



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Date: August 23, 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:

- **July 2024 Minutes Approval**

10:00 -10:15 AM	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement July minutes approval	Tim Ellis, Chair
10:15 -10:50 AM	Committee Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Advisory Committee • Executive Committee • External Relations Committee 	Julia Parrish Alan Clark Nan McKay
10:50 – 11:10 AM	Business Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWSI Conference Registration • Budget Update • NW Straits Initiative Retreat 	Caitlyn Blair Sasha and Lucas Lucas
11:10 – 11:20 AM	Project Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NW Straits Insider Roundup • Skagit vessel turn in & media day 	Jessica Owens Dana Oster & Jessica Owens
11:20 – 11:45 AM	MRC Reports	MRC Representatives



agenda

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: September 27, 2024 from 10 AM – 12 PM Virtual on Zoom



Minutes

July 26, 2024, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM
In-Person Meeting, Port Townsend Yacht Club, Port Townsend
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, Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit), Jamie Stephens, Nan McKay

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

Others in Attendance: Austin Rose, Frances Robertson, Joenne McGerr, Liz Tobin, Brad Bebout, Christopher Kelley, Cheryl Lowe

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission)

Welcome and Introductions:

Alan Clark, standing in for Chair Tim Ellis who was attending virtually, welcomed the group with introductions and the tribal acknowledgement.

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

Remarks from Joenne McGerr, Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program Manager:

Joenne McGerr, Shorelands and Environmental Assistance (SEA) Program Manager, shared about the several programs that she manages within the Department of Ecology, including shoreline and coastal planning, wetlands, the Washington Conservation Corps, Applied Coastal Research and Engineering, among many others. The Northwest Straits Commission is one of the programs that is administered within the SEA section of Ecology.

Beyond Kayaks: Expanding Techniques for Monitoring Floating Kelp in Jefferson County:

Christopher Kelley and Jeff Taylor, Jefferson MRC: Jefferson County MRC Member Christopher Kelley gave a presentation about expanding techniques for monitoring floating kelp in Jefferson County. The presentation highlighted a variety of aerial imagery and pixels that can assist with tracking trends and changes in kelp beds of specific sites around Jefferson County. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the presentation, please reach out to Caitlyn Blair (blair@nwstraits.org).



Minutes

Speed Date with a Scientist: Data-Driven Decision Making for a Sustainable Fishing Future, Liz Tobin: Liz Tobin, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe's Shellfish Program Manager was this month's [speed date with a scientist](#). Her presentation highlighted how the Tribe relies on data and collaboration to inform sustainable shellfisheries co-management. Liz featured research on Dungeness crab larval monitoring and population genetics coordinated by the Pacific Northwest Crab Research Group.

Business Items

Commission staff provided updates on the following business items:

NW Straits Commission 2025 Meeting Schedule: Caitlyn shared the meeting schedule for 2025. The schedule was approved by consensus.

NW Straits Initiative Conference: Caitlyn reminded attendees about the dates and logistics for the NW Straits Initiative Conference on November 15-16 at the Delta Hotel in Everett. If you are planning to stay at the hotel and need accommodations, please see the [2024 Conference webpage](#).

Retreat Planning Exercise

During the July Executive Committee meeting, the Committee discussed using a self-facilitated "carousel" strategy to collect feedback from Commissioners and attendees on the following questions posed by the Retreat Planning Committee:

- 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?

Meeting attendees participated in the activity and Lucas collected the responses for collation and reporting back to the Retreat Planning Committee at their next meeting.

Committee Updates

Science Advisory Committee: The Science Advisory Committee is planning a session for the annual conference where attendees will get to meet and interact with the Committee. The Science Advisory Committee also shared their [Articles of Association](#) outlining the roles of the Committee. The roles focus on assisting Commission staff in an advisory role for MRC and regional projects, assisting with annual conference planning, the speed date with a scientist



Minutes

presentation series and additional emerging issues or tasks. Learn more about the SAC and members here: [Science Advisory Committee \(nwstraits.org\)](http://nwstraits.org).

Executive Committee: The Executive Committee met on July 15. The Committee discussed the retreat planning exercise as well as strategies for handling difficult and uncomfortable conversations during NW Straits 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. The Executive Committee will discuss norms in upcoming Committee meetings and bring them to the Commission for further discussion at a later date.

