan

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

- The MRC and Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe conducted a population survey of Olympia Oysters in the Sequim Bay restoration area over 2 days, and collected broodstock for spawning.
- LaTrisha Suggs (representing the City of Port Angeles) is the new Chair of the Clallam MRC, as Tim Cochnauer (representing the Community At-Large) ended his term as Chair.

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

- During the May meeting, elections took place. Tim Cochnauer ended his term as Chair, and LaTrisha Suggs has been elected the new Chair for 2024-2025. Ann Soule will remain Vice Chair, and Alan Clark will remain as the representative to the NWSC.

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

- Olympia oyster broodstock collection and population surveys took place in partnership with the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe in early May.
- April monthly MRC meeting was held 5/20/24. The MRC hosted David Trimbach, Conservation Social Scientist with WDFW, to discuss his planned research project on the ecosystem services provided by kelp and seek the MRC’s collaboration as a project partner.
- Shell spread for Olympia oyster restoration will take place in late May, in partnership with the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe and a Washington Conservation Corps crew.

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):

- Olympia oyster broodstock collection and population surveys took place in early May in partnership with the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe. Pacific oyster shell spread, to provide substrate for Olympia oysters, is scheduled for two days in late May (with assistance from a Washington Conservation Corps crew).
- Several Clallam MRC members continued to collect the monthly Forage fish samples at Cline Spit, Ediz Hook and Elwha beach.
- MRC members continued supplying local eateries and community establishments with educational outreach coasters featuring information on local marine life.
- MRC members continued developing new displays for outreach at local festivals.
- Clallam MRC continued to steward the beach at the mouth of the Elwha River.
- MRC member Nancy Stephanz continues to process samples weekly for the Sound Toxins project (with Feiro Marine Life Center).

- The Clallam MRC continued to prepare for its upcoming Pinto Abalone monitoring project, with fieldwork expected to begin late 2024. A QAPP was accepted this month.
- Shellfish biotoxin monitoring has begun for 2024, with MRC member Bob Vreeland monitoring every two weeks at two sites.
- The MRC is planning its fieldwork season for kelp monitoring.
- Pigeon guillemot fieldwork training took place mid-May, and MRC staff members Rebecca Mahan and Amelia Kalagher are now trained. Monitoring will begin June 2. The MRC is actively seeking additional volunteers for this season.

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 adopted a formal document to guide the advisory process at the May meeting.
- [Project Macoma](#), an experimental project in CO2 removal by creating alkaline seawater, has been proposed for Port Angeles Harbor and is moving forward through approval and permitting processes. Many MRC members attended a meeting with its parent company, [Ebb Carbon](#), to address environmental concerns, and some members have provided public comment. Many members will also be attending a local workshop on responsible carbon removal in early June hosted by Sarah Nawaz (American University).
- Two MRC members scored films for the upcoming [River and Ocean Film Festival](#).

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



MRC member Helle Andersen and Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe shellfish biologist Neil Harrington surveying a quadrat for Olympia oysters in Sequim Bay in early May. Photo credit: Amelia Kalagher.



The Olympia oyster survey team brings equipment across the mudflats to a second survey plot. Photo credit: Amelia Kalagher.



An example Pacific oyster shell with young Olympia oysters of various sizes. Photo credit: Amelia Kalagher.



Bags of Pacific oyster shell on the Sequim Bay mudflats, photographed during May broodstock collection. These will be spread in late May. Photo credit: Rebecca Mahan.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: May / 2024

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- **Cornet Bay Stewardship Event**
- **ALE Program Low Tide Walk**
- **Penn Cove Water Festival**

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:

- May 7: MRC Monthly Meeting
- May 15: Stewardship Event

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- June 4: MRC Monthly Meeting
- June 5-6: Leadership Council Presentations
- June 12: Hoypus Stewardship Event

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):

Monitoring – Forage Fish: Our work monitoring for Forage fish eggs continues year-round at most sites. Teams continue to monitor monthly at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Glendale, and Keystone Preserve. Seahorse Siesta is finished for the season and will begin again next winter. The committee has been discussing how to move forward with this project. The team is trying to decide between the importance of index sites and/or working to get protections on as many beaches as possible by moving sites once forage fish eggs are identified at the location. Additionally, the team is looking to find more ways to utilize the volunteers while they are already on the beach and can capture more data.

