



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Date: June 28, 2024
Time: 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Location: [Virtual Zoom Meeting](#)

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.

Documents for NW Straits Commission Review:

- **May 2024 Minutes Approval**

| | | |
|------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 10:00 -10:10 AM | Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement May minutes approval | Tim Ellis, Chair |
| 10:10 – 10:30 AM | Athena Group Project Presentation | Tevin Medley |
| 10:30 – 10:55 AM | Speed Date with a Scientist: Ohop Creek Stormwater Management Pilot Project | Keith Estes, Long Live the Kings |
| 10:55 -11:05 AM | Business Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European green crab funding through Dept of Ecology budget request • NWSC Meeting July 2024 | Lucas Hart Caitlyn Blair |
| 11:05 – 11:15 AM | Project Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEI and Eelgrass No Anchor Zone Phase 2 planning | Lucas Hart |
| 11:15 – 11:25 AM | Committee Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Advisory Committee | Julia Parrish |



agenda

| | | |
|------------------|--|-------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Committee• External Relations | Alan Clark Nan McKay |
| 11:25 – 11:40 AM | MRC Reports | MRC Representatives |
| 11:40 – 11:45 AM | Northwest Straits Foundation | Don Hunger |
| 11:45 – 11:50 PM | Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission | Cecilia Gobin |
| 11:50 – 11:55 PM | Puget Sound Partnership | Laura Bradstreet |
| 11:55 – 12:00 PM | Public Comment | All |
| 12:00 PM | Adjourn | |

Next meeting: In Person in Jefferson County at the Port Townsend Yacht Club (2503 Washington St. Port Townsend, WA 98368) from 10 AM – 3 PM



Minutes

May 31, 2024 10:00 AM-3:00 PM

In-Person Meeting, Camano Library, Island County
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Ken Collins (Island), Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Nan McKay, Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Tom Cowan

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

Others in Attendance: Elsa Schwartz, Barbara Bennett, Jill Lipoti, Jay Krienitz, Scott Chase, Don Hunger, Austin Rose, Katie Kowal, Kelly Zupich, Sarah Fisker

Absent: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit)

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim Ellis welcomed the group with introductions and the tribal acknowledgement.

The April NW Straits Commission minutes were approved as written by consensus.

NW Straits Elections:

Tim Ellis was nominated and elected as chair, and Alan Clark was nominated and elected as vice chair.

Department of Ecology's new Coastal Resilience Initiative, what's new and what's coming

Jay Krienitz presented on the Department of Ecology's new Coastal Resilience Initiative. The Coast and Ocean Management Unit developed a Coastal Resiliency program and a [Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team \(COHORT\)](#) in response to coastal communities' requests for the state to help address the growing severity of natural hazards, which include flooding, erosion, sea level rise, landslides, and a Cascadia earthquake and tsunami event. If you are interested in viewing this presentation, please contact Caitlyn (blair@nwstraits.org).

Island MRC Presentation: "Building a Sense of Place"

Jill Lipoti presented on the ways Island MRC builds a sense of place with their volunteers. Building and creating a sense of place includes fostering relationships with people and the ecosystem that deepen our learning and awareness of the environment around us and where we



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live. If you are interested in viewing this presentation, please contact Caitlyn (blair@nwstraits.org).

Retreat Update from ECO Resource Group

Facilitators from ECO Resource Group, a consultant team contracted by the Commission to support preparation for a 2024 NW Straits Initiative retreat, shared an update on the planning process for the retreat agenda. They are completing individual interviews with folks from the NWS Initiative and have received over 60 responses to a separate survey. The interviews and survey are being used to collect insight on what is going well in the Initiative and opportunities for improvement. Information collected will be used to inform a leadership retreat that will be held in late summer/early fall.

Business Items

Puget Sound Day on the Hill: The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and Puget Sound Partnership led another successful Puget Sound Day on the Hill in May. Among the priorities at this year's Day on the Hill was reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative. Meetings were held with the Washington State delegation to share the work of Marine Resources Committees and our many regional partnerships. Learn more about the future of the Initiative, resources, and links on our [Looking ahead](#) webpage.

Project Updates

Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI): Athena Group is hosting focus groups for members of the NW Straits Initiative to share their thoughts and ideas about DEI and learn about the progress of this phase of the project, which is an internal assessment of the current state of DEI sentiments within the Northwest Straits Initiative. Virtual focus groups will be held on June 10 and June 13 for MRC volunteers, NW Straits Commissioners, NW Straits Foundation Board members, and MRC, NW Straits Commission, and NW Straits Foundation staff.

Kelp Social Media Campaign: Jeff and Jessica have been working on a social media campaign for the Kelp Plan. The goal is to reach out to invested people and get them involved in kelp restoration and education. There will be 17 posts on various social media from now to December. The posts will highlight the importance and status of kelp, sharing the kelp plan, highlighting project examples, and sharing helpful solutions for involvement in kelp restoration and projects.

Derelict Vessel Update: Skagit MRC, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Skagit County, Port of Skagit, La Conner Maritime Services, NW Straits Commission, WA Department of Ecology, and



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WA Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) are hosting a free vessel turn-in event at the end of July at the La Conner Marina. Apply or learn more in the [Vessel Turn-In Flyer](#).

Committee Updates

Science Advisory Committee: Julia shared that the social science subcommittee is putting together a 101 workshop. The Committee is also in the process of reviewing MRC reports.