External Relations: Nan shared that Senator Maria Cantwell has co-sponsored the NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill. She also mentioned that Senator Murray came to Padilla Bay NERR on July 16 and MRC representatives were able to share their successful projects made possible with funding secured through Senator Murray's continued support of the NW Straits Initiative.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

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

Island – Ken Collins

- The MRC's most recent stewardship event took place at Cornet Bay. The work was focused on grass removal and cutting back thistle that was in bloom. 120 pounds of weeds were removed.
- The MRC is currently planning for the Shoreline Workshop they are hosting on October 5th. The Shoreline Armoring Report and Permit Analysis is complete. We will be working on getting the report out to as many groups as possible.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- Kelp kayak monitoring began on July 18th.
- The MRC has begun planning for the Wooden Boat Festival. This event will include tabling, 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.



Minutes

San Juan – Christina Koons

- 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.

Skagit – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- **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.
- The MRC is surveying a new kelp bed at Lone Tree in Skagit Bay at Swinomish.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- 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

Whatcom – Mike MacKay

- 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.



Minutes

- 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.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Partner Updates

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura Bradstreet reported on the Puget Sound Partnership updates, which included the NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill. Laura also shared that the Puget Sound Partnership will be having their September 11-12 Leadership Council meeting in Whatcom County at the Hotel Leo in Bellingham. For more information about the Puget Sound Partnership's meetings, visit their [website](#).

NW Straits Foundation: The NW Straits Foundation has begun recruiting for new NW Straits Foundation Board positions, with priority on representatives from Clallam, Island and Skagit counties.



Commission staff highlights - [August 2024]

MRC Support

MRC Grants: Commission staff is working with MRC staff to initiate and execute amendments to some of the existing grant agreements, in order to make necessary updates to project scope and budget as needed.

MRC Meeting Attendance:

Sasha attended the Jefferson MRC meeting (8/6)

Jessica attended the Island MRC meeting (8/6)

Allie attended the San Juan MRC meeting (8/1)

Jeff attended the Clallam MRC meeting (8/19)

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: Staff developed a draft of the WA Kelp Project Inventory, an interactive online resource to submit and view kelp project information. Staff presented the draft with partners for further input. Staff continued with *The Under Story* posts, which focused on different goals of the Kelp Plan. Please keep an eye out for these posts on NWSI social media platforms and share them to increase awareness of and engagement with the Kelp Plan.

Kelp Monitoring: MRC kayak volunteers continued to monitor their respective beds. Staff will host the second Kelp Kayak Monitoring Workgroup meeting at the end of the month, where MRC volunteers and NWSC and NWSF staff will discuss topics including recent kelp kayak monitoring efforts and ideas to improve data recording and sharing.

European Green Crab: The Washington Conservation Corps crew completes their final week working with Northwest Straits in Skagit County on August 22nd. NWSC Staff, Volunteers, and WDFW staff continue to trap in Drayton Harbor and will support ongoing efforts in Samish Bay in the following months. A new cohort of young EGC is evident in recent captures in areas of both Skagit County and Whatcom, and specimen have been transferred to partners at Sea Grant for additional DNA sampling. NWSC staff will host an outreach booth at Fidalgo Bay Day.

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: Commission staff met with WA Ecology social marketing expert, Justine Asohmbom to continue to coordinate on a phase 2 for the social marketing campaign development. Staff are currently developing a scope of work.

Derelict Vessels: NWSC staff helped organize a media day event August 1st for the Skagit county vessel turn-in event. The event featured speakers from the different partners



Commission staff highlights - [August 2024]

collaborating on the effort along with elected officials. Then a demonstration was provided of a vessel being deconstructed and placed in recycling bins. Media coverage so far includes the La Conner Weekly and Skagit Valley Herald. The vessel turn in event is currently underway, beginning the 22nd of July and continuing through August. To date, 34 vessels have been turned in and recycled with an additional 7 planned for later in the month.

Operations

Staff: No staff updates at this time.

Budget: The NOAA application for fiscal year 2024 funding is currently open. Commission staff is currently preparing a scope of work and budget to submit with the intention of requesting a January 1, 2025 start date.

Contracts: Commission staff has prepared and executed a contract for Phase 2 of the DEI project, with The Athena Group serving as the consultants to continue moving forward with the next steps. Commission staff is working on preparing an amendment to the interagency agreement with WA Department of Natural Resources to add funding for the regional derelict vessel removal effort under the direction of the established workgroup.

DEI: Commission staff has been working to review the final project summary report from Athena Group. The report will be distributed to NW Straits Commission members and MRC members at a later date. Commission staff has also prepared a contract for Phase 2 of the DEI project with the Athena Group.