Bull Kelp Surveys: The team plans to test new equipment to measure temperature, salinity, and depth and build contour maps. Volunteers attended the Bull Kelp kickoff meeting at the beginning of May. Additionally, a local Island County training and check-in was held a few weeks ago to cover training and safety, especially for those volunteers who did not attend the kickoff earlier in the month.

Stewardship – Cornet Bay/Hoypus Point: The NWSF, MRC, and volunteers came together at Cornet Bay to work on some weeding. It was a lovely day for us to dig in and get some of the pesky weeds out of the ground. Altogether, we removed 100lbs of weeds including some that are categorized as noxious. We

will be hosting monthly stewardship events throughout the growing season and are getting ready for weekly watering.

Shoreline Education and Survey: Herrera presented the results of the permit analysis at our May MRC Meeting. We are working with them to get the final report so we can start educating about our findings. We will be presenting this data at the Leadership Council.

Derelict Vessels: Kelly Webb worked with the NWSC and state DNR to get a vessel removed from the south end of Whidbey. In addition, she facilitated getting a problem vessel turned in to the state before it sank. We have a report of a boat over on Camano that we will be investigating options for 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.):

Comprehensive Plan: The IC MRC Comp Plan committee includes Jill Lipoti, PaulBen McIlwain, Greg Easton and Barbara Bennett. The committee is tracking the County's development of a new comprehensive plan for use through 2045 by attending meetings, reviewing discussions recorded at formal meetings, making public comments, and submitting written comments.

ALE Program Low Tide Walk: We joined the South Whidbey School District ALE Class to go on a low tide walk at Possession Point State Park. We talked about proper tide pool etiquette before heading to the beach. The students had a great time exploring the rocky beach with lots of creatures to learn to identify.

Penn Cove Water Festival: We participated in the Penn Cove Water Festival by hosting an educational booth for families. Our educational focus was forage fish and their importance. We had a microscope set up with forage fish eggs and Andi Kopit used her skill to make a forage fish life cycle activity. Adults and kids both enjoyed the activities. About 60 people came through our booth.

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



Cornet Bay – Volunteers weeding

Photo by Kelly Zupich



Possession Point – ALE
low tide walk
Photo by Kelly Zupich



Penn Cove Water
Festival – MRC booth
Photo by Kelly Zupich

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: May 2024

Submitted by: Katie Kowal

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

- New project – Pilot project monitoring kelp beds using satellite imagery
- Digging for Dinner event 4/27/2024
- The MRC hired a new Coordinator, Katie Kowal, who started 5/13/2024.

- **Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): The MRC hired a new Coordinator, Katie Kowal, who started 5/13/2024.

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

Past Events/Meetings

April 27 – Digging for Dinner

May 7 – MRC monthly meeting

May 21 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting

May 23 – Rain Garden Maintenance/Mentor training

May 25 - 26 – Fjord Fest

Upcoming Events/Meetings

June 4 – MRC monthly meeting

June 8 – Discovery Bay Olympia Oyster survey

June 18 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting

June 22 – Broad Spit Olympia Oyster survey

June 26 – Crabber Outreach Workshop

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 - Dabob Bay (Index):** The Project Lead (Sarah) sampled in May.
- **Shoreline Landowner:** Meeting with Port of Port Townsend 5/23.
- **Kelp:** North Beach surveys to begin next month.
- **Storm surge monitoring:** Nothing to report.

2. Rain Gardens:

- The MRC and the WSU Jefferson County Master Gardener program collaborated to develop a training for volunteer rain garden maintenance mentors. The program will be on May 23 in Port Townsend.

- The MRC has identified volunteer maintenance events for May and is working on a June schedule.

3. Education & Outreach:

- Fjord Fest May 25-26
- Crabber outreach June 26

4. Olympia Oysters:

- June 8 population survey
- June 22 Beach Walk oyster survey at Broad Spit

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- Nothing to report.

6. ROV Lost Crab Pots:

- Committee decided not to hire a contractor to use side scan sonar for derelict crab pots due to the high bid price provided by the contractor.

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 to report.