Executive Committee: The Committee is working on scheduling a joint Executive Committee meeting with the NWS Foundation. The Committee also discussed providing comments on the Army Corps of Engineers Regional General Conditions. Cecilia Gobin provided a draft letter. The Committee was supportive of the comments but wanted to seek NWS Commission input before moving forward with submitting the comments. The deadline for comment submission did not allow for the Committee to get Commission input before the due date.

The NW Straits Commission approved submission of the letter. They also suggested a change to the NWS Commission Rules of Procedure to allow the Executive Committee to submit comment letters without full Commission approval when the comments are on non-controversial matters.

External Relations: Nan shared that the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and Puget Sound Partnership led another successful Puget Sound Day on the Hill in May. Among the priorities at this year's Day on the Hill was reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Initiative.

Green Crab Ad-Hoc Committee: Lucas reminded the Commission that this committee was formed to make a decision on how the Commission would engage in the European green crab issue in the next biennium and beyond. Lucas informed the Commission that the Committee reached consensus that the Commission will continue its current level of work in the next biennium assuming funding is secured. The Commission will also work with partners such as WDFW in the next biennium to provide insight on transition needs for long term green crab management and what the NWS Commission's role will be. The Committee discussed one option for the Commission could be to take a more localized approach to engage MRCs. Though, more field support will be needed from other partners as the Commission would likely step away from ongoing field trapping. More discussions internally and with partners are needed to identify the Commission's long term role.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark



Minutes

- 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 Clallam MRC, as Tim Cochnauer (representing the Community At-Large) ended his term as Chair. The vice chair is still Ann Soule.

Island – Ken Collins

- Cornet Bay: The MRC, NWS Foundation, and volunteers came together at Cornet Bay to work on some weeding. The MRC removed 100 pounds of weeds including some that are categorized as noxious.
- Alternative Learning Experience Program Low Tide Walk: The MRC joined South Whidbey School District ALE Class to go on a low tide walk at Possession Point State Park.
- Penn Cove Water Festival: The MRC participated in the Penn Cove Water Festival by hosting an educational booth for families. The key focus was forage fish and their importance.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC hired a new Coordinator, Katie Kowal, who started on the MRC on May 15, 2024.
- The Digging for Dinner event was on April 27, 2024. There were about 45 people in attendance.
- The MRC began a new project, which is monitoring kelp beds utilizing satellite imagery.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The MRC was represented at Friday Harbor Labs Open House on May 18. 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 began in late May 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 Island.
- Jeff Dyer is retiring from his position on the MRC. The MRC is looking to fill the position.

Skagit – From Report

- 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 students it was their first time on a beach! See the article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).



Minutes

- 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.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The MRC intern will begin 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.

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- 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 Voluntary No-Anchor Zone 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 NW Straits Foundation has also hired two 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.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Puget Sound Partnership

Laura Bradstreet gave an update on Puget Sound Day on the Hill. There were over 60 people, and over 40 meetings were held. Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization was a major priority. She also shared that there will be a Puget Sound Partnership meeting at Oak Harbor Library on June 5th and June 6th.



Commission staff highlights - [June 2024]

MRC Support

2022-23 and 2023-25 CDS MRC Grants (NOAA funding): Quarterly reporting will be due at the end of June for each of these awards.

2023-25 MRC Grants (state/EPA funding): Unspent funds from fiscal year 2024 in these awards will expire as of June 30, 2024. Quarterly reporting is also due for these awards.

MRC Meeting Attendance: San Juan (June 6) – Dana, Jeff, Jessica; Skagit Kayak Kickoff (June 7) – Leah, Jeff, Suzanne, Allie; Skagit (June 13) – Jeff, Caitlyn, Sasha Skagit MRC Molt Search Training (June 15) – Allie, Leah

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: Staff are updating and expanding the Kelp Project Inventory, an online resource to enter, update, and view all kelp related projects in Washington. Staff are collaborating with WA DNR's upcoming Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy on Kelp Plan action sequencing and next steps.

Kelp Monitoring: NWSC staff organized kayak safety classes for interested MRC kelp kayak volunteers for June 29th and 30th at Bowman Bay, Fidalgo Island. The classes will be instructed by Fidalgo Paddlesports. Nineteen individuals have enlisted.

European Green Crab: NWSC staff participated in a collaborative trapping event with WA Dept. of Natural Resources, WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, WA Conservation Corps, Padilla Bay NERR, and others in Fidalgo Bay. Staff also collaborated with Skagit MRC and Padilla Bay NERR to host an in-person Molt Search Training. Staff are also working closely with WDFW and Padilla Bay to discuss coordination of future management efforts.

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: NWSC staff provided review for the social marketing campaign deliverables. Staff continued reaching out to navigation application developers to discuss virtual no-anchor zone strategies.

Derelict Vessels: NWSC staff and partners continue to coordinate and plan for the Skagit vessel turn in event beginning in July. Staff are planning for a media day event in early August as part of the turn in activities.



Commission staff highlights - [June 2024]

Operations

Staff: Commission staff met at Padilla Bay Reserve on June 10 with Joenne McGerr, Program Manager of Ecology's Shorelands and Environmental Assistance (SEA) Program. The Commission is housed within the SEA Program at Ecology. On June 12 Commission staff joined other Padilla Bay Reserve staff for a tour for Ecology's Executive Leadership Team, including Ecology Director Laura Watson and Deputy Director Heather Bartlett.