Retreat: The retreat planning group is continuing to work with Eco Resource consultants to plan an agenda for the September 19 retreat. They have two meetings remaining. In the last planning group meeting, it was proposed that the NWS Commission and MRCs consider what support is needed from the NWS Foundation. The planning group is collecting this information to inform the retreat agenda, which will likely include small group work that focuses on answering key pre-prepared questions. It is anticipated that the small group work will guide post-retreat NWS Commission conversations to reach consensus on how to proceed on to-be-determined topics raised at the retreat.

Other Meetings Attended

- Kelp and Eelgrass Health Plan- Straits priority area meeting (8/1) – Jeff and Dana
- PSP Dialogue Series on Social Science (8/13) – Jessica, Sasha, and Dana
- Clallam MRC Kelp Kayak Monitoring Meeting (8/1) - Jeff
- Kelp Kayak Monitoring Workgroup (8/27) - Jeff, Leah
- Skagit MRC Forage Fish Site Discussion (8/19) – Leah



Commission staff highlights - [August 2024]

- Congressional Staffer Tour (8/20) – Lucas
- NWSI Retreat Planning Group (8/2, 8/12) – Lucas
- Rep. Larsen Visit Planning Meeting (7/30, 8/14) – Lucas

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: August 2024

Submitted by: Amelia Kalagher

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

- MRC member Tim Cochnauer, with assistance from other MRC members and staff, made an annual presentation on August 5th to the Clallam County Board of Commissioners on the MRC's work and interest in taking a more active advisory role.
- The MRC designed and printed a new poster focusing on marine biotoxins and their effect on public health.
- A schedule was set for the kelp kayaking monitoring season, with surveys in August and September at Freshwater Bay and Clallam Bay.

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)

- The July monthly meeting is being held 8/19/24.
- On July 26th, the MRC hosted an informational table at the ["Get to Know Your Sanctuary" film festival event](#) for the 30th anniversary of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): none to report.

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

- Olympia oyster broodstock has been sent out to cultivate spat for the Sequim Bay restoration site.
- 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. The MRC is designing and will soon order a new round of coasters.
- MRC members continued developing new displays for outreach at local festivals. A new poster focusing on marine biotoxins was designed and printed this month.
- Clallam MRC continued to steward the beach at the mouth of the Elwha River.
- MRC member Nancy Stephanz continues to process samples weekly for the Sound Toxins project, with Feiro Marine Life Center.
- The Clallam MRC continued to prepare for its upcoming Pinto Abalone monitoring project, with fieldwork expected to begin late 2024.
- MRC member Bob Vreeland continues to sample shellfish for biotoxin monitoring every 2 weeks, in partnership with the Department of Health.
- The MRC is planning its fieldwork season for kelp monitoring. A schedule was set for August and September monitoring, with help from volunteers associated with a local kayaking club.

- Pigeon guillemot monitoring is underway for summer 2024, with ~40 volunteers monitoring guillemot colonies weekly. Number of birds and prey deliveries to date in 2024 is lower than usual.

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):



MRC member Tim Cochnauer speaks to a member of the public about MRC projects at an outreach event July 26th, 2024 – the film festival portion of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary’s 30th anniversary celebration in Port Angeles.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: August/ 2024

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- **Recruitment from Camano has been successful**
- **Outdoor Discovery Days**

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

- Our MRC has recommended a new member for the Board of Island County Commissioners to approve to serve on the MRC. We should find out in the next few weeks if the approval goes through. We had another Camano resident interested and anticipate them applying soon.

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

Previous Meetings/Events:

- Aug 6: MRC Monthly Meeting

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- Sept 3: MRC Monthly Meeting
- Oct 1: MRC Monthly Meeting
- Oct 5: Shoreline Homeowner Workshop

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. Kirk Larsen the team lead is working to add a Camano location to our sites.

Bull Kelp Surveys: The teams have been going out to survey their sites monthly. The YSI unit that was purchased needed to be sent back to the manufacturer to be repaired. We finally got it back and it went out with the Possession Point team this week.

Stewardship – Cornet Bay/Hoypus Point: We're continuing to water weekly as we can and have had a volunteer helping to cut back the blooming Canada thistle. We're also collaborating with multiple groups to plan an Orca Recovery Day event at Cornet Bay and Hoypus on October 19th.