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

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: May 2024

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

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

- The MRC was represented at Friday Harbor Labs Open House on May 18th. It was an incredible day connecting with the community around marine issues. MRC members were able to share about the projects they are working on, answer questions, and discuss what actions are being taken.
- Vessel presence monitoring in eelgrass protection zones will resume later this month as the busy boating season kicks off. Members will be performing surveys around the county to add to collective data about recreational boats anchoring in sensitive eelgrass zones.
- MRC members, acting as the Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) for salmon recovery, visited six potential project sites on May 1-2. Projects ranged from acquisition to restoration to community conversations and covered locations on San Juan, Lopez and Orcas Islands.

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

In June, Jeff Dyer will be finishing out his term with the MRC. Jeff has been a super star committee member, helping table at events, perform vessel county surveys, and discuss marine issues with keen insight. His years as commercial vessel operator has helped bring wisdom and perspective to the MRC. Jeff will be sorely missed. Recruitment has begun to fill this opening with interviews scheduled for early June.

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

- Salmon Recovery Site Visits – May 1-2 (No May MRC meeting)
- Friday Harbor Labs Open House – May 18th
- PFSS Subcommittee meeting – May 28th
- Next MRC Meeting – June 6th

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):

The MRC was recently represented at the Friday Harbor Labs annual open house on May 18th. MRC members and staff spoke with the public about the work that we do, especially as it relates to the marine science happening at Friday Harbor Labs. It was a great afternoon connecting with the community to share stories of our work, answer questions, and pass out whale warning flags and stickers. Summer outreach has only just begun, and we will set a schedule for dock talks in the coming weeks.

Plastic Free Salish Sea initiative has been engaging with folks in the wake of the Spring Great Islands Clean-up. A number of new Adopt-a-Beach and Adopt-a-Road stewards have signed up. We are in the process of welcoming new stewards and getting them up to speed with the PFSS program. The committee will be meeting at the end of May to discuss website redesign and updates.

The summer boating season kicked off in San Juan County the weekend of May 4th and with this comes revival of our annual vessel presence monitoring for eelgrass protection. MRC members have been reviewing survey protocol and dividing up locations. We hope to see more members assist with surveys this summer, as it is a fun and easy way to get involved as well as gathering valuable data that will help influence future protections. Understanding relative vessel density is a key step towards regulating eelgrass protection zones. Green Boating signs created by Friends of the San Juans will be installed throughout the county at public docks.

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.):

Acting as the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) for Salmon Recovery, members of the MRC joined in for site visits May 1-2. With over \$1.8 million available for funding during this grant cycle, seven proposals were brought forth. Visiting the proposed sites and walking the properties will help MRC members conceptualize the projects and allow them to add important views as it relates to social and economic values of the potential projects.

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





Salmon Recovery Site Visits – Photos by Katie Johnson



Friday Harbor Labs Open House – Photos by Frances Robertson

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: May/2024

Submitted by: Tracy/Lynne

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

- **Kids on the Beach- May 22:** Allen Elementary (Mount Vernon)- 40 fifth grade students participated in the mudflat safari at Bay View State Park with the help of volunteers. The teachers were impressed by how engaged their students were! For many of the students it was their first time on a beach! Recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#). in the paper.
- **Olympia Oyster Restoration:** Paul Dinnel collected native oyster recruitment bags this month. Counted 450 juvenile oysters per 100 shells which is the highest settlement we've seen in Fidalgo Bay in the last 20 years!

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

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

- **May 9-** Monthly MRC Meeting, Microsoft Teams (9-11am).
- **May 7-9-** Kids on the Beach at Padilla Bay (Evergreen Elementary 6th grade).
- **May 9-** Bowman Bay Outreach Event Meeting (2-3pm).
- **May 20-** La Conner Elementary School Site Visit/Assessment.
- **May 22-** Kids on the Beach at Padilla Bay (Allen Elementary 40, 5th grade students).
- **May 23-** Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Meeting, Microsoft Teams (2-3pm)
- **May 30-** Bowman Bay Stewardship Day (9am-11am)
- **June 13-** Monthly MRC Meeting, in person at Padilla Bay (9-11am)
- **June 14-** Kayak Kelp Shake Down Cruise- Cap Sante
- **June 15-** European Green Crab Molt Survey Training at Padilla Bay (10:30am-12:30pm)
- **June 21-** Salish Sea Stewards Meeting, in person at Padilla Bay (9:30am-10:30am)
- **June 28-** Bowman Bay Outreach Event