Budget: State fiscal year 2024 ends this month. This is the first year of the two-year state budget cycle. Any remaining FY24 funding for MRCs and for European green crab work expires as of June 30. The state funds for kelp (including funds passed through to partners) do not expire, as they are on the two-year cycle ending June 30, 2025.

Contracts: The contract with Athena Group for the DEI Phase 1 will be complete at the end of June, and the planning is underway for a Phase 2 contract. A small contract with Fidalgo Paddlesports for kelp kayaker volunteers was executed with work to be complete at the end of June.

DEI: Athena Group hosted four focus groups: 1. MRC volunteers, 2. NW Straits Commissioners and NW Straits Foundation Board members, 3. all NW Straits Commission, NW Straits Foundation, and MRC Staff, 4. any NW Straits Initiative member. The focus groups were designed to share the survey results and have a discussion with attendees about the results. On June 25, there will be a project assessment presentation from Athena Group, which all MRC volunteers, Initiative staff, as well as Commissioners and Board members have been invited to. Several staff attended the staff focus group. Various staff also attended several Ecology DEI Conference sessions, as well as the Indigenous Knowledge Dialogue Series webinar on June 11.

Other Meetings Attended

- Conference planning meeting (June 4) – Lucas, Sasha, Dana, Caitlyn, Jessica
- Transboundary Kelp Node (Participative Kelp Science) (June 4) – Jeff
- NOAA Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Evaluation Workshop (June 10) – Jeff
- Tsleil-Waututh Nation Burrard Inlet Eelgrass Symposium (June 10) – Allie
- WA Seaweed Collaborative Workshop (June 14) – Jeff
- PSEMP (Forage Fish and Food Webs) Workshop (June 26) – Jeff
- Science Advisory Committee meeting, UW Seattle (June 26) – Dana, Sasha, Caitlyn, Jessica, Lucas



Commission staff highlights - [June 2024]

- Lucas: WDFW Green crab budget planning meeting 6/17; Ecology Program Management Team meetings 6/3, 6/10, 6/17, 6/24; Ecology Budget Development Advisory Group meeting 6/20

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: June 2024

Submitted by: Amelia Kalagher

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

- Clean Pacific oyster shell was spread at the Sequim Bay site for Olympia oyster restoration.
- Several MRC members attended an informational and listening workshop on marine carbon dioxide removal held by American University researchers.

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)

- June monthly MRC meeting was held 6/17/24.
- The MRC is preparing to host a table at the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary’s film event in July.

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 substrate spread was completed last month, and broodstock collection aims to grow about 3 million oyster seed for the restoration site in Sequim Bay.
- 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. Future coaster designs are being discussed.
- MRC members continued developing new displays for outreach at local festivals, especially in preparation for the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary’s film event in July.
- Clallam MRC continued to steward the beach at the mouth of the Elwha River. A sticker was printed this month to inform sanican users of the MRC stewardship of the facility.
- MRC member Nancy Stephanz continues to process samples weekly for the Sound Toxins project (with Feiro Marine Life Center).
- The Clallam MRC continues to prepare for its upcoming Pinto Abalone monitoring project, with fieldwork expected to begin late 2024.
- Shellfish biotoxin monitoring continues 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 monitoring began June 2 across Mussel Beach, Panorama Vista, Port Williams, Dungeness Spit, Port Angeles, McDonald Bluff, and Bachelor Rock.

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):



Figure 1. Spreading clean Pacific oyster shell for the Olympic oyster restoration project in Sequim Bay, in partnership with the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, May 28. Washington Conservation Corps crew on site for shell spread. Photo credit Amelia Kalagher.



Figure 2. Spreading clean Pacific oyster shell for the Olympic oyster restoration project in Sequim Bay, in partnership with the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, May 28. Washington Conservation Corps crew on site for shell spread. Photo credit Amelia Kalagher.



Figure 3. Spreading clean Pacific oyster shell for the Olympic oyster restoration project in Sequim Bay, in partnership with the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, May 28. Photo credit Amelia Kalagher.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: June / 2024

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council
- Stewardship Event at Hoypus

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

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

Previous Meetings/Events:

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

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- June 25: Women's Group Weeding Event
- July 2: MRC Monthly Meeting
- July 10: Cornet Bay 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: We continue our year-round monitoring for forage fish eggs at most sites. Teams conduct monthly monitoring at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Glendale, and Keystone Preserve. Seahorse Siesta has concluded for the season and will resume next winter. The committee is deliberating on the project's future direction. They are weighing the importance of maintaining index sites versus maximizing beach protections by relocating sites upon identifying forage fish eggs. Additionally, the team is exploring ways to better utilize volunteers on the beach to collect more data.

Bull Kelp Surveys: The team plans to test new equipment to measure temperature, salinity, and depth, and to create contour maps. Surveys began on June 18. The new team lead, Carter Webb, along with the staff, will work to visit all sites to observe the teams in action. This will provide an opportunity to get to know the volunteers and familiarize themselves with the sites.

Stewardship – Cornet Bay/Hoypus Point: Our most recent stewardship event took place at Hoypus Point and Cornet Bay. We began at Hoypus Point to address the encroaching weeds, then moved to Cornet Bay for additional weed removal. This year, the Canada Thistle infestation appears to be more severe at Cornet. We are collaborating with the Noxious Weed Coordinator to find solutions. This week, staff sprayed the thistle and plan to start watering next week.