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. The Planning Department at Island County is wanting an opportunity to review and check the data before we

share the report with the public. There also may be a need to get a 3rd party review. Staff continues to work with Island County Departments to figure out a path forward.

Derelict Vessels: We are working on a plan for education focused on prevention. Additionally, we would like to continue investigating the possibility of hosting a turn in event in Island County.

Water Quality: The team has decided to amend our grant to remove this project for now. The amount of time it was taking to get a QAPP approved was not working with the grant timelines. The team will continue with the project unfunded for the time being. We will be meeting soon to discuss what to do with the second year of funding.

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 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 the team has worked on the Transportation element. We hope to send the finished document to Island County Planning this next week.

Outdoor Discovery Day: MRC volunteers joined Washington State Parks and various other organizations to share with families about nature. The booth was set up to show families forage fish eggs with microscopes and learn about the forage fish lifecycle along with their importance in the food web. Over 100 students visited the MRC booth.

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



Fort Casey – Outdoor
Discovery Day

Photo by Andi Kopit



Fort Casey – Outdoor
Discovery Day
Photo by Ken Collins

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: August 2024

Submitted by: Katie Kowal

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

- “Local Youth” MRC member interviewed and accepted, joining us starting 9/3.
- Shoreline Landowner project – Sarah Fiskien met with Lisa Kaufman at NWSF (Shore Friendly) to do a beach walk/site visit at Shine Tidelands on August 5.

- **Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Joanie Hendricks (District 3) will resign 9/8, new “Local Youth” member Akeyla Behrenfield will begin 9/3.

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

Past Events/Meetings

August 6 – MRC Monthly Meeting

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

August 17 – Kelp kayak monitoring

August 20 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting

August 22 - E+O - Wooden Boat Festival planning/site visit

Upcoming Events/Meetings

August 30 – Rain Garden Work Party

September 3 – MRC Monthly Meeting

September 5-8 – Wooden Boat Festival

September 16 – Kelp kayak monitoring

September 17 – MRC Executive Committee 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) will sample end of August.
- **Shoreline Landowner:** Beach walk/site visit 8/5 at Shine Tidelands.
- **Kelp kayak monitoring:** 8/17 - North Beach kayak survey.
- **Kelp Satellite Imagery Pilot:** QAPP waiver provided.
- **Storm surge monitoring:** Nothing to report.

2. Rain Gardens:

- August 2024 Rain Garden Work Party is scheduled for 8/30.

3. Education & Outreach:

- 8/22 – Upcoming site visit for Wooden Boat Festival
- 9/5-8 – Wooden Boat Festival, tabling booth and speaker series tent

4. Olympia Oysters:

- 8/21 – Coordinator and project lead (Neil) will meet to discuss logistics for spreading shell in Discovery Bay by the end of the year using OTGP-2023 funds

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.): Nothing to report.

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: August 2024

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

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

- August 20th will be the Natural Resources Agencies' Congressional Staff tour to San Juan Island. The Department of Natural Resources Staff will share about collaboration amongst the MRC, the NWSC and PSP to remove 132 creosote pilings from Jackson's beach, improving habitat and water quality.
- Adam Parrot will take over as MRC Chair from Christina Koons. The MRC is grateful to Christina for her service and looks excited to see Adam take on this role.
- Summertime outreach continues with dock talks on Orcas Island and tabling at the San Juan County Fair. As well as research through aerial surveys, shore-based vessel counts, and benthic habitat survey work.

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

In August, Christina Koons finished out another year as an excellent chair and will pass off the baton to Adam Parrot. Adam brings a strong sense of leadership and accountability to the role. The MRC is grateful to Christina for her dedication and wisdom this past year (and longer!) and excited to see Adam take on this role.

Roan will present about their MRC internship experience at the September meeting. Shortly after this they will return to school at Western Washington University.

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

- MRC Meeting – August 1
- San Juan County Fair – August 15-18: MRC will have a booth
- Oil spill prevention/ERTV subcommittee meeting – August 12
- August 27 – PFSS subcommittee meeting
- Next MRC Meeting – September 5 (in-person)
- Fall Great Islands Cleanup – September 21

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):

The MRC, acting as the Citizens Advisory Committee for Salmon Recovery finalized the ranking and scoring of projects for this year. 2024 was one of our biggest and most complex grant rounds to date. The funded projects ranged from shoreline armor removal, shoreline protection, riparian restoration and scientific assessments to help guide our future priorities. This \$2.28 million investment is a massive contribution to our ongoing salmon recovery efforts, and it represents a meaningful investment in the San Juan County community in support of local jobs and our local economy.