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 – Darla Gay Smith:
 - Final class and graduation held April 30 at Padilla Bay with 26 new graduates.
 - The last class featured a 1-hour presentation “One Year as a Salish Sea Steward” by Ron Conte, a 2023 graduate, highlighting some of his volunteer work including plankton surveys, juvenile Dungeness crab molt studies, forage fish surveys, and stormwater monitoring.
 - Each new Steward was given a Certificate of Completion, letters of congratulation from the SMRC & Padilla Bay NERR along with a SSS logo T-Shirt/uniform, a name tag on a lanyard, and a current list of volunteer opportunities.
 - Most of the Stewards Advisory Committee members attended the graduation and successfully recruited one of the new graduates to join the Salish Sea Advisory Committee.
 - Volunteer opportunities are posted every 2 weeks in *The Wave*, an electronic bulletin maintained by PBNERR.

- The Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting was held May 17th via Zoom. The next meeting will be held in person on June 21. 9:30am-10:30am at Padilla Bay.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly sampling continues at 4 Index sites: Guemes Channel, E. Similk Bay (Swinomish Reservation), Samish Island, and west of marina towards Skyline.
 - Monthly sampling continues at 3 Restoration Sites: Bowman Bay, W. Similk Bay (private property), and Clayton Beach (Skagit volunteers alternate monthly sampling with Whatcom County).
 - Monthly surveys at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve for DNR continue.
 - In April, volunteers got some unusual looking egg samples in Similk Bay that they could not identify. Sent the samples to WDFW to ID.
 - One of the newly graduated Salish Sea Stewards joined the forage fish survey team and seems pretty enthusiastic.
 - Forage Fish Outreach Activities:
 - May 21- Forage fish volunteers assisted 1st and 2nd graders from Island View Middle School in learning about forage fish at the Fidalgo Bay Resort beach. Kids learned about forage fish and forage fish habitat in the classroom prior to the field trip.
 - June 28- Big outreach event at Bowman Bay will include forage fish surveys & interpretive station, beach seining, and plant maintenance.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - 10 classes, 250 students from 3 schools participating in the spring program with classroom and field data collecting and analysis components: mudflats, forage fish, and beach seining. Many students have never been to the beach before:
 - April 10: **Concrete 10th-11th grade.** Collected biodiversity and density data of intertidal organisms at Padilla Bay with the help of volunteers.
 - May 6 - May 10: **Evergreen Elementary in Sedro Woolley 4th grade**, 75 students. There was a shortage of bus drivers. Chartering a bus was too expensive. Will need to reschedule. Will need to consider including funding for buses in the future.
 - May 22: **Allen Elementary in Mount Vernon** Allen Elementary (Mount Vernon)- 40 fifth grade students participated in the mudflat safari at Bay View State Park with the help of volunteers. A lot of these kids have never been to the beach before. Recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#). in the paper. The teachers were impressed by how engaged their students were!
 - The Kids on the Beach program has been so successful that it has infiltrated into many other educational programs at Padilla Bay NERR where they've incorporated many elements from the KOTB program.
- School Rain Gardens – Tracy Alker and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Mt. Erie School Rain Garden:** Diane Hennebert hosted a Rain Garden Maintenance Orientation at the Mt. Erie School with on Friday, May 17 at 4:30pm MRC staff and the County Intern.
 - Pulled lots of weeds. There are still a lot of weeds left to pull, but the rain garden is looking pretty healthy overall. Starting to fill in a little with some new growth. Might need some additional planting and mulch in the fall or next year to help it fill in.
 - Next Steps: Diane scheduled another Rain Garden Maintenance Orientation at the Mt. Erie School in June with the two interns recently hired by the Northwest Straits Foundation. The County intern will work

with the Foundation interns to maintain the rain garden this summer into the fall and to develop a long-term maintenance plan. Will likely need to purchase some tools, a hose, and yard waste bags. Need to determine options and costs for composting the weeds.