Shoreline Education and Survey: We are currently planning for the Shoreline Workshop we will be hosting in October. Additionally, we are collaborating with Herrera to finalize their report, which is generating considerable discussion at the county level. Once the report is complete, we will develop a plan to utilize the data and educate the public.

Derelict Vessels: We are working on a plan for education focused on prevention.

Water Quality: The team is working to get two QAPP's prepared and ready for review by DOE.

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.

PSP Leadership Council: The local forum provided a fantastic opportunity for our MRC to showcase the work we've accomplished over the past year. Patrick Havel presented the Climate Change White Paper, while Jill Lipoti discussed the Shoreline Armoring Survey. Staff also shared updates on Cornet and Hoypus Point. Following the forum, Island MRC hosted a site visit to Cornet and Hoypus. It was a beautiful day, offering the perfect chance to highlight the importance of continued funding for maintaining the health of restoration sites after construction ends.

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



Cornet Bay – Volunteers weeding
Photo by Kelly Zupich



Cornet Bay/Hoypus Point – PSP Leadership Council site visits
Photo by Valerie dos Santos



Hoypus Point - Bull Kelp Monitoring
Photo by Kelly Webb

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: June 2024

Submitted by: Katie Kowal

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

- 6/26 Crabbing 101 Workshop
- 6/8 Olympia oyster population survey – Discovery Bay

- **Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): New student MRC Member position (Youth Representative) established in Fall 2023 has been advertised, and one application has been received. Application period closes 6/30.

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

Past 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 Beach Walk
June 26 – Crabber Outreach Workshop
June 28 – Rain Garden Work Party

Upcoming Events/Meetings

July 18 – Kelp kayak monitoring
July 25 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting
August 6 – MRC monthly 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 - Dabob Bay (Index):** The Project Lead (Sarah) sampled in June.
- **Shoreline Landowner:** Nothing to report.
- **Kelp kayak monitoring:** North Beach kayak surveys to begin in July. Protocol walk-through on the beach on 6/22.
- **Kelp Satellite Imagery Pilot:** QAPP in development. Potential contractors being contacted and imagery options compared.
- **Storm surge monitoring:** Nothing to report.

2. Rain Gardens:

- Rain Garden Work Party on 6/28
- Rain Garden maintenance needs were identified at the 5/23 Rain Garden Maintenance/Volunteer training, and will be used to inform Work Party schedule for 2024 (schedule tbd).

3. Education & Outreach:

- Crabbing 101 Workshop 6/26
- Planning meeting for Wooden Boat Festival expected to be scheduled for end of June/early July.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- 6/8 population survey— 12 attendees counted live Olympia oysters in an oyster bed in south Discovery Bay. Volunteers counted oysters in 2"x2" quadrat subsections along a transect line, collecting a total of 60 samples over 4 hours.
- 6/22 Beach Walk oyster survey at Broad Spit

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- Nothing to report.

6. ROV Lost Crab Pots:

- Nothing to report.

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 Jefferson MRC, in conjunction with Strait ERN, is working with a local DEI contractor, USAWA, who will observe and review Jefferson MRC operations (meetings, programming) and provide guidance and suggestions around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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



*Photo: Olympia oyster population survey – Discovery Bay, WA
Volunteers conduct an Olympia oyster population count on the beach at low tide.*

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: June 2024

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

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

- June marks the end of Jeff Dyer's time on the SJC MRC. He has been an important part of the committee, volunteering his time and expertise. His experience as a commercial captain brings keen insight to the MRC. Jeff is truly an all-star and we will sorely miss him. Interviews are underway to fill his seat, with several good prospects moving forward.
- Aerial surveys to study recreational boating density amongst sensitive habitats are underway for the summer. Systematic line-transect surveys will be flown at least twice per month between now and September. Through this project we hope to understand the connection between boater presence and activity on eelgrass habitat health and identify impact hotspots or priority sites for protection and/or restoration.

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

Our June MRC Meeting was the last scheduled meeting for long time member, Jeff Dyer. Many thanks were shared for his all efforts and wisdom towards furthering marine protections and actions in the San Juans. We will truly miss his insight, willingness to help out, and all his friendly, thoughtful participation. Interviews are underway to recommend candidates for the open position. We have several good prospects that will be forwarded on to the County Council later this month.

The Department of Environmental Stewardship interviewed several candidates for the Marine Program summer intern to help with MRC projects, including tabling at key summer events like dock talks and the county fair. They will have an opportunity to learn from the MRC about the scientific research happening such as the aerial surveys and benthic habitat mapping. They will also be introduced to working with advisory committees and how citizens can influence policy and protection measures relevant to the Salish Sea.

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

- MRC/CAG/LIO Meeting – June 6
- PFSS Subcommittee Meeting – June 25
- Dock Talks – July 6, 20, August 10, 24
- Next MRC Meeting – July 10 (in person)

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

The MRC was just notified about a \$13,200 grant award from the Washington Maritime Heritage Grants program to create and install updated educational signage at the Cattle Point Interpretive Area on the Southern tip of San Juan Island. The project is focused on sharing the stories of maritime heritage at this site. MRC members will be instrumental in helping craft, install and celebrate the stories from this area.

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

Understanding recreational boating density is essential to protecting sensitive eelgrass habitat among the popular boating destinations in the San Juans. In order to better understand where high density of boats are anchoring, we can compare eelgrass beds and meadows to where boats are anchoring. Aerial surveys are scheduled to happen throughout the summer. This pairs with land-based vessel counts at specific zones. MRC members and volunteers will be performing shore-based vessel counts to add to the data set.