Plastic Free Salish Sea wrapped up reporting contest at the end of July. Congratulations to Sadie and Bear, Adopt-A-Beach volunteers, who've spent quality time cleaning their favorite beach – Deadman's Bay. Sadie said, "Bear loves telling people that he's a steward at this favorite beach!" Plastic Free Salish Sea will be presenting at the County Fair Green Village, discussing the plastics problem and ways in which we can help. Planning is underway for the Fall Great Islands Cleanup – Save the Date: September 21.

Summertime outreach efforts continue with dock talks on Orcas Island, led by Roan. The MRC had a booth at the County Fair August 15-18 to share the projects and people who make this work possible. It was a great opportunity to highlight MRC's impact on the community and natural environment. One of best parts of the fair outreach was the derelict vessel OH NO! who floated adrift and beached herself throughout the fair, just like real derelict vessels in marine waters.

Research activities continue with aerial surveys, shore-based vessel counts, and the start of benthic habitat surveys. The San Juan MRC is partnering with the Jefferson MRC to look at satellite imaging as it relates to boat counts and sensitive eelgrass and kelp beds.

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 August 20, the Department of Environmental Stewardship Staff will participate in the Natural Resources Agencies' Congressional Staff tour. What a great opportunity to highlight the power of partnership with the Northwest Straits Commission and Puget Sound Partnership around the creosote removal project at Jackson's Beach.

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



MRC Table at the San Juan County Fair. Photo Credit: Frances Robertson/ / PFSS Table at County Fair. Photo Credit: Katie Johnson



The OH NO at anchor – catch her before she drifts off! Photo credit Katie Johnson/ The OH NO blocking the Zucchini 500 race! Photo by Frances Robertson



The Oh NO is high and dry in the horse arena! Quick, call the DV hotline to rescue it!/ The OH NO crashed the party at the Trasion Fashion Show – quick call the DV hotline for a rescue! Photos by Frances Robertson



Congratulations to Sadie and Bear – Adopt-a-Beach stewards and winners of our Plastic Free July Reporting Contest.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: Aug/2024

Submitted by: Tracy/Lynne

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

- **Bowman Bay Stewardship Event-** held July 25th with 3 NWSF staff, 2 Skagit MRC members and staff, 6 Foundation Board Members, and 5 volunteers. We successfully spread the remainder of the mulch throughout zones 3 and 4, and substantially cut back the blackberry from the landward side of zone 6 in hopes to minimize it's spread into the restoration site.
- **Vessel Turn-In Event:** The Vessel Turn-In Event took place July 22 - Aug 16. Media day took place August 1 with project partners and several elected officials and media outlets in attendance. The La Conner Maritime team was very efficient in deconstructing over 43 vessels! A special Thanks goes to Dana, Catey and Melissa for planning and coordinating and successfully getting 50 boats signed up! Recent article in the NWSI newsletter and in the Skagit Valley Herald.
- **Fidalgo Bay Trestle Project Community Meeting- Aug 1:** The City of Anacortes hosted the first community meeting with stakeholders including Skagit MRC and Samish DNR, on August 1 at the Anacortes Library. The City provided an overview of the project and the stakeholders shared perspectives. The MRC coordinated and hosted the stakeholder communications team kickoff meeting on Aug 15th to start working on content and messaging for the interpretive signage.

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):

- **Aug- Shoreline Needs Assessment Advisory Committee Meeting-** via Zoom (4-5pmm)
- **Aug 8- Monthly MRC Meeting-** via Microsoft Teams (9-11am). Shannon Boldt presented on the Salish Sea Pigeon Guillemot Networks Breeding Survey. Lisa Kaufman presented an update on the Clayton Beach restoration project.
- **Aug 8- New MRC Website Transition Meeting-** via Microsoft Teams (3:30pm-4:30pm)
- **Aug 14- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment Check-in-** via Microsoft Teams (11-11:30am)
- **Aug 14- Rep Larsen Visit Planning Meeting-** via Zoom (2pm-3pm)
- **Aug 15 - Fidalgo Bay Trestle Communications Kickoff –** via Microsoft Teams (2:30pm-3:30pm) with stakeholders.
- **Aug 15- Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Meeting-** via Microsoft Teams (1pm-2pm)
- **Aug 24- Fidalgo Bay Day-** at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes(11am-3pm)

