



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Date: September 27, 2024
Time: 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Location: [Virtual 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.

Documents for NW Straits Commission Review:

- August 2024 Minutes Approval
- 2025 – 2027 MRC Grant Timeline Packet

10:00 -10:05 AM	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement August minutes approval	Tim Ellis, Chair
10:05 – 10:35 AM	Speed Date with a Scientist: Olympia Oyster Restoration – Summary of 2012-2020 and Future Plans	Julieta Martinelli, Department of Fish and Wildlife
10:35 – 10:50 AM	Business Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWSI Conference • NW Straits Initiative Retreat • 2025 – 2027 MRC Grant Timeline 	Caitlyn Blair Lucas Hart Sasha Horst
10:50 – 10:55 AM	Project Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEI Summary Report • Website Update 	Allie Simpson Jessica Owens
10:55 – 11:15 AM	Committee Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Advisory Committee • Executive Committee • External Relations Committee 	Julia Parrish Alan Clark Nan McKay



11:15 – 11:40 AM	MRC Reports	MRC Representatives
11:40 – 11:45 PM	Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	Cecilia Gobin
11:45 – 11:50 AM	Northwest Straits Foundation	Don Hunger
11:50 – 11:55 PM	Puget Sound Partnership	Laura Bradstreet
11:55 – 12:00 PM	Public Comment	All
12:00 PM	Adjourn	

**Note that we will not have a regular monthly NW Straits Commission meeting until December 6, 2024, from 10 AM – 12 PM on Zoom. The next in-person event will be the NW Straits Annual Conference at the Delta Hotel in Everett, Snohomish County on November 15-16, 2024.*



Minutes

August 23, 2024, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Jamie Stephens, Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Ken Collins (Island), Laura Bradstreet (Puget Sound Partnership), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Elizabeth Lorence (Whatcom – Alternate), Nan McKay, Julia Parrish, Cecilia Gobin, Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit)

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

Others in Attendance: Austin Rose, Sam Whitridge

Absent: Ginny Broadhurst, Mike MacKay (Whatcom), Christina Koons (San Juan)

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The July minutes were approved as written by consensus.

Committee Updates:

Science Advisory Committee: Julia shared that the Committee is in the process of creating a project final report template to share with all MRC staff. The Committee is also working to host a Social Science 101 virtual seminar, open to all MRC members. The seminar will be on October 2, 2024 from 4 PM – 5:30 PM: Understanding and Engaging Communities Using Social Sciences Seminar. The Committee is also working on the Science Advisory Committee session that will take place at the annual conference.

Executive Committee: Alan shared that the NW Straits Commission has received \$1 million for fiscal year 2024 from NOAA. The application will be submitted to NOAA by the Department of Ecology in early September with a January 1, 2025 start date. The Committee reported that the retreat planning committee continues to plan for the NW Straits 2024 Retreat, held at the La Conner Country Inn. The agenda is underway. The Committee has also been discussing group norms. Norms will be tested at the Executive Committee meetings, and proposed norms will be brought to the NW Straits Commission for review.

External Relations: Nan reported that the NWSI reauthorization bill is awaiting a vehicle to be attached to, which would allow it to move to a floor vote in the Senate. We'll be tracking progress



Minutes

on this through Senator Murray's office. Lucas attended a Congressional Staff tour in the San Juans, which highlighted some MRC projects like Jackson Beach. Representative Rick Larsen is visiting Skagit MRC next week. This visit will highlight a number of project partnerships, including those with Samish Indian Nation, Padilla Bay Reserve, and the Port of Anacortes.

Business Items:

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

NWSI Conference Registration: Registration for the 2024 NW Straits Initiative Conference is open. Please visit the [conference website](#) or contact Caitlyn Blair (info@nwstraits.org) if you have any questions.

Budget Update: Sasha shared a proposed budget and schedule for the NOAA FY24 programmatic funding in the amount of \$1 million, which is designed to push more funding to future years to help stabilize funding to MRCs. The Commission approved by consensus the proposed budget and schedule.

NW Straits Initiative Retreat: The retreat planning group has two planning meetings between now and the retreat on September 19. The agenda is in progress and more information will be available for participants leading up to the event.

Project Updates:

NW Straits Insider Roundup: Staff at the NW Straits Commission have developed a new internal email/mailer. The goals of this email are to streamline communication, consolidate information and stay connected for internal staff and members to learn about each other's work. The email will come from (info@nwstraits.org). The first iteration of the Insider Roundup will be in September.

Skagit Vessel Turn-In Event and Media Day: The Skagit County Vessel Turn-In Recycling Event began July 22, 2024, bringing previously approved vessels to site for deconstruction and recycling. Fifty vessels applied to be a part of this recycling event! To highlight the turn-in event, project partners, special guests and members of the media gathered at La Conner Maritime Service in early August for a media day. The media day event was an opportunity to showcase the amazing collaborative work by all the project partners.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark



Minutes

- MRC member Tim Cochnauer, with assistance from other MRC members and staff, made an annual presentation on August 5 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.