Along with vessel surveys, MRC members will help out with Dock Talks throughout the summer. This is a valuable outreach opportunity to discuss the work of the MRC and to pass out Whale Warning Flags to boaters. We highlight the

importance of kelp and eelgrass beds, sharing Green Boating materials from Friends of the San Juans and educating people about the dangers of derelict vessels and how to report them.

Fieldwork for benthic habitat mapping is scheduled to happen this summer. Assessing the seafloor in shallow areas, such as where recreational boaters may be anchoring, can give us important data about what these habitats look like. Mapping will happen at several sites lacking sufficient data, identifying bathymetry and benthic habitat types.

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.):

On June 19th the El Capitan, a long-time watched vessel, was raised from the depths of WestSound Marina on Orcas Island. The saga comes to positive conclusion after the efforts of marina operators, IOSA, DNR, Ecology, the Coast Guard and the County to finally raise the ship and have it removed permanently from local waters.

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



Aerial Surveys, counting recreational vessels across the San Juan Islands. Photos by Frances Robertson.



The El Capitan, a long-watched derelict vessel that sunk back in November 2023, being raised out of the depths of Westsound Marina. Photos by Sam Whitridge.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: June/2024

Submitted by: Tracy/Lynne

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

- **European Green Crab Molt Survey Training- June 15 at Padilla Bay:** Hosted by Skagit MRC, Northwest Straits Commission, and Padilla Bay NERR. 23 people registered, only 6 attended. Very engaged group with lots of great questions!
- **2025 Skagit County Comp Plan Update- Stakeholder Interview with MRC:** Teams meeting held June 21, attended by 6 MRC members. Interview took one hour. Thought provoking questions and discussions!

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):

- **June 13-** Monthly MRC Meeting, in person at Padilla Bay (9-11am). Sylvia Yang presented on Padilla Bay's Olympia oyster restoration project. Meeting was followed by a tour of the upland coastal prairie restoration project and the touch pool in the interpretive center.
- **June 14-** Kayak Kelp Shake Down Cruise- Cap Sante.
- **June 15-** European Green Crab Molt Survey Training- June 15 at Padilla Bay.
- **June 20-** Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment Check-in Meeting.
- **June 21-** 2025 Skagit County Comp Plan Update- Stakeholder Interview with MRC via Teams.
- **June 28-** 'Bowman Bay Discovery Day' Outreach Event In partnership with NWSF, SFEG, State Parks, and Skagit MRC. Will include beach seining demos, plant maintenance, forage fish survey demos, outreach tables, etc.

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 joining the ranks of 365 trained Stewards. Many have already started volunteering!
 - 2 new SSS graduates, Barabara Clark and Jenn Dumas, recently joined the AC.
 - Volunteer opportunities are posted every 2 weeks in *The Wave*, an electronic bulletin maintained by PBNERR.
 - The Advisory Committee is in the process of reviewing the 2024 SSS Class Surveys and planning the Summer Alumni social with Padilla Bay.
 - To date, SSS have recorded over 50,000 volunteer hours since 2015.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - May forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites were cancelled due to schedule conflicts.
 - The "annual" Anacortes Island View Elementary kids program on May 21 was held at RV Park for a great time by all. Huge thanks to a big group of volunteers who made it work in Pete's absence!
 - June forage fish survey schedule is now out.
 - Pete will be at the Bowman Bay Discovery Day event on June 28 and will be leading some small group forage fish sessions and sample survey work.

- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - April 8-12: **Concrete 10th-11th grade.** Weeklong program. 1 field day, 4 classroom days. 45 students collected species abundance and biodiversity of intertidal organisms at Bay View State Park with the help of volunteers on April 10. Students collected data from natural beach habitats and compared them to habitats that have been armored and beach habitats that have been partially restored as an indicator of ecosystem health. Students created graphs, analyzed data, and gave presentations.
 - May 22: **Allen Elementary in Mount Vernon-** 40 fifth grade students participated in the mudflat safari at Bay View State Park. This was their first year participating! A lot of these kids have never been to the beach before. The teachers were impressed by how engaged their students were! There was a good student to volunteer ratio. Recent article in the [Skagit Valley Herald](#).
- 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 in May and again in June with MRC and NWSF staff, one County Intern, and two NWSF interns. Pulled lots of weeds. There are still a lot of weeds left to pull, but the rain garden is looking healthy overall. Starting to fill in with new growth. Might need some additional planting and mulch in the fall or next year to help it fill in. The interns will maintain the rain garden this summer into the fall with NWSF staff oversight. The NWSF is working on a maintenance schedule and will be purchasing some tools, a hose, and key for water access.
 - **La Conner School Rain Garden:** Tracy and Lynne facilitated a site visit on May 20th with the Skagit County Road Shop Staff, Skagit Conservation District Staff, and Swinomish staff (ie Catey Ritchie) to get their technical expertise on the proposed improvements. The School Principal and Facilities Staff attended as well and were able to track down a copy of the original rain garden design. Proposed improvements include:
 - Improving stormwater flow to the rain garden (top priority).
 - ❖ County can help with construction. Recommended creating additional notches in the curb around the rain garden and shaving the asphalt area to help direct stormwater flow into the rain garden. Cost estimates are around \$6,000.
 - ❖ School Principal's daughter is a civil/environmental engineer who specializes in designing water flow systems for property development. She offered her engineering services (if needed) free of charge!
 - Spruce up the bare areas 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.
 - There won't likely be enough funding left to install interpretive signage this year, but we hope to get it done next year.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - Date has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Save the Date notices have been sent out to past participating organizations and volunteers.
 - Volunteer recruitment noticed posted in the Salish Sea Stewards electronic news bulletin The WAVE and the SSS alumni newsletter.
 - Event Agenda: beach seining, Shannon Point Marine Center Touch Tank (waiting on confirmation), outreach tables, chowders, shellfish, no-host salmon BBQ, face painting, kids craft tables, discovery passports, Samish canoe experience (waiting on confirmation).
 - Need to fill volunteer vacancies for: Parking, zero waste, popcorn, kids craft tables, Event MRC/announcer, photographers, roving volunteer break relief, and setup/cleanup.

- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) currently doing field work- outplanting with Teams from PSRF, WDFW, the Seattle Aquarium and Samish Tribe. So far this year they’ve outplanted around 12,000 juvenile abalone in the San Juan Island area at 17 outplant sites. 5,600 of those abalone went to Skagit sites.
 - PSRF finished monitoring all the outplant sites for the season.
 - Collected 20 new broodstock for spawning in the hatchery.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Paul retrieved shell strings for the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to monitor oyster settlement throughout Puget Sound.
 - Sampled oyster shell patch at the muddy southern channels of Fidalgo Bay. 82% of oysters were dead in the southern channels, possibly due to freezing winter temps. On the plus side, there were a lot of juvenile oyster settlement on the shell. The oyster shells will continue to provide substrate for future oyster settlement where there is very little substrate in the muddy 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.
 - Our Interlocal Agreement with the City of Anacortes was recently presented to the City Council. We are still waiting for a signed agreement. The City will be responsible for the following deliverables:
 - Interpretive Signage: City will create the layout design, fabricate, and install up to 3 interpretive signs. Skagit MRC will help create messaging content.
 - Website: City will host the project page on their website and create the QR Code. Skagit MRC will help create content.
 - Video: City will create a series of 3 short video clips (30 or 60 seconds) for social media and websites with input from Skagit MRC.
 - Community Engagement: City will host 3 stakeholder meetings at the Anacortes Senior Center and several community meetings. City staff will also host an informational booth at Fidalgo Bay Day.
 - Preliminary Conceptual Design: Hanson will provide a very preliminary conceptual design by the end of December. The conceptual design process will include geotech and hazardous materials sampling, and testing. The concept design will not be finalized until after our grant expires but will still be shared and presented to the MRC.
 - Need a new MRC Project Lead to coordinate the development of messaging content for public outreach (interp signage, website, videos, etc.), complete the Communications Plan and Outreach Strategy, and attend stakeholder meetings with the City.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Background: Skagit surveys include the following sites: Coffin Rocks (Steven Olsen - Lead), Biz Point (John Freeto - Lead), Shannon Point east/west (Lynne Wenberg - Lead) and proposed new “Lone Tree Point” (Steven Olsen – Lead).

Updates: Kelp Season is here!

 - May 11, Steven Olsen and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, with help from the Swinomish - obtained access to Thousand Trails boat launch and did a recon of Lone Tree Point and Skagit Island kelp beds. We found a healthy young kelp bed starting around the reef off Lone Tree. Steven recorded way points and a track of the current bed. We also paddled north to Skagit Island Near WDFW buoy and Steven took way points for the small kelp

bed there. Steven, as lead, determined access and managing currents / tides were feasible (although something to watch). The MRC approved the addition of the new Lone Tree Point site to the kelp surveys. First survey for Lone Tree occurred June 21.

- Skagit kayakers and NWSC reps (Jeff and Suzanne) met June 7 for a team BBQ and pre-season coordination at Steven's house. Topics covered: coordinating shake-down cruise for June 14 (Steven leading), debrief from NWSC kelp meetings and discuss what other MRC's are doing, new equipment needed, etc. (NWSC has what we need). Team leads shared their survey schedules and discussed resources needed to add the new bed. Although we have lost 4 kayakers (and added 1) this year, the team agreed to rally to share kayakers to ensure all teams have the kayakers they need (an online schedule and contact list was established).
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Background:** Bowman Bay Restoration Project Monitoring Plan calls for post-restoration monitoring to occur in years 1 – 5 (2016 - 2019 & 2021), and 9 – 10 (2024 – 2025) post-restoration. A new Beach Seining project was funded by the SMRC for 2024-2025 with Jason Morgan as the NWSF Lead Scientist. SFEG has an adjacent restoration project in the works and will be providing 50% of the necessary beach seining funds. An MOU with NWSF and SMRC has been signed and formalized.
 - **Updates:** Beach seining currently takes place twice a month through June with the help of volunteers including MRC members (Paul Dinnel and Lynne Wenberg-. It will be reduced to once a month starting in July through the end of 2025. BB has been experiencing high levels of ulva and at least one seining session had to be called off. In May they caught a few juvenile Chinook and chum salmon and a large number of juvenile pink salmon, surf smelt, Sculpin, and English sole. A team of 8 volunteers contributed a total of 41 hours.
- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Background: 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.