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

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

- Salish Sea Stewards – Darla Gay Smith:
 - The SSS Advisory Committee is on their summer break. The AC will resume monthly meetings starting in October to review the 2024 Steward Class surveys and start to plan for the 2025 SSS Training Program at Padilla Bay.
 - Darla and Pete are working with PBNERR staff to recruit new AC members. The AC provides guidance and oversight of the SSS Program, helps Padilla Bay develop & organize the yearly SSS training, and assists in steering topics & speakers for the

class and helps with publicity, graduation gear, reviewing new volunteer opportunities, and brainstorming alumni events.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - Not much happening right now. Planning and coordinating will start up again soon for the upcoming school year.
- La Conner School Rain Gardens – Elizabeth Drozda:
 - On July 31, the County Road Crew regraded the asphalt and created additional notches in the curb around the rain garden to help direct stormwater flow into the rain garden. The crew suggested also creating a swale to help improve stormwater flow into the rain garden.
 - Coordinating with the school's facilities staff to clean up the raingarden and remove some plants to make room for culturally significant native plants.
 - Reached out to the Salal Native Plant Garden to see if they have any of the plants on our list available for planting this fall. They currently only have a handful in stock and will need to order more.
- Fidalgo Bay Day – Tracy Alker:
 - The event will be held Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Pre-event setup will take place Friday, August 23 from noon-4pm. Saturday event setup will be 9am-10:30am.
 - Jude Apple is the MC and will kick off the event at 11am with a welcome from the Samish.
 - Matt is unable to participate, so Jason Morgan will be leading the beach seining this year which will start at 2:00pm. Jason has plenty of volunteers lined up.
 - The Samish Canoe family will be offering short canoe trips during the event.
 - 31 Discovery Passport Outreach Stations (a new record)! Booklets will have been finalized and printed.
 - Promoted event online. Handed out flyers in Mt. Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, Burlington, La Conner, and Anacortes. Sent out the press release.
 - Pete and several forage fish volunteers posted the FBD event banner on R Avenue.
 - Purchased supplies.
 - Completed the Umbrella Food permit application and submitted to the Health Dept.
 - BBQ rental equipment will be picked up and delivered by one of our volunteers. Paul will purchase and prepare the top- secret ingredients for shellfish.
 - Borrowing The Salish Sea School's popcorn machine for the event.
 - Finished cutting out crab and orca hat templates for kids crafts. We will also have fish printing on canvas bags and a kelp forest coloring activity. Several volunteers for the kids craft tables and face painting dropped out so we are looking for new volunteers to fill in.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) with the help of WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Samish Indian Nation, Seattle Aquarium, and Port Townsend Marine Science Center completed the second round of outplanting in June where they seeded 8 additional sites around north Puget Sound.
 - 4 sites in Skagit County were outplanted this year, including 2 new sites with help from Shannon Point Marine Center.
 - Successful hatchery spawning. 1000 larvae were seeded into culture tanks to provide juveniles for next year's outplants.
 - PSRF is currently working on data analyses and the annual report due in September.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:

- Field work has been completed for this year. Shell bags were distributed around Fidalgo Bay to catch this year's seed oysters to assess next spring.
 - Paul gave a brief presentation on oysters during Senator Patty Murray visit to Padilla Bay as part of the NWSI reauthorization discussion. Other MRCs, NWSC staff and NWSF staff presented as well.
 - Paul deserves special recognition for his dedication, hard work, and many hours contributed to the success of the oyster restoration project. Thank you, Paul!
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Cynthia Nielsen:
 - Cynthia Nielsen is the new MRC Project Lead for the Fidalgo Bay Trestle project. Thank you, Cynthia!!
 - Our Interlocal Agreement with the City of Anacortes has been fully executed with the following deliverables: Interpretive signage, project website, 3 short video clips for social media, community meetings, and preliminary conceptual design- due December 31, 2024.
 - The City of Anacortes hosted the first community meeting with stakeholders including Skagit MRC and Samish DNR, on August 1 at the Anacortes Library. Not a lot of people showed up, but it is still very early in the process. The City provided an overview of the project and the stakeholders shared perspectives.
 - Cynthia coordinated and facilitated the communications team kickoff meeting to work on interpretive signage content development in collaboration with the City and other stakeholders. The Teams kickoff meeting was held August 15, 2:30-3:30pm via Teams.
 - This project from start to finish could potentially take up to 15 years to complete!
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Skagit surveys occur monthly June-Sept and 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 July 19. Observations: Kelp density and health very good. Overall kelp bed appears larger than June survey with fingers of kelp extending beyond circular perimeter. Next survey is Aug 20.
 - **Shannon Point:** A team of 4 volunteers - surveyed July 17.
 - West Kelp Bed Observations: Overall kelp was very healthy, still a lot of bulbs underwater but only tracked those above.
 - East Bed Observations: Very little kelp bulbs observed (4 total) same as last month. Significant amount of sargassum observed close to shore and farther out where bull kelp is normally found (50-100 feet). Next survey is scheduled for Aug 16.
 - **Biz Point:** A team of 3 volunteers surveyed August 6. Overall kelp was very healthy with long blades and dense in places. Tracks provided for "new" south and north beds, along with the primary bed. Next survey is Aug 19.
 - **Lone Tree:** A team of 3 volunteers surveyed July 22 for the inaugural paddle. Kelp very dense and very healthy in appearance. Eelgrass in hallow area by reef in 1-2 foot depth at minus 1 to minus 2 tide. Next survey is Aug 20
 - **WA DNR's Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead (HSIL)** - team will be visiting Bowman Bay or a nearby area on August 29th (sometime between 12:30 and 3:00). The HSIL team supports Puget Sound habitat recovery and conservation issues through HSIL funding and also runs various implementation strategies, including a Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy that will be developed over the next year. Bree Turner, who is organizing this trip, asked if Jeff W can present on the Kelp Plan and Steven Olsen will present on Skagit's kayak kelp surveys.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