Island – Ken Collins

- Our MRC has recommended a new member to 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.
- 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.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

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

San Juan – Sam Whitridge

- 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.

Skagit – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

- **Bowman Bay Stewardship Event**- held July 25th with 3 NW Straits Foundation 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.



Minutes

- **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.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- 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.

Whatcom – Elizabeth Lorence

- 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.

Partner Updates

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura joined the Congressional staff tour this August. The Puget Sound Partnership continues to advocate for reauthorization of the NW Straits Commission. The partnership is also interested in obtaining federal funding to remove federal derelict vessels from the Puget Sound.

Public Comment: No public comment.



Executive Committee Meeting
September 16, 2024 • 11:00am-12:00pm (Zoom)
Meeting Minutes

Retreat Planning: The Retreat planning group will be proposing a new NW Straits Initiative definition at the retreat on September 19. The proposed definition is:

“The NWS Initiative is a community led collaboration working to protect and restore the marine environment of northwest Washington. It is composed of the NWS Commission and seven locally based Marine Resources Committees who identify and address priority NWS marine conservation issues through internal and external partnerships, coordination, and funding.”

The retreat planning consultants, ECO Resource Group, performed surveys and interviews ahead of the retreat with NWSC, MRC, and NWSF representatives. One of the themes from this research revealed a desire to renew clarity about the organizational infrastructure of the Initiative. The retreat planning group, made up of NWSC staff and board members, MRC members, and NWSF staff and board members, reviewed the original NWSI authorization and the reauthorization bill to gain this clarity. The planning group proposed the above definition as something that will be in alignment with the authorization language. The Executive Committee talked about how this definition is different from the “three-legged stool” description we have used historically, which included the NWSC, NWSF, and MRCs. The Executive Committee expressed support for the new definition.

The Committee shared that it will be important to have enough time at the retreat to talk about action items to move forward and what will be different as a result of the new definition. People may also have questions about how the money flows between the NWSC, NWSF, and MRCs. For example, does the NWSC financially support NWSF programs like derelict gear removal? Sharing scenarios or examples of how the NWSC works with partners may also help illustrate how the definition applies in the real world. The Executive Committee will discuss action items after the retreat.

Setting Meeting Norms: The Committee continued their discussion about meeting norms from last month. In addition to those shared at the last meeting (below), the Committee talked about integrating norms from the diversity, equity and inclusion phase 1 project (see page 2). In particular, the Committee talked about “calling people in/out” in meetings versus having one on one conversations about uncomfortable topics. The Committee recommended that the NWS Commission talk about the norms during a meeting and decide which norms they will be comfortable abiding by moving forward.

Norms from last Executive Committee meeting:

- Listen as an ally and ask questions
- Approaching conversations like we are on the same team
- Having a list of ground rules and reminding people what the ground rules are in each meeting
- Ouch, oops, I'm sorry strategy. This is an "opt-in" strategy where the individual can choose to say:
 - Ouch – someone said something offensive
 - Oops – say "oh, oops, I didn't mean that"
 - Sorry – say you're sorry
- Use one on one conversations to discuss difficult or contentious issues
- If a difficult conversation needs to take place, have the conversation offline
- Presume positive intent
- Encourage good listening – Wait for three other people to speak before you speak again

Norms from DEI phase 1 project:

DRAFT NWSI Norms for Courageous Conversations – In phase 1 of the NWSI DEI project, focus groups shared thoughts on norms that were important to them. Quotes from those conversations are included in the phase 1 DEI report. NWSC staff are working to develop norms from the phase 1 quotes. The five draft norms below were created from that information.

Norm 1: Understand that making mistakes is a normal part of learning. Filtering oneself in public spaces and conversations will not contribute to unlearning biases that inhibit our ability to think critically and to be willing to learn from mistakes.

Norm 2: Understand intent vs impact of your statements. Regardless of the intention of the things we say or the actions we take, the impact of our words and actions influence those around us, as well as ourselves. It is important to be mindful about our words and actions so that our impact is not negative, harmful, or insensitive. People don't typically intend to hurt others, but it happens, and it matters that those affected by words or actions are made to feel safe and like they belong, and for the person who did the harmful action to learn from it.

Norm 3: Call people in, not out. Microaggressions and outwardly racist/harmful comments do happen in the workplace and in public settings. How we address these comments and actions is important for creating a welcoming environment for all who participate in our meetings/events. Inviting people in to rethink their actions and words can be done with care for the person who made the mistake, and it is not an attack, but an opportunity to rethink their words/actions, and to learn and grow.



Norm 4: Listen and don't assume. Taking time to ask questions and listen to others helps with avoiding making assumptions about who someone is. Making assumptions about people is harmful, and it is more beneficial to come together to ask questions and find common ground rather than to assume everyone is on the same page or has the same opinions. Different opinions and ways of thinking are valued and honored.