- **La Conner School Rain Garden:** Tracy and Lynne hosted a site visit on May 20th with the Skagit County Road Shop Staff, Skagit Conservation District Staff, and Swinomish staff to get their technical expertise and cost estimates on the proposed improvements. The School Principal and Facilities Staff attended as well. Proposed improvements include:
 - Improve stormwater flow to the rain garden.
 - Spruce up with additional native plants and mulch and incorporate indigenous plantings for food and/or a medicine garden to support the Swinomish's Between Two Worlds program.
 - Interpretive signage.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - Date has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Samish Indian Nation will be supporting Fidalgo Bay Day this year with some additional funding.
 - Save the Date notices have been sent out to past participating organizations and volunteers and posted.
 - A call for volunteers with a list of volunteer needs was posted in the Salish Sea Stewards electronic news bulletin The WAVE and the SSS alumni newsletter. Responses are very slowly starting to trickle in.
 - Will start reaching out directly to past volunteers in a couple of weeks to confirm participation and fill spots.
 - Reached out to Amy with The Salish Sea School to ask if students might be interested in hosting the craft tables and/or face painting this year. We also reached out to the Childrens Museum, but they are unavailable.
 - Rosie confirmed she will be participating again this year with the No-Host Salmon BBQ. We will need to get more details from her regarding the menu & prices.
 - Recruited a volunteer to take the lead on contacting restaurants for chowders. Only one restaurant has signed up to participate so far.
 - The Volunteer Coordinator with PBNERR, and the County NRD education/outreach staff joined the FBD Planning Committee! Updated the flyers with our new partner logos.
 - FBD Planning Committee meeting held May 23.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) finished monitoring all the outplant sites for the season and some outplanting of juvenile abalone. Will finish up outplanting at 4 sites in Skagit in June with Teams from PSRF, WDFW, the Seattle Aquarium and Samish Tribe.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - During the last several weeks Paul has been picking up some of the native oyster recruitment bags in Fidalgo Bay to monitor recruitment from last year. Counted 450 juvenile oysters per 100 shells in sample bags at the trestle, which is the highest settlement we've seen in Fidalgo Bay in the last 20 years!
 - Paul and his son worked with Matt to set out shell strings and tile stacks for the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to monitor oyster settlement throughout Puget Sound.
 - Significant new oyster beds have been cropping up in the muddy area south of the trestle in an area Paul didn't think would be good habitat for oyster settlement. Some of the new beds are small, but one of them appeared to be around 100 square meters.
 - Paul gave a presentation on oysters to the WCC at Padilla Bay NERR as part of the oyster restoration work happening at Padilla Bay.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Tracy Alker:

- Skagit MRC’s Grant Funding from NOAA (\$58k) for this project expires December 31, 2024.
- The City of Anacortes has a contract with Hanson Professional Services for the Fidalgo Bay trestle project that is expected to get signed in April.
- We are still negotiating the Interlocal Agreement with the City of Anacortes. We are getting pretty close to getting it all sorted out.
 - Proposed Framework:
 - Interpretive Signage: City would contract with Museum to create the layout design and will contract with an outside company to fabricate (with MRC grant funds). Skagit MRC Science team will create content.
 - Website: City will host the project page on their website and create the QR Code. Skagit MRC Science team will help create content.
 - Video: City video contractor would create a series of 3 short video clips (30 or 60 seconds) for social media and websites. Could include drone footage and interviews with scientists. Details will have to be fleshed out.
 - Community Engagement: City would host 3 community meetings at the Anacortes Senior Center hosting local scientists and project partners. City staff would also host an informational booth at Fidalgo Bay Day.
 - Preliminary Concept Design: This is one of our grant deliverable requirements. The concept design will not be completed until after our grant expires. Hanson could provide a very preliminary concept design by the end of December. City provided updated scope and fees which would cost an estimated \$48k for additional Geotech and hazardous materials sampling, and testing.
 - Communications Plan and Outreach Strategy: We will be seeking guidance from Jessica Owens to create a Communications Plan with Messaging and Outreach Strategy.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - NWSC/NWSF held the annual 2024 Kelp Kayak Kickoff meeting on May 1 in person at PBNERR and partially online for all participating MRC’s. Safety, kelp data resources and pre-season prep were covered, as well as hands-on practice skills for protocols, data collection and management for those interested. It was well attended by the Skagit kelp kayaker team.
 - Kelp presentation at the Salish Sea Stewards training along with a plug for new kayaker kelp survey volunteers – we had one interested, but they will likely join the Whatcom MRC team.
 - 2024 Kelp Surveys will begin again in June with a Skagit team pre-season review and BBQ scheduled for June 6 and a shake-down paddle planned for June 14.
 - Exploring the possibility of adding new kelp bed(s) to survey in collaboration with the Swinomish off Lone Tree Point and Hope Island and Kiket Island - Steve Olsen has offered to lead. The Swinomish will provide launch access at Thousand Trails. The site recon went well and looks feasible. The next step is to find a few experienced kayak kelp survey volunteers willing to add this kelp bed to their schedules this year.
 - Lynne and Jeff W met with Pacific Northwest National Labs to learn more about the work they are doing to model the currents in the Salish Sea:
 - <https://nvs.nanoos.org/WaysWaterMoves>
 - <https://ssmc-uw.org/2023/07/12/sscofs-current/>
 - They also have a You-Tube site where you can get short vignettes of different higher resolution studies that have done for various areas across the Salish Sea:

- <https://www.youtube.com/@salishseamodelingcenter7155>
- David Trimbach, NWSC Science Advisory Committee and WDFW Conservation Social Scientist is meeting with MRC kelp teams and others to collect information for a HSIL proposal to connect with diverse communities, including Asia Pacific Islanders, on their relationships / interaction with kelp. Objective is to provide more targeted and useful communication to communities on the value of kelp (seaweed), including legal uses and restoration / monitoring / protection needs. Lynne recently met with David about the project.
- Bowman Bay Restoration– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Beach Seining:** Jason Morgan with the NWSF is leading the beach seining effort for the Skagit MRC with the help of volunteers including MRC members (Paul Dinnel and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson), from January 2024 through December 2025. Beach seining currently takes place twice a month through June. It will be reduced to once a month starting in July through the end of 2025.
 - **Plant Maintenance:** Lisa Kaufman with the NWSF is leading the plant maintenance effort for the Skagit MRC. Foundation staff continues to do weekly plant maintenance at the site every Thursday to make sure the plants get watered on a regular basis during the hot and dry summer months. Monthly volunteer stewardship events will be held May 30th, June 28th, July 25th, and August 22nd from 9am-11am.
 - **Bowman Bay Outreach Event- June 28th:** In partnership with NWSF, SFEG, State Parks, and Skagit MRC. Details are still being work out. Will include beach seining demos, plant maintenance, forage fish survey demos, outreach tables, etc.
 - **Other (non-MRC) Bowman Bay Restoration Updates:** With USFW funding leftover from a previous project, the NWSF is working with Deception Pass State Park and USFWS to develop a design for removal of the Bowman Bay boat ramp and armor/debris that was exposed during the December 28 storm event. The boat ramp will be replaced with a gravel slope to allow for hand-carried vessels. USFWS will provide federal ESA permitting assistance to Parks. Design should be completed by end of September.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Background:** A Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment has been funded for Jan 2024-Dec 2024 to leverage previous shoreline restoration and protection studies, projects and research and update with new and emerging research to produce: Skagit Geodatabase with interactive web-based tools compatible with SoundIQ; Skagit Nearshore Inventory Resource List; List of Prioritized Skagit Focus Areas and a Top Priority List of Skagit MRC Projects and recommended action plans. A firm was selected from the 5 proposals through a team-based evaluation and follow-on interviews of top 3 candidates – Confluence Environmental was unanimously chosen and a contract was in place as of April 1.
 - **Updates:** The Shoreline Needs Assessment project is underway.
 - Kickoff meeting was held April 19 – introductions, review more detailed Confluence Project Plan, open Q&A and a focus on the Task 1 geodatabase design and deliverables. Suzanne Shull (NWSC) attended and was a significant help in clarifying approach needed for Task 1/5 Geodatabase and deliverables to be compatible with SoundIQ.
 - Next steps: Confluence set up 30 minute “check in’s” every 2 weeks to monitor progress and answer questions as the deliverables are developed.
 - First check in was Wed May 5 which covered project status, project needs and next steps.
 - Next Deliverables Due: Initial Geodatabase design (Task 1) and Literature Review (Task 2) (Due: June 10)
- Vessel Turn-In Event- Melissa Ciesielski:

- Swinomish in partnership with NWSC, Skagit MRC, Port of Skagit, La Conner Marina, DNR, and Skagit County will be co-hosting a vessel turn-in event towards the end July with NWSC and DNR funding.
- We've started promoting the event this month. Flyers have been distributed to local marinas.
- Applications are now being accepted through June 24th.
- There are several vessel owners that have already expressed interest to Catey about participating.
- The Turn-In Event could last a few days to a few weeks depending on how many vessels register.
- There will likely be a media day with the partners and press present.