- ❖ Ecosystem Process
- ❖ Habitat Function
 - 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

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):

La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden – Stormwater Drainage Improvement



Skagit Vessel Turn-In Media Day Event- Aug 1, La Conner Marina



Fidalgo Bay Day Signage- R Ave, Anacortes



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: August 2024

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The MRC is currently reviewing a draft of the 2025-2030 Snohomish MRC Strategic Plan. A final draft is expected in September.
- A Marine Vegetation outreach event is being planned by the Snohomish MRC in Edmonds. The event will occur on October 12.

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):

MRC Staff met with Skagit County MRC Member Lynne Wenberg to discuss the Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment on July 30.

The MRC will host their annual picnic at Kayak Point Park on August 21.

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

None.

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

Strategic Planning (MRC grant project for 2024 – 2025): The MRC is currently reviewing a draft of the 2025-2030 Snohomish MRC Strategic Plan. A final draft is expected in September.

Marine Vegetation Outreach (MRC grant project for 2024 – 2025): 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, with the date decided for October 12.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): The contractor has received notice to proceed 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 are scheduled for monitoring on August 22. Howarth Park sampling is also scheduled for August.

Nearshore Restoration: Their next Meadowdale Monitoring group meeting is on September 10th. The monitoring website updates are complete:
<https://snocomrc.org/projects/meadowdale-beach-monitoring/>

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

Crabber Outreach/Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: No updates.

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)

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 – August 22.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info): None

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: August 2024

Submitted by: Dana Flerchinger and Austin Rose

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

- Northwest Straits Foundation interns, Alex Haase and Dylan Trainer, have been continuing to engage with boaters utilizing the boat ramp at Wildcat Cove. Alex and Dylan have been interacting with boat launch users at the Cove, collecting observational data, and educating cove users about intertidal organisms, invasive species, and eelgrass environments.
- Whatcom MRC has completed bull kelp monitoring surveys at Alden Bank, Aiston Preserve, and Cherry Point/Gulf Road and plans to survey Southwest Lummi Island and Point Whitehorn later this month.

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

Jim Boyle resigned from the MRC in late June 24'. Jim was offered a position as the Chief Development Officer with the Charles Darwin Foundation in the Galapagos Islands/Ecuador. This departure has created a Conservation/ Environmental vacancy.

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

- The August MRC meeting was held on August 1st. Highlights included:
 - A presentation and update from Northwest Straits Foundation interns Alex Haase and Dylan Trainer who have been assisting with eelgrass preservation efforts in Wildcat Cove. Alex and Dylan have been interacting with boat launch users at the Cove, collecting observational data, and educating cove users about intertidal organisms, invasive species, and eelgrass environments. Alex and Dylan started their work down in the Cove during mid-June and will continue until September.
 - MRC subcommittees have been working with the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District to identify shared priorities and avenues of collaboration with the MRC and discussing the feasibility of the MRC taking on intertidal surveys at Cherry Point in the coming years.

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
Whatcom County has completed bull kelp monitoring surveys at Alden Bank, Aiston Preserve, and Cherry Point/ Gulf Road. The areas of each of the kelp beds were similar to previous years, with an additional bed found at Aiston Preserve. Kelp appeared healthy at Cherry Point and Alden Bank, but

looked a bit tattered at Aiston Preserve. The remaining surveys will take place at Southwest Lummi Island (scheduled for August 17th) and Point Whitehorn (scheduled for August 20th).

- Social Marketing at Wildcat Cove

Northwest Straits Foundation interns, Alex Haase and Dylan Trainer, have been continuing to engage with boaters utilizing the boat ramp at Wildcat Cove. Alex and Dylan have been interacting with boat launch users at the Cove, collecting observational data, and educating cove users about intertidal organisms, invasive species, and eelgrass environments.

- HABs

The HABs team has been sampling for phytoplankton and mussels weekly at Semiahmoo Marina and Birch Bay Marina. Over the past month, the presence of harmful algal species has decreased slightly from previous months. Beaches throughout Whatcom County remain closed for recreational harvest of shellfish.

- Chuckanut PIC

In collaboration with Whatcom County Public Works, the MRC will be conducting additional water quality sampling at North Chuckanut Bay over the coming year. Additional samples for eDNA analysis will be taken at priority sites that have demonstrated consistently high fecal coliform levels over the past years. The goal of this additional sampling is to better determine the sources of contamination to inform the next steps for the project.

- Olympia Oyster

MRC Staff have connected with Julieta Martinelli, Biologist and Olympia Oyster Program Lead, WDFW, who has become familiar with Whatcom's pilot Oly restoration work in Chuckanut Bay. Julieta recommends more adults are needed for the population to grow. Shell enhancements are useful, but when there is no recruitment the ideal approach is to also add some seed. Due to the cost of restoration grade seed and PSRF booked out, an alternative approach would be to collect spat in cultch bags from nearby areas that have a self-sustaining population. The MRC could get donations of shell bags from a local grower, that could be placed in Fidalgo Bay, and left over the Spring and Summer until baby Olys set. Those bags with naturally 'captured' baby Olys would then be transferred to the pilot restoration site to help the population grow. This would probably need to be done for at least 3 years, or until we start seeing some growth in the population.

Other:

Kristy Lee with Whatcom Land Trust inquired about the MRC participating in a moderated panel discussion titled "Protecting Our Waterways: Community Stewardship in Whatcom County" during Whatcom Water Week. The event will take place on September 17th from 5:30-8pm, with other panel participants from NSEA and the Whatcom Conservation District. The goals of the panel are to describe the role that local organizations play in enhancing water quality and habitat in Whatcom County and to discuss how folks can contribute. The panel is expected to run about 1-1.5 hours at Transition Outpost. The rest of the time will be to eat, socialize, etc. Austin will communicate with the committee via email

about MRC member participation. Heather Spore (MRC Chair) is tentatively available for the panel discussion.

Photos:

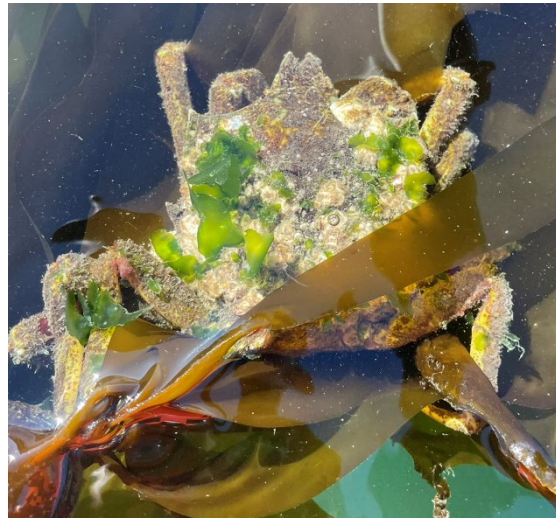


Photo credit: Dana Flerchinger. *Left: Kelp with visible sori at Cherry Point. Right: Kelp Crab in the kelp bed at Cherry Point.*



Photo credit: Dana Flerchinger. *Volunteers surveying the kelp bed at Cherry Point/ Gulf Rd.*



Photo credit: Dylan Trainer, NWSF Intern. *Left: NWSF Intern, Alex Hasse collecting data in Wildcat Cove along the single lane that has been set up to minimize damage to eelgrass beds. Right: Eelgrass meadow in Wildcat Cove.*