Norm 5: Understand that environmental issues and social issues are deeply interconnected and should be utilized as a framework for working in marine conservation. The environmental justice movement addresses environmental issues and impacts associated with environmental loss and degradation and how these issues are directly related to health hazards, loss of cultural traditions, and resource extraction. It is necessary to frame our marine conservation work in a way that encompasses social issues and environmental issues as interconnected.



Commission staff highlights - [September 2024]

MRC Support

MRC Grants: Commission staff completed amendments to several existing grant agreements, in order to make necessary updates to project scope and budget as needed. Commission staff prepared a draft timeline for the 2025-27 grant cycle, shared as part of the meeting materials for Commission review.

MRC Meeting Attendance:

Caitlyn attended the San Juan MRC Meeting 09/05

Jeff attended the Whatcom MRC Meeting 09/05

Caitlyn and Jeff attended the Skagit MRC Meeting 09/12

Dana attended Island MRC meeting 9/3

Jeff attended the Clallam MRC Meeting 09/16

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: The Kelp Plan Action Linking Subcommittee, composed of volunteers from the Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee, have begun their work developing links between Kelp Plan actions to help people more easily identify how their work or proposed work fits within the Kelp Plan framework, to help identify how we can use more advanced actions to bolster those needing additional attention and effort, and to assist in development of other efforts. Staff also continue to refine the WA Kelp Project Inventory to identify who is doing what with kelp in WA.

Kelp Monitoring: The kelp kayak monitoring season has come to a close, with most MRCs completing their final surveys mid-September. Thank you to all the kayak volunteers that assisted with this year's program. Your work is very much appreciated and valued. Staff worked to update the WA State Kelp Floating Indicator to include 2023 data, which includes two new sites for the indicator (i.e., Pt. Whitehorn in Whatcom County and Hoypus Pt. in Island County).

European Green Crab: The EGC program continues monitoring and removal efforts in Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay with the support of WDFW technicians, DNR aquatic reserves staff, and volunteers! There is an uptick in capture rates in both waterbodies, as well as nearby locations, due to a seemingly successful recruitment year of young crab. Land-based trapping will wrap up at the end of September for NWSC.

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: NWSC staff held the transboundary eelgrass protection meeting among partners in WA and BC to share updates on no-anchor zones and collaborate.



Commission staff highlights - [September 2024]

Derelict Vessels: The Skagit vessel turn-in recycling event wrapped up in September as the final vessels with asbestos were abated and deconstructed. Additionally, a large 40 ft sailboat was abandoned on the shores of Waadah Island in Neah Bay on Makah owned tidelands. There was an opportunity to respond quickly before the vessel broke further apart and the Makah Tribe prioritized using NWSC CDS funds to cover costs of the removal. Removal operations were complicated given the location and position of the vessel and involved helicopters and dive teams. The vessel was successfully recovered and floated to safer waters.

Operations

Staff: No staff updates at this time.

Budget: Commission and Ecology staff submitted the NOAA application for fiscal year 2024, requesting a January 1, 2025 start date.

Communications: Commission staff, MRC staff, and our website developers completed the shift from an older website platform to an up-to-date system for all MRC sites except Skagit, which is expected to be complete within the next month. Updates were made with ADA compliance in mind. The first edition of our Insider Roundup was sent to all MRC members, Commission members and staff, and Foundation board members and staff.

Contracts and grants: No new contracts executed this month. Commission staff have requested an amendment to the US Fish and Wildlife Service grant agreement for voluntary no-anchor zones to extend to the end of 2025. Plans are underway to contract for phase two of the voluntary no-anchor zone social marketing campaign.

DEI: Commission staff had a pre-kickoff meeting with Athena Group on 09/10 to discuss plans for Phase 2 and developing learning cohorts as an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of DEI concepts and to assist with implementing DEI goals within each county MRC.

Retreat: The retreat planning group is continuing to work with Eco Resource consultants to plan an agenda for the September 19 retreat. The agenda 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



Commission staff highlights - [September 2024]

- NOAA 312 evaluation of Padilla Bay NERR 9/11 & 9/12 attended by Dana, Allie, Leah, Sasha, and Lucas
- WDFW Boater Engagement Workshop 9/12 attended by Dana
- Salish Sea Eelgrass Protection Workgroup 9/12 attended by Dana, Sasha, and facilitated by Allie
- Kelp and Eelgrass Health Plan Advisory workgroup 9/23 attended by Dana
- Ecology's Shoreline Management Act Rulemaking webinar 9/23 attended by Jeff
- Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program Management Team Meeting 9/9 and 9/17 attended by Lucas
- Derelict Vessel Strategic Planning meeting on 9/24 attended by Dana and Lucas
- Statement of Cooperation Workgroup Action Plan Review meeting on 9/12 attended by Lucas
- DEI planning meeting with Athena Group attended on 9/10 by Allie, Caitlyn, Lucas
- NWSI Retreat Planning Group