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):

Allen Elementary fifth grade students participating in the mudflat safari at Bay View State Park- May 22, 2024.
Photo: Annie England, PBNERR



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: May 2024

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The MRC intern will start in early June and will support MRC projects and focus on creating a shoreline monitoring framework for the MRC.
- The Crabber Outreach subcommittee is preparing for crabber opening weekends.

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

Our intern has accepted the position and will start her position on June 10. The Marine Ecology Intern will support MRC projects including forage fish, kelp monitoring, and the ORCA program. The intern will also focus on creating a shoreline monitoring framework for the MRC and conduct a shoreline audit.

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

Elisa Dawson attended the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material workshop on April 18.

Elisa Dawson attended the NWSC Capstone Group Meeting on April 23.

Joycelyn Blue and Elisa Dawson attended the Kayak Kickoff on May 1.

Joycelyn Blue has been attending the WSU Beach Naturalist program over the past few weeks and completed the program on May 9.

MRC Members were invited to attend the Adopt-A-Stream Killer Whales Tales presentation on May 11.

The May MRC meeting was held on May 15.

Elisa Dawson attended the NWSC Capstone Group Meeting on May 21.

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):

Strategic Planning (MRC grant project for 2024 – 2025): The second in-person strategic planning workshop is scheduled for July 10. The consultant is currently working on analyzing responses from the survey regarding the strategic plan of the MRC.

The Evan’s School students presented a summary of their findings to the MRC at the May 15 MRC Meeting. The final report from the Evan’s School Students will be available in early June.

Marine Vegetation Outreach (MRC grant project for 2024 – 2025): The subcommittee is continuing to scope an in-person event for the fall. The consultant is wrapping up the first draft of the summary of conservation, policy, and environmental data/conditions for marine vegetation in the Edmonds area, as well as the list of Edmonds community groups.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): The two vessels have been posted and staff are working to hire a contractor for their removal.

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

Forage Fish Monitoring: April sampling of Picnic Point and Meadowdale occurred on April 24. May sampling occurred on May 22 for these two sites.

Howarth Park sampling occurred on April 27 and May 11.

Nearshore Restoration: Elisa met with Meadowdale consultant ESA on May 14 to discuss updates to the monitoring report. The next Monitoring Team meeting is June 24.

Outreach: Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. Planning for the third quarter cleanup is still in progress and plans to utilize the ETAP process.

The 2024 Beach Naturalist program concluded on May 9 with 17 people graduating the program.

The Outreach subcommittee tabled at the Edmonds Watershed Fun Fair on May 18. They mostly focused on marine vegetation education.

Crabber Outreach/Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: The subcommittee met and determined the supplies that need to be reordered. The subcommittee will send out volunteer signups at the beginning of June for the approximate dates of crabber opening weekends.

Marine Water Quality: ORCA continues to take data and analyze it for 2024 and will also analyze data from 2020-2022. Altogether, there will be 5 years of data available and analyzed by the end of this year (2020-2024). Staff from both organizations met to discuss deliverable specifics and review draft graphics for public outreach on April 29. The next meeting to discuss deliverables will be in fall.

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area: The outreach subcommittee is working with Tulalip Tribes to update the MRC signs at Kayak point and ensure they align in story and messaging. The subcommittee plans to utilize information from the Port Susan storymap in the signs.