Updates:

 - Coordinating the season's plant maintenance schedule of stewardship events with weeding, watering, and spreading compost and mulch.
 - Stewardship event on May 30th with 13 volunteers and 3 NWSF staff in attendance, focusing on plant maintenance, such as weeding throughout the entire restoration site.
 - Monthly volunteer events have been scheduled. Next event is June 28, July 25, August 22. June 28th will be a larger event including project partners (NWSF, MRC, SFEG, TSSS and MG Native Plants) and nearshore monitoring activities and demonstrations.
 - No watering to date due to rainy spring.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Background:** This project will produce a 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. Confluence Environmental is the firm that has been contracted to do this project.
 - **Updates:**
 - Meeting with Confluence every 2 weeks. June 20 was a one-hour progress meeting (1st deliverable) to review status of all the tasks in detail and solicit input from the Skagit advisory team members.
 - The preliminary literature review (in the form of a table summary) is complete and has been shared with the MRC for review. Literature Review will be iteratively updated as new information is needed over time. The list of data is

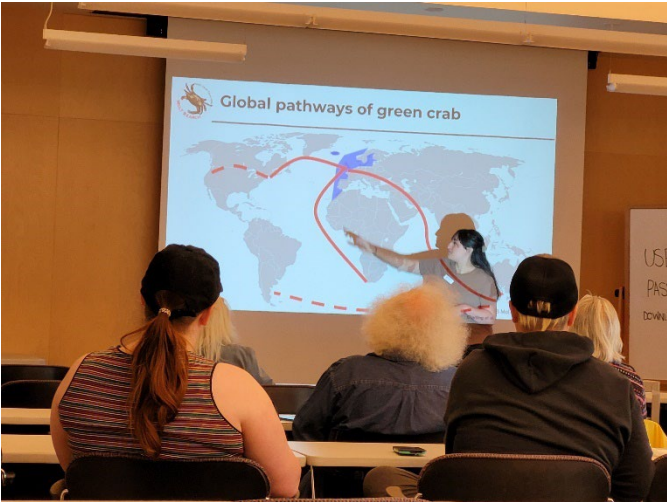
broad but not necessarily used in the analysis. All datasets will become part of the final Skagit Resource Inventory for future use.

- Phil reviewed latest conceptual model for determining marine processes, structure and function stressors, degradation, and linkage analysis.
- Phil noted some data sources from agencies (like WDFW) will require a public disclosure request before data will be made available. Phil will include any costs (nominal) associated with this in the invoicing.
- For digital access to Skagit Bay Blueprint data, Phil and Suzanne talked about other possible sources who might have this data archived somewhere – they haven't given up yet!
- Phil recommends we initially use Google Earth to map existing MRC projects more easily (completed, partially completed or incomplete).
- The geodatabase analytical unit will likely be shoreline (line segment) rather than parcel (polygon). Suzanne recommended looking at how other agencies define their data.
- Nearshore connections were noted of most importance to MRC and the main priority of this project to maintain scope, but we may elect to add areas up the watershed in the future. Phil provided a Nearshore Context diagram to verify what areas of the nearshore we want covered and asked if we also want to add areas higher up in the watershed for water quality.
- The following preliminary categories were proposed for prioritization:
 - Landscape Context
 - Ecosystem Process
 - Habitat Function
 - Overall
- 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.
 - Applications are being accepted through June 24th.
 - Potentially over 30 vessels interested.
 - There will likely be a media day with the partners and press present. Communications team (NWSC, Swinomish, Port of Skagit, DNR, and ECY reps) coordinating on media day logistics/plan.
 - Next meeting mid-July to finalize plans.

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):

European Green Crab Molt Survey Workshop at Padilla Bay- June 15, 2024



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: June 2024

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The MRC will be doing crabber outreach at the Port of Everett on July 6 and 7.
- Welcome to Cassie Laney our summer intern who will be working on creating a shoreline assessment framework!

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

Welcome to Cassie Laney our Marine Ecology Intern! She will be supporting current MRC projects and working on her own project to create a shoreline health assessment framework.

Cassandra Laney is a Marine Ecology Intern for Snohomish County Surface Water Management. Cassandra has a strong connection to Possession Sound, as this is where she discovered her passion for Oceanography. As both a resident and student in western Washington, she believes the neighboring waters create Washington culture. In 2021, she conducted her first independent research project focused on plankton gradients along the merge between estuary and river water through the GEOPATHS grant funded by the NSF.

Cassandra received her Associate's degree from the Ocean Research College Academy (ORCA) at Everett Community College. She is currently pursuing her Bachelor's degree at the University of Washington Seattle Campus where she is majoring in oceanography.

Outside of oceanography, Cassandra enjoys hiking, reading, and curating. You can also find her on the field or in the arena cheering with UW Spirit as a flyer.

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

Staff met with Jessica of NWS to ensure access and launch the new MRC U13 website on May 23.

MRC members and staff attended the ORCA student showcase on June 6.

Joycelyn Blue attended the PSEMP Indigenous Knowledge, Science, and Collaboration Panel on June 11.

The MRC decided to cancel the June 19 meeting due to it falling on the Juneteenth holiday.

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 and will take the place of the July MRC meeting. The subcommittee reviewed the first draft of the analysis of responses from the survey regarding the strategic plan of the MRC.

Marine Vegetation Outreach (MRC grant project for 2024 – 2025): The subcommittee reviewed 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. The final draft will be complete by the end of June. The subcommittee narrowed down dates for the in-person event to two potential Saturdays in October and are currently scoping locations in Edmonds.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): A contract is in progress for the removal of two vessels.

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

Forage Fish Monitoring: Picnic Point and Meadowdale were sampled on June 26.

Howarth Park sampling occurred on June 8.

Nearshore Restoration: The Monitoring Team meeting was held on 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.

Crabber Outreach/Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: Crabber outreach will occur at the 10th Street Boat Launch in Everett, July 6 and 7, from 6-10 a.m. In addition to crab gauges, rot cord, and bait hooks the MRC will be handing out oil spill kits donated from Washington Sea Grant. The subcommittee met on June 24 to finalize details for outreach.

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). The next meeting to discuss deliverables will be in fall.

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area: None

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.):

Staff are working with a student in the UW Bothell Digital Scholars program to revamp and convert the MRC annual report in Canva to make future editing easier and potentially accessible to members.

Upcoming Events:

- Forage fish monitoring Picnic Point and Meadowdale –July 16; Howarth Park – July 7
- Crabber Outreach – July 6 and 7

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

Cassie Laney, Snohomish County Marine Ecology Intern 2024



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: June 2024

Submitted by: Dana Flerchinger and Austin Rose

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

-

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

- Mark Fairhart was appointed to the MRC on June 4, filling a Citizen-at-Large seat.

"I have been a certified Scuba diver since 1983 and have personally observed the unrelenting decline of marine habitats around the world. I sail on the beautiful Salish Sea and Lake Whatcom and am very concerned about the increasing rejection of climate science by a significant portion of our citizenry. I hope that my participation on this committee can perhaps make a difference." – Mark Fairhart

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

- The June MRC meeting was held on June 6. Highlights include:
 - Brigid Wills and Eleanor Hines (representing the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Citizen Stewardship Committee (CPAR CSC)) and Erica Bleke (representing Department of Natural Resources Aquatic Reserves Program (DNR ARP)) presented on the Cherry Point Intertidal Monitoring Program. Since 2013, there have been annual intertidal monitoring surveys at sites on the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve, using methods from WSU's Beach Watcher's program. These surveys provide valuable baseline data in an area susceptible to oil spills and species invasions, fill a data gap of long-term (10 years) of surveys, and engage the community in citizen science efforts to learn about the aquatic environment. Historically, RE Sources has provided support for these surveys, with the RE Sources' lead scientist and Aquatic Reserves Stewardship Coordinator Americorps member providing coordination and training support. The lead scientist at RE Sources provided insight on protocols conducted data collection, quality assurance, and data analysis, and prepared reports to inform DNR ARP management decisions. Due to chronic underfunding, this program, as well as the lead scientist position, has been cut from RE Sources' budget. DNR continues to be interested in these surveys for management decisions and policy. Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Citizen Stewardship Committee sees the value in continuing to collect this data, and is looking for a new partner(s) in Whatcom County to provide funding, logistical, and additional scientific support. The MRC is assessing the possibility of taking on Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve intertidal monitoring as a project coordinator. A decision will be made by the end of summer.

See GIS Story Map, developed by DNR:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/6716f9bab0a24ccd8e53771ccc9d297b?item=3>

Scrolling down, this story map provides a data exploration tool, along with summarized findings of beach topography and species richness, among others.

- An updated [Drayton Harbor Shellfish Recovery and Protection Plan](#) was recently developed by the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District and approved by the Whatcom County Council. The plan includes recommendations on emerging issues, overarching priorities, new priorities, and other actions needed to restore shellfish growing areas in Drayton Harbor. The MRC discussed recommendations that overlap with their interests including: derelict vessels, VNAZ, eelgrass, and HABs. The MRC also discussed a potential collaborative role to recover the recreational shellfish area outside of Semiahmoo Spit.

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):

- Harmful Algae Bloom Monitoring (HABs)
Weekly HABs sampling resumed in March, and Whatcom County is still in the midst of spring plankton blooms. Paralytic shellfish toxins (PST) were first detected in mussels on 3/26 at Birch Bay and on 4/2 at Drayton Harbor/Semiahmoo Marina (DHSM). Alexandrium (A PST producing dinoflagellate) was first detected 4/23 at DHSM and 4/8 at Birch Bay. The WADOH closed recreational shellfish beds from Birch Point to the Canadian border on 5/24, incorporating the entire Whatcom County shoreline a few days later.
- Social Marketing at Wildcat Cove
The Northwest Straits Foundation has hired 2 interns (Dylan Trainer and Alex Haase) to work on various NWSI projects throughout the summer including eelgrass preservation efforts at Wildcat Cove. The interns will be engaging with boaters at the launch to discuss best practices to preserve eelgrass, such as launching at a higher tide. They will also educate visitors about proper intertidal etiquette and intertidal organisms.
- Olympia Oysters
Dana Flerchinger and MRC project lead, Jackie Dexter, conducted a population survey of live Olympia oysters in Drayton Harbor near historical Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) restoration sites. They documented a perimeter track surrounding live Olympia oysters that incorporated an area of 8,000 square meters. There were several large, healthy adult Olympia oysters with new shell growth found and measured throughout the survey. Despite the abundance of healthy Olympia oyster adults, no new larval recruitment was observed. Jackie has been communicating with PSRF to determine next steps for expanded restoration plots at Drayton Harbor.

Photos:

Photo right: Jackie Dexter measuring an Olympia oyster in Drayton Harbor.
Photos below: The BIG Olys found in Drayton Harbor

Credit: Dana Flerchinger

