



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission

Date: July 26, 2024

Time: 10:00 AM- 3:00 PM

Location: Port Townsend Yacht Club, 2503 Washington St, Port Townsend, WA 98368

Zoom Option: [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 homelands of the Jamestown S'Klallam and Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribes.

Documents for NW Straits Commission Review:

- June 2024 Minutes Approval
- NWSI Retreat planning exercise description

10:00 -10:15 AM	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement June Minutes Approval	Alan Clark, Vice Chair
10:15 – 10:25 AM	Special Guest Remarks	Tentative
10:25 – 10:45 AM	Remarks from Joenne McGerr, Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program Manager	Joenne McGerr, Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program Manager
10:45 – 11:15 AM	Beyond Kayaks: Expanding Techniques for Monitoring Floating Kelp in Jefferson County	Christopher Kelley and Jeff Taylor, Jefferson MRC



agenda

11:15 – 11:45 AM	Speed Date with a Scientist: Data-Driven Decision Making for a Sustainable Fishing Future	Liz Tobin, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe Shellfish Program Manager
11:45 – 11:50 PM	Business Items <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2025 NW Straits Commission Meeting dates• NW Straits Initiative Conference	Caitlyn Blair Caitlyn Blair
11:50 – 12:35 PM	Working Lunch	
12:35 – 1:20 PM	Retreat Planning Exercise	Lucas Hart
1:20 – 1:50 PM	Committee Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Science Advisory Committee• Executive Committee• External Relations	Julia Parrish Alan Clark Nan McKay
1:50 – 2:20 PM	MRC Reports	MRC Representatives
2:20 – 2:25 PM	Public Comment	All
2:25 – 2:35 PM	Puget Sound Partnership	Laura Bradstreet
2:35 – 2:45 PM	Northwest Straits Foundation	Don Hunger
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, August 23, 2024, from 10 AM – 12 PM



Minutes

June 28, 2024, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Jamie Stephens, Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Ken Collins (Island), Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Ginny Broadhurst, Darla Smith (Skagit – Alternate), Alan Clark (Clallam), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Nan McKay, Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin, Karin Roemers-Klevin (San Juan – Alternate)

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

Others in Attendance: Chris Porter, Tevin Medley, Edline Francois, Rhiannon Colaci, Don Hunger, Keith Estes, Jude Apple, Sarah Fisken (Jefferson – Alternate)

Absent: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, Christina Koons

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The May minutes were approved as written by consensus.

Lucas introduced and welcomed Jamie Stephens, the new gubernatorial appointee to the NW Straits Commission.

Athena Group Project Presentation: Tevin Medley and Athena Group shared a brief update of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion assessment survey, focus groups, and a project summary presentation. If you are interested in receiving the presentation link, please contact Caitlyn Blair (blair@nwstraits.org).

Speed Date with a Scientist - Ohop Creek Stormwater Management Pilot Project: Keith Estes from Long Live the Kings presented on the Ohop Creek stormwater management pilot project. The project tested the efficacy of using an above ground compost-based biofiltration system to collect and clean stormwater from roadway runoff. [Learn more about the Ohop Creek project](#) and please reach out to Keith (kestes@lltk.org) with any questions or requests for presentations to MRCs.



Minutes

Business Items

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

European green crab funding through the Department of Ecology budget request: Lucas shared that the Department of Ecology will be prioritizing a funding request for European Green Crab (EGC) research in the next biennium. This is separate from the NWS Commission's work on EGC. NWS will be talking with WDFW about continuing the funding they currently provide for NWS work in Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay in the next biennium.

July NW Straits Commission Meeting: Due to a scheduling conflict in Clallam County, the NW Straits Commission meeting on July 26 will now be held in Jefferson County at the Port Townsend Yacht Club from 10:00 – 3:00 PM. Please reach out to Caitlyn (blair@nwstraits.org) for any questions.

Project Updates

No-Anchor Zone Phase 2 Planning: Dana shared that the NW Straits Commission worked with a consultant to develop a social marketing strategy for the no-anchor zone project. In Phase 2 of this project, the NW Straits Commission will decide how to implement the social marketing strategies for the 2025 boating season.

DEI Phase 2 Planning: The NW Straits Commission staff is planning for Phase 2 of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work, following the work in Phase 1 completed in June. Several needs for DEI were identified in the survey results that Athena Group shared. An additional \$40,000 was budgeted in our FY22 NOAA award for this work, expiring in December 2024. The Commission moved and approved by consensus contract with the Athena Group for DEI Phase 2 in the amount of \$40,000.00.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: The Committee had a joint meeting with the NW Straits Foundation Executive Committee to discuss improving coordination and collaboration between the NW Straits Commission and the NW Straits Foundation. The Executive Committees agreed that the retreat planning process being done with ECO Resource Group and the September 19 retreat will be a good way to prioritize topics to address. The planning process has participants from the NWS Commission, Foundation, and MRCs.



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External Relations Committee: On June 18, 2024, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), and U.S. Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA-02) reintroduced legislation to reauthorize the Northwest Straits Initiative. Reauthorization will recognize the Initiative as a federal program and acknowledge the importance of locally driven marine conservation. As Congress moves through the legislative process, we will keep you informed on the progress through the current session, which ends January 3, 2025. For additional information, please see our [Looking Ahead web page](#). NWS Commission staff, Commissioners, MRC members and partners are working together to plan a site visit for Senator Murray on July 16 to highlight the reauthorization bill at Padilla Bay.

Science Advisory Committee: The Committee had a productive meeting in person on June 26, 2024. The meeting focused on the structure of the MRC reports to create a simpler format to assist with MRCs and staff to move quickly through project reporting. The Committee also discussed the Science Advisory Committee session planned for the annual conference.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

- 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.

Island – Ken Collins

- The MRC's 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.
- 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.

Jefferson – Sarah Fiskén



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- Olympia Oysters – 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.
- On June 26 the MRC hosted a crabbing 101 workshop.
- The MRC is working to recruit a student member to fill a position on the MRC.

San Juan – Karin Roemers-Klevin

- 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.

Skagit – Darla Gay Smith

- 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. It was a 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!

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

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

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

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



Minutes

on Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve intertidal monitoring as a project coordinator. A decision will be made by the end of summer.

Partner Updates

NW Straits Foundation: Don Hunger shared that there will be a celebration on July 1, 2024 for Jason Morgan's 10th year working at the NW Straits Foundation. The NW Straits Foundation is also working with Whatcom MRC on rain gardens and the eelgrass at Wildcat Cove. Don will be providing a NW Straits Foundation 101 presentation at the San Juan MRC meeting in July.

NW Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared that the Army Corps of Engineers amending their regional conditions to nationwide permits for shoreline stabilization activities. The Northwest Division will be accepting and approving the amended regional conditions, which would put more protection in place for forage fish.

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura Bradstreet shared that the Puget Sound Partnership submitted a letter of support for what Cecilia shared about the Army Corps of Engineers amendments to the regional conditions to permitting for shoreline stabilization activities. The Partnership met with Island MRC at their leadership council meeting earlier in June. Reauthorization. The Partnership recognized Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Senator Rick Larsen's (D-WA-02) reintroduction to legislation to reauthorize the NW Straits Initiative that was announced June 18, 2024. Laura also shared that Ahren and his partner delivered a healthy baby boy earlier this month, and Ahren will be on leave until August 6, 2024.

Public Comment: No public comment.



Executive Committee Meeting
July 15, 2024 • 11:00am-12:00pm (Zoom)
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Committee Members: Alan Clark (Chair), Nan McKay, Jude Apple (ex officio)

NWSC Staff: Caitlyn Blair, Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst

Absent: Tim Ellis

How to approach difficult conversations: The Committee discussed strategies for handling difficult and uncomfortable conversations during NWS Commission meetings. Several options were considered, such as: trainings through the Department of Ecology or outside organizations and readings from recommended books.

The Committee recommended that establishing norms for meetings would be a valuable first step. To begin testing possible norms, each member of the Executive Committee will come to the next Committee meeting with one practice that can be implemented to create a safe space for difficult conversations. The Committee will test these practices over the next couple meetings to develop proposed norms, which can later be brought to the NWS Commission for consideration.

NWSC Retreat Assignment: The NW Straits Initiative Retreat Planning Group held its first meeting on July 11, 2024. The planning group would like feedback from the NW Straits Commission, NW Straits Foundation, and MRC representatives on the following questions:

- What is the role of the NW Straits Commission, NW Straits Foundation, MRCs, and Science Advisory Committee?
- What should the role of each of these entities be?

The planning group would like to have this feedback by August 12, 2024. The planning group is not asking each entity to reach consensus on these roles. Instead, they would like to hear high level perspectives that capture both agreement and differences of opinion.

The Committee recommended using a self-facilitated “carousel” strategy to collect feedback on these questions from Commissioners at the July 26 Commission meeting. Lucas will work with NWS staff to add this exercise to the meeting agenda.

2025 Meeting Schedule: Caitlyn shared the proposed 2025 NWSC meeting schedule. The schedule was recommended for approval by the NWS Commission.



Commission staff highlights - [July 2024]

MRC Support

2022-23 and 2023-25 CDS MRC Grants (NOAA funding): Quarterly reporting has been submitted by MRCs and Commission staff is reviewing any materials and payment requests.

2023-25 MRC Grants (state/EPA funding): Unspent funds from fiscal year 2024 in these awards expired on June 30, 2024. Quarterly reporting and payment requests are under review by Commission staff and Ecology staff.

MRC Meeting Attendance: Island MRC Meeting (July 2) – Caitlyn Blair; Skagit MRC Meeting (July 11) – Sasha Horst, Leah Skare; Clallam MRC Meeting (July 15) – Caitlyn Blair, Allie Simpson

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: Staff are continuing the Kelp Plan social media campaign *The Under Story*, with July posts focusing on the Kelp Plan and its goals. Please feel free to like and share. Staff are collaborating with partners on several projects aimed to help advance and track Kelp Plan actions, including Kelp Plan action sequencing and development of an upgraded WA Kelp Project Inventory. Jeff also attended a Kelp Geonomics Symposium on 7/22.

Kelp Monitoring: NWSC and Fidalgo Paddlesports held kayak safety classes on June 29th and 30th. Participating kayakers commented that they enjoyed the class and are hoping to repeat it in 2025. MRC kayakers have begun to conduct surveys at their local beds.

European Green Crab: Staff are collaborating with Padilla Bay NERR staff to complete various grant and management reports for WA Department of Fish and Wildlife. Staff continue to trap for green crab in Samish Bay and Drayton Harbor by coordinating with volunteers, Washington Conservation Corps members, and WDFW technicians. Allie and Leah attended a molt search training debrief session on 7/17. Lucas and staff also attended a European Green Crab meeting with the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife on 7/15.

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: Staff hosted the reoccurring transboundary eelgrass protection workgroup meeting in July to continue to strategize with partners about virtual protection opportunities for no-anchor zones. Staff held a meeting to strategize with Ecology social marketing experts on next steps for the social marketing campaign. Allie and Dana attended a Transboundary Salish Sea Eelgrass Protection Workgroup on 7/11.



Commission staff highlights - [July 2024]

Derelict Vessels: Staff are coordinating with partners to host a vessel turn in recycling event in Skagit county. This included staff conducting a site visit with Swinomish and Port of Skagit staff, along with multiple partner meetings to coordinate the logistics for the vessel turn in and processing along with a planned media day in August.

Forage Fish: Staff is coordinating with WDFW to schedule a check-in with project leads, plan field visits to sites where needed, and schedule a volunteer training for later this year.

Operations

Staff: Lucas is working with Jude Apple, Director at Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve on two staff positions that will assist both Padilla Bay and the NW Straits Commission on administrative and logistics tasks. One position is a Padilla Bay administrative assistant who will assist with scheduling, communications, travel arrangements, and other business needs at the Reserve. The second position will serve primarily as the Padilla Bay Coastal Training Program Coordinator while also assisting the NW Straits Commission with conference and event logistics planning.

Budget: Commission staff is working with MRCs, other grant/contract recipients, and Ecology staff to compile final invoices or estimates for the fiscal year 2024 state funding as Ecology works to close out the fiscal year.

Contracts: The contract with The Athena Group ended on June 30 and Commission staff is working to close out the agreement.

DEI: Athena Group hosted a project assessment presentation on June 25 that was open to all MRC volunteers, Initiative staff, as well as Commissioners and Board members. All NW Straits Commission staff attended the project summary. NW Straits Commission staff are working with Athena Group on the scope of work for Phase 2 of DEI.

Other Meetings Attended

- Senator Murray visit to Padilla Bay NERR (7/16) – Lucas, Jessica, Sasha, Dana, Caitlyn
- Ecology Program Management Team (7/1, 7/18) – Lucas
- Northwest Straits Foundation Board meeting (7/25) – Lucas
- NWSI Retreat Planning Group (7/11) – Lucas
- Sen Murray Planning Group meeting (7/2, 7/9, 7/10) – Jessica, Lucas, Sasha, Dana
- MRC Lead Staff meeting (7/23) – Lucas, Sasha, Allie, Dana, Jeff, Leah, Jessica, Caitlyn
- Dialogue Series - Human Health (7/16) – Dana

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: July 2024

Submitted by: Rebecca Mahan

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

- Olympia Oyster broodstock had clean health assessment and are being spawned at the lab and will be returned to us as spat on clean shell in bags.
- A sub-committee was called to action by Chair to define roles and responsibilities for MRC members.
- New educational posters and coasters are being designed with graphic designer.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Christopher Rumble is new Development community representative.

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

- July monthly MRC meeting was held 7/15/24.
- The MRC is preparing to host a table at the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary's film event July 26th. See [Special Events | Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary \(noaa.gov\)](https://www.noaa.gov)

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):

- Several Clallam MRC members continued to collect the monthly forage fish samples at Cline Spit, Ediz Hook and Elwha Beach.
- MRC members collaborating on future coaster designs.
- 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 SaniKan 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 summer 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.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: July / 2024

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- **Stewardship Event at Cornet Bay**
- **Shoreline Education and Survey**

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 25: Women’s Group Weeding Event
- July 2: MRC Monthly Meeting
- July 10: Cornet Bay Stewardship Event

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- Aug 6: MRC Monthly Meeting
- Aug 14: 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 Cornet Bay. The work was focused on grass removal and cutting back thistle that was in bloom. 120lbs of weeds were removed. We are looking to host an Orca Recovery Day event in October.

Shoreline Education and Survey: We are currently planning for the Shoreline Workshop we will be hosting on October 5th. The Shoreline Armoring Report and Permit Analysis has been completed. We will be working on getting the report out to as many groups as possible.

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

Water Quality: The team is working to get a QAPP prepared and approved.

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. This last month they have submitted comments on the Economic Development and Capital Facilities Elements.

Crabber Education: A group of Sound Water Stewards and MRC volunteers visited local boat ramps on Whidbey and Camano Islands. We distributed Catch More Crab materials along with WDFW packets, engaging with many enthusiastic crabbers to share our message.

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



Cornet Bay – Crabber Ed.
Photo by Kelly Zupich



Cornet Bay – Canada
Thistle

Photo by Kelly Zupich

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: July 2024

Submitted by: Katie Kowal

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

- Kelp kayak monitoring began 7/18
- MRC has begun planning for upcoming extensive Education and Outreach event 'Wooden Boat Festival'. This event will include a tabling booth, in addition to a new "Marine Science and Stewardship" speaker stage, featuring 3 days of presentations and hands-on activities. The speaker stage is a partnership between the Jefferson MRC, Port Townsend Marine Science Center, and WA Sea Grant.

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

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

Past Events/Meetings

June 28 – Rain Garden Work Party

June 28 – DEI Subcommittee meeting

July 16 – E+O Subcommittee Meeting – Wooden Boat Festival planning

July 18 – Kelp kayak monitoring

July 22 – MRC Youth Member Interview

July 25 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting

Upcoming Events/Meetings

August 6 – MRC Monthly Meeting

August 13 - E+O Subcommittee Meeting – Wooden Boat Festival planning

August 17 – Kelp kayak monitoring

August 20 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting

September 6-9 – Wooden Boat Festival

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 July.
- **Shoreline Landowner:** Nothing to report.
- **Kelp kayak monitoring:** 7/18 - North Beach kayak survey
- **Kelp Satellite Imagery Pilot:** Final QAPP in development. Potential contractors being contacted and imagery options compared.

- **Storm surge monitoring:** Nothing to report.

2. Rain Gardens:

- August 2024 Rain Garden Work Party is being planned.

3. Education & Outreach:

- 7/16 - Planning meeting held for Wooden Boat Festival.
- 8/13 – Upcoming planning meeting for Wooden Boat Festival.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- Data from 6/8 population survey event is being entered and analyzed.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- 7/6 – NAZ Buoys were pulled and cleaned of algae/invertebrate growth.

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. They will attend the August MRC monthly meeting to observe.

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

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: July 2024

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

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

- Two new members have been recommended to join the SJC MRC – Olivia Graham and Mike Ramsey have moved forward in the committee process.
- The MRC is excited to welcome Roan Ontjes-DeGroot as our summer intern. Roan is attending Western Washington University studying Environmental Science. They will be assisting with vessel surveys, public outreach for Be Whale Wise education, and helping with derelict vessel patrols.
- Aerial surveys, shore-based vessel counts, and summertime outreach are well underway. Benthic habitat mapping is set to begin any day now.

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

During July, several MRC members and staff interviewed prospective candidates to join the committee. Two community members were recommended to the County Council to become official members of the San Juan County Marine Resource Committee. Pending approval at the end of the month, the San Juan MRC is excited to welcome Olivia Graham and Mike Ramsey at our August meeting. Olivia is a Postdoctoral Research Associate the Friday Harbor Labs, focused on the health of eelgrass throughout the San Juan Islands. Mike brings a depth of experience, previously managing the local conservation district and administering salmon recovery grants through the WA State Recreation and Conservation Office. We are excited for both candidates to share their expertise and knowledge with the committee.

The marine program has a new summer intern, Roan Ontjes-DeGroot, Orcas Island resident and sophomore at Western Washington University studying environmental science. Roan will assist with marine projects of the MRC including outreach to the community at dock talks, eelgrass protection, oil spill prevention, and derelict vessels. They also will be performing shore-based vessel counts and assisting with derelict vessel patrols. We are thrilled to welcome Roan to the team.

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

- MRC Meeting – July 10 (in person)
- Dock Talks – July 6, 20, August 10, 24
- Derelict Vessel Patrol – July 22
- Oil Spill Prevention Subcommittee Meeting – July 24
- Next MRC Meeting – August 1
- San Juan County Fair – August 15-18: MRC will have a booth

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):

Plastic Free Salish Sea is celebrating Plastic Free July by sharing resources and information across social media. There is also a mini contest being held for our Adopt-a-Beach and Adopt-a-Road stewards to record their cleanup efforts between now and the end of July. The steward with the most amount of time spent cleaning beaches and roadways will win \$50 gift certificate to the New Leaf Café at the Outlook in Orcas Island. PFSS is growing its partnership with cross promoting activities for the Exchange/Orcas Recycling Services.

DV patrol has been scheduled for July 22, to take a current assessment of vessels of concern (VOC) from our database. Following the successful spring turn-in event, a handful of boats from the VOC list have been resolved. Patrols for the summer will be focused on priority hotspots and follow up to previously marked vessels.

Planning has started for a fall Marina Roundtable, to gather the marina operators throughout the county and have open discussions about issues of concern. How can the MRC be instrumental in finding solutions to these barriers/challenges? What are common issues we can help address?

Public outreach to recreational boaters will continue with dock talks scheduled throughout the summer at Roche Harbor and expansion onto Orcas Island with the help of our summer intern.

Aerial surveys are being flown throughout the summer season to assess recreational boating density amongst sensitive eelgrass habitats. Shore based vessel counts are continuing.

Fieldwork for benthic habitat mapping will begin any day now. We are looking forward to what these maps will provide.

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 July 16, Christina Koons, MRC Chair, met with Senator Patty Murray to express support for the reauthorization of the Northwest Straits Commission. Christina shared about the creosote piling removal project at Jackson Beach, implemented last fall by the MRC.

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



Meet Roan Ontjes-DeGroot, 2024 Summer Marine Program Intern, Photo courtesy of Roan.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: July/2024

Submitted by: Tracy/Lynne

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

- **Bowman Bay Discovery Day- Celebrating Habitat Restoration- June 28:** We kicked off the event with an overview of the history and ongoing habitat restoration of Bowman Bay presented by Lisa Kaufman. Outreach booths were hosted by the Skagit MRC, NWSF, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, The Salish Sea School, and the Salal Chapter of the Washington National Plant Society. Activities included spreading two yards of mulch within the restoration site, beach seining demonstrations, forage fish sampling demonstrations, forage fish eggs under microscopes, build a beach activity, and native plant ID. 14 first - third graders and 20 fifth – sixth graders from The Salish Sea School participated.
- **Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment:** We received the first two deliverables from Confluence including the initial new geodatabase structure with snapshots of the current parcel and drift cell datasets and the literature review spreadsheet of 168 possible source publications and dataset descriptions.

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):

- **July 11- Monthly MRC Meeting-** via Microsoft Teams (9-11am). Craig Thomas and the U.W. Research Team presented the results of the survey on how collaborative partnerships (including MRCs) find and apply science in decision-making processes followed by an engaging and thought-provoking discussion.
- **July 11- Vessel Turn-In Planning Meeting-** via Microsoft Teams (1-2pm).
- **July 15- Mt. Erie School Rain Garden Maintenance-** (9:30-11:30am)
- **July 17- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment Check-In-** via Microsoft Teams (11:30-noon)
- **July 16- Bowman Bay Beach Seining** at 1:30pm
- **July 23- MRC/NWSC Staff meeting-** via Zoom (1-3pm)
- **July 25- Bowman Bay Stewardship Day-**(9-11am)
- **July 30- Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Meeting-** via Microsoft Teams (2:30-3:30pm).
- **July 31- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment Check-In-** via Microsoft Teams (11:30-noon)

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:
 - The SSS Advisory Committee started their summer break. The AC will resume with an in-person meeting in October to review the 2024 Steward Class surveys and start to plan for the 2025 SSS Training Program at Padilla Bay.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
 - Spawning is good in Fidalgo Bay and is picking up in Similk Bay.
 - Volunteers helped with forage fish sampling demos at the Bowman Bay Discovery Day on June 28. Several students from The Salish Sea School that participated only spoke

- Spanish. An interpreter was there to help communicate the information that was being shared.
- Pete announced he will no longer be the forage fish lead after the end of this year. He is working with other volunteers to figure out how to restructure and reorganize and transition things over to someone new.
 - Bob Weathers, a longtime volunteer for forage fish surveys and bull kelp kayak surveys recently moved to California. The good news is that two longtime volunteers, Dale Fournier and Brad Smith, are moving back to Shelter Bay after moving to the east coast two years ago and are eager to get involved in volunteering again!
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - Kids on the Beach programs took place in April with Concrete High School students and in May with Allen Elementary Mount Vernon fifth grade students (first year participating). Lots of help from volunteers during field days. It was a very successful spring program. Planning will start up again soon for the next school year.
 - School Rain Gardens – Tracy Alker:
 - **Mt. Erie School Rain Garden:** The NWSF is leading the maintenance effort at this site with their two interns and the County intern. They purchased some tools, a hose, and key for water access. Weeding and watering took place on July 15.
 - **La Conner School Rain Garden:**
 - Elizabeth Drozda will be taking over as the new MRC project Lead of the school rain garden project.
 - The top priority is to improve stormwater flow to the rain garden because it isn't currently functioning properly as a rain garden. The County Road Crew will create additional notches in the curb around the rain garden and re-grade the asphalt area to help direct stormwater flow into the rain garden. Construction will hopefully take place in August, before school starts back up again (once we get permission from the school).
 - This fall we plan to spruce up the bare areas with additional native plants and mulch with the planting plan provided by the Skagit Conservation District. We also hope to 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.
 - Event Agenda: Samish led beach seining, Shannon Point Marine Center Touch Tank (waiting on confirmation), outreach tables, chowders, shellfish, no-host salmon BBQ, popcorn, face painting, kids craft tables, Corra the Mermaid-Selkie, discovery passport activity, Samish canoe experience (waiting on confirmation).
 - 27 outreach booths confirmed. Collecting and coordinating Discovery Passport Station Questions for outreach booths.
 - Only 21 volunteers signed up so far. Still have lots of volunteer vacancies to fill: Parking, zero waste, popcorn, kids craft tables, Event announcer, photographers, roving volunteer break relief, and setup/cleanup.
 - Event promo starting to ramp up. Posted event on online event calendars and resources. Updated the press release.
 - Skagit Soils will take our compost free of charge for this event with our pre-approved compostable plates, bowls, cups, and utensils we have in stock.
 - Planning kids craft activities. Skagit MRC and The Salish Sea School will be hosting the kids craft tables this year along our outreach booths/Discovery Passport Station activity.

- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) with the help of WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Samish Indian Nation, and Seattle Aquarium completed field work for the season Feb- June.
 - Field work included monitoring of previously established outplant sites, adding new seed abalone, collecting new spawners for the laboratory, and commencing spawning activities in the lab to produce seed abalone for 2025.
 - 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.
 - Collected 20 new broodstock for spawning in the hatchery.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Paul Coordinated with PSRF to get new shell strings for deployment in Fidalgo Bay and later deployed strings at the trestle and Weaverling Spit. Also collected the shell strings that had been set out in 2023 and processed same. Collected the 2023 shell recruitment bags from four Fidalgo Bay locations and processed these. Settlement proved to be very high in 2023. Set out new recruitment bags for collection in 2025.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Tracy Alker:
 - Our Interlocal Agreement with the City of Anacortes was recently signed by the City. It is anticipated to get signed by the County next week. It includes the following deliverables: Interpretive signage, project website, short video clips for social media, community meetings, informational booth at Fidalgo Bay Day, and preliminary conceptual design. Skagit MRC and other stakeholders will help create messaging content for interpretive signage.
 - The first community meeting is tentatively scheduled August 1 at the Anacortes Library at 1:30pm.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

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

 - **Coffin Rocks:** A team of 3 volunteers surveyed June 20. Observations: Kelp density and health looked very good with young kelp still below surface. Next survey is July 19.
 - **Shannon Point:** A team of 3 volunteers surveyed June 18.
 - West Kelp Bed Observations: Kelp appeared to be sparse but very healthy. Many individual bulbs were noted to the south of the track bed, as well as many detached small bulbs found washed up at shoreline.
 - East Bed Observations: Very little bull kelp – only 11 random single small bulbs (searching multiple times), several bulbs found surrounded in Sargassum. Not enough bulbs to track a bed. The shoreline is overrun with thick, invasive Sargassum.
 - Next SP survey is scheduled for July 17.
 - **Biz Point:** survey was not conducted in June due to a scheduling a conflict. The next BP survey is scheduled for July 9.
 - **Lone Tree:** No survey was conducted in June due to access issues. Next LT survey is planned for July 22.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Beach Seining Updates:** Beach seining is a project funded by Skagit MRC and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and is led by Jason Morgan as the lead scientist with the help of volunteers including MRC members (Paul Dinnel and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson). Beach seining in June took place June 17 (150 fish) and June 28 (311 fish). They caught lots of shiner perch English sole, gunnel’s and staghorn sculpin. They also caught

Chinook, prickleback, and greenling. 7-8 volunteers contributed a combined total of 21 volunteer hours each day.

- **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:** 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.
 - Using the Parks water truck, NWSF staff watered the restoration site on June 13th, June 20th, and July 3rd. The weeks that were skipped were due to sufficient rain for early season and no watering was necessary.
 - The next stewardship event is on July 25th with the NWSF staff, Foundation Board Members, and volunteers.
- **Bowman Bay Discovery Day- Celebrating Habitat Restoration- June 28:** We kicked off the event with an overview of the history and ongoing habitat restoration of Bowman Bay presented by Lisa Kaufman. Outreach booths were hosted by the Skagit MRC, NWSF, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, The Salish Sea School, and the Salal Chapter of the Washington National Plant Society. Activities included spreading two yards of mulch within the restoration site, beach seining demonstrations, forage fish sampling demonstrations, forage fish eggs under microscopes, build a beach activity, and native plant ID. 14 first - third graders and 20 fifth – sixth graders from The Salish Sea School participated.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
The Shoreline Needs Assessment project with Confluence Environmental is underway.
 - Meeting every 2 weeks.
 - Task 1 – Initial new Geodatabase
 - Task 1 deliverable was provided by Confluence for MRC review containing the proposed initial database structure, including snapshots of the current parcel and drift cell datasets. It is expected the database design will be updated iteratively as we make more decisions going forward.
 - Task 2 – Literature Review
 - Task 2 deliverable was provided by Confluence for MRC review containing a spreadsheet of 168 possible source publications and dataset descriptions.
 - Not all data will necessarily be used in the analysis. All datasets will become part of the final Skagit Resource Inventory for future use.
 - Nearshore connections were noted of most importance to MRC: kelp/eelgrass, forage fish, native Olympia oysters and crab, consistent with current adjacent MRC projects.
 - Task 3 – Develop Prioritization Process, Perform Analysis, Identify MRC Focus Areas
 - The following preliminary categories were proposed for prioritization:
 - ❖ Landscape Context
 - ❖ Ecosystem Process
 - ❖ Habitat Function
 - ❖ Overall
 - Additional descriptions and attributes were reviewed and will continue to be developed for purposes of prioritization and analysis.
 - We confirmed that priority should be nearshore to maintain scope, but we may elect to add areas up the watershed in the future.
 - Task 4 – Develop High Priority Restoration or Protection Projects
 - tbd
 - Task 5 – Final Geodatabase
 - tbd
- Vessel Turn-In Event- Melissa Ciesielski:

- Swinomish in partnership with NWSC, Skagit MRC, Port of Skagit, La Conner Marina, DNR, Skagit County, and Ecology will be co-hosting a vessel turn-in event starting July 22 with NWSC and DNR funding.
- Received 50 vessel applications! 45 is the maximum number of vessels that can be accepted for this event. Currently in the process of reviewing applications and prioritizing vessels for this event.
- Media day planned for August 1. Working on the logistics.

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):

Bowman Bay Discovery Day- June 28, 2024



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: July 2024

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- Volunteers spoke with 185 people about how to not lose their crab pots during Snohomish County MRCs crabber outreach at the Port of Everett 10th street boat launch on July 6 and 7.
- 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. First drafts of the student's work were reviewed in July. A final is expected mid-August

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

None

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

Elisa Dawson attended the Fall Shore Friendly Workshop planning meeting with the Northwest Straits Foundation and Island County MRC on July 1.

Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue attended the ECO Resource Group presentation on July 10.

The MRC held its Strategic Planning workshop on July 10 in place of the July MRC meeting.

Elisa Dawson was interviewed by KOMO News on July 16 regarding Crabber Education work.

Staff participated in the NWSC and MRC Lead staff meeting on July 23.

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 MRC approved the final draft of an integrated memo that combined the interviews conducted of people closely connected with the MRC and the survey responses received. The second strategic planning workshop was held on July 10th. MRC members individually prioritized the current MRC work and discussed the combined results. A draft of the strategic plan is expected to be reviewed by the Subcommittee in early August. After the subcommittee has made a first round of edits, a final review will happen by the entire MRC at the end of August.

Marine Vegetation Outreach (MRC grant project for 2024 – 2025): The final draft of the marine vegetation memo and list of community groups was completed in June. The subcommittee is currently developing messaging for the outreach materials and deciding a design direction. Planning for the in-person event in October is also continuing.

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 July 16.

Howarth Park sampling occurred on July 7.

Nearshore Restoration: There was a Meadowdale Monitoring group meeting on June 24th. The team continues to gather data and will be updating the website later this summer.

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 occurred 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 handed out oil spill kits donated from Washington Sea Grant. Volunteers spoke with 185 people about how not to lose their crab pots.

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.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring: Kelp monitoring has been scheduled for summer 2024. Schedule below: (Dates may change based on weather conditions and presence/absence of kelp beds)

July
Hat Island – July 8

Mukilteo – July 17
Edmonds – July 18
Meadowdale – July 19

August
Hat Island – Aug 5
Edmonds – Aug 19

September
Hat Island – Sep 16

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area: The Port Susan and Outreach subcommittees continue to coordinate with the Tulalip Tribes on signage for Kayak Point Park.

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. First drafts of the student’s work were reviewed in early July. A final is expected mid-August.

Upcoming Events:

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

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

Snohomish County MRC members and Crabber Outreach volunteers Dawn and Phil at the Port of Everett 10th street boat launch on July 6 and 7, Photo credit: Joycelyn Blue



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: July 2024

Submitted by: Dana Flerchinger and Austin Rose

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

- MRC members Jim Boyle, Glen Alexander and Councilwoman Galloway met with Representative Rick Larsen on July 5 and highlighted Whatcom MRC projects including: the beach seine with kids program, eelgrass protection, European green crab project, bull kelp monitoring, harmful algal bloom monitoring, and derelict vessels.
- The HABs team has been sampling for phytoplankton and mussels weekly at Semiahmoo Marina and Birch Bay Marina. Over the past month, there has been an observed increase in harmful algal species including Alexandrium (produces toxins associated with paralytic shellfish poisoning) and Dinophysis (produces toxins associated with diarrhetic shellfish poisoning). Beaches throughout Whatcom County have been closed for recreational harvest of shellfish since late May.

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

n/a

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

- The July MRC general monthly meeting was cancelled due to the July 4 holiday and summer vacations.
- Dana Flerchinger and Mike MacKay joined the Northwest Straits Initiative visit with Senator Patty Murray. MRC representatives from several counties presented project highlights to demonstrate the amazing work that the Northwest Straits is doing. Dana and Mike provided an overview of the Beach Seine with Kids project, emphasizing the importance of connecting youth with their local environment and the unique partnerships that MRCs have with local tribes. Senator Patty Murray asked about the number of schools that have participated in the program, the cost of the program, and how the program will be expanded going forward.
- MRC members Jim Boyle, Glen Alexander and Councilwoman Galloway met with Representative Rick Larsen on July 5. Members had 11"x17" laminated printouts to reference as they highlighted Whatcom MRC projects including: the beach seine with kids program, eelgrass protection, European green crab project, bull kelp monitoring, harmful algal bloom monitoring, and derelict vessels.

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):

- Kelp

Bull kelp monitoring volunteers and MRC staff participated in a half day kayak safety training conducted by Fidalgo Paddlesports at Bowman Bay on June 29th and 30th in preparation for the upcoming surveys. Six participants from Whatcom County attended the training. The first Whatcom County bull kelp survey is scheduled for Aiston Preserve on either July 21st or July 24th.

- Social Marketing at Wildcat Cove

Northwest Straits Foundation interns, Alex Haase and Dylan Trainer, have been engaging with boaters using the boat ramp at Wildcat Cove since June 24 – working a mix of weekend and week days. They will continue through the crabbing season (July 15 – September 30). Observational data is being collected including:

- The number of vehicles with boats using the boat launch and associated tidal stage
- What folks are using the launch for (kayaks/paddle boats/ etc vs motorboats)
- Do boaters stay on a single track
- Invasive species sightings data
- Recording an observed sea star wasting disease
- Recording any other events/ observations that are out of the ordinary

AND

Suggesting ways for boaters/other cove users to minimize impacts to eelgrass beds including:

- Checking the tide charts
- Limiting impacts to a single lane or track
- Avoiding trampling eelgrass when walking across the tide flats, especially to reach the tide pooling area

- HABs

The HABs team has been sampling for phytoplankton and mussels weekly at Semiahmoo Marina and Birch Bay Marina. Over the past month, there has been an observed increase in harmful algal species including Alexandrium (produces toxins associated with paralytic shellfish poisoning) and Dinophysis (produces toxins associated with diarrhetic shellfish poisoning). Beaches throughout Whatcom County have been closed for recreational harvest of shellfish since late May.

Photos:



Photo Credit: Dylan Trainer. *Alex Haase (left) and Dylan Trainer (right), Northwest Straits Foundation interns at Wildcat Cove, engaging with boaters that utilize the Wildcat Cove boat launch during low tide events with the goal of influencing boater behavioral change to minimize impacts to eelgrass beds.*



Photo credit: Dana Flerchinger. Kiosk at Wildcat Cove boat ramp with the Whatcom MRC social marketing poster (“preserve eelgrass”).



Photo credit: Steve Wilson. A chain of 4 Alexandrium viewed under a microscope. Alexandrium is a harmful algae that produces toxins associated with paralytic shellfish poisoning.