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:

- Edmonds Watershed Fun Fair on May 18
- Forage fish monitoring Picnic Point and Meadowdale –May 22; Howarth Park – May 11
- ORCA Student Showcase – June 6 at 4pm
- Crabber Outreach – first two weekends of crabbing season (expected end of June, beginning of July)

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



Julie Schlenger and Brienne Townsend of the Snohomish County MRC running a booth at the Edmonds Watershed Fun Fair.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: May 2024

Submitted by: Dana Flerchinger and Austin Rose

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

- The MRC made a recommendation to the Whatcom County Executive to appoint an applicant to the Citizen-at-Large vacancy. This is an agenda item for the June 4 Council session.
- The MRC discussed the idea of piloting a virtual VNAZ in Drayton Harbor which would be in partnership with the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District (DHSPD) – whose concerns go beyond eelgrass and include water quality and impacts to commercial shell fishing. The MRC tabled further discussion and decision making until the June MRC meeting.
- MRC staff provided WA State Parks staff with the social marketing materials developed by Shew Designs. Posters will be displayed at the Wildcat Cove boat launch and rack cards will be distributed to park guests at informational kiosks. The Northwest Straits Foundation has also hired 2 interns to engage with boaters at the launch to discuss best practices to preserve eelgrass, such as launching at a higher tide. The interns will start in early June.

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

- There is currently a vacancy for a Citizen-at-Large position for which a community member has applied. The MRC made a recommendation to the Whatcom County Executive to appoint the applicant to the Citizen-at-Large vacancy. This is an agenda item for the June 4 Council session

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

- The May MRC meeting was held on May 2nd. Highlights include:
 - Dana Oster, Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC), updated the committee on the Voluntary No-Anchor Zone project. Due to the number of new committee members, Dana provided an overview of the project and how it has evolved over the years. The tiered approach to regional VNAZ project was shared, and the virtual VNAZ concept was highlighted. The MRC discussed the idea of piloting a virtual VNAZ in Drayton Harbor, which would be in partnership with the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District (DHSPD) – whose concerns go beyond eelgrass and include water quality and impacts to commercial shell fishing. The MRC tabled further discussion and decision making until the June MRC meeting.
 - David Trimbach, Conservation Social Scientist, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, shared his proposal focused on kelp and eelgrass in response to the recent [HSIL RFP](#). This project will be a social science research project focused on identifying ecosystem services (emphasis on health/wellbeing) of kelp and eelgrass in Puget Sound. The MRC agreed to be a general participant in his project.
 - Lucas Hart, Director, Northwest Straits Commission provided information about the origins of the [Northwest Straits Initiative](#).

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

n/a

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

- [Beach Seine with Kids](#)
The MRC has completed all field and classroom event visits for the Beach Seine with Kids program with a total of 4 schools participating including Beach Elementary School, Lummi Nation School, Lowell Elementary School, and Eagleridge Elementary School. A total of 189, 4th grade students attended the 3 beach seine events that included a talk from a tribal elder, a salmon fishing game, and several successful

beach seines! Among the catch were many juvenile salmon species (including chum, pink, chinook, and coho), sculpins, shiner perch, and pipefish!

- Social Marketing at Wildcat Cove

MRC staff provided WA State Parks staff with the social marketing materials developed by Shew Designs. Posters will be displayed at the Wildcat Cove boat launch and rack cards will be distributed to park guests at informational kiosks. The Northwest Straits Foundation has also hired 2 interns to engage with boaters at the launch to discuss best practices to preserve eelgrass, such as launching at a higher tide. The interns will start in early June.

- Olympia Oysters

The MRC conducted their 6th annual population survey of Olympia oysters in North Chuckanut Bay on May 8th. Bellingham Technical College (BTC) Fisheries and Aquaculture Program students assisted with the population survey in the 7 test plots throughout the bay (including one reference plot). The MRC and BTC students also introduced 25 cubic yards of seasoned Pacific oyster shell to monitor natural recruitment of larvae against shell substrate. The MRC lead is also working with Ryan Crim, Puget Sound Restoration Fund, to complete a population survey in Drayton Harbor.

Photos:



Photo credits: Dana Flerchinger, *BTC students learning from MRC project lead, Jackie Dexter, about how to conduct an Olympia oyster survey in North Chuckanut Bay (left). Live Olympia oyster (right).*



Photo credits: Dana Flerchinger, *Students from Eagleridge Elementary school observe technicians from Lummi Natural Resources counting and measuring fish at the final Beach Seine with Kids event on May 15th (left). A juvenile chum and chinook salmon that were caught in the beach seine (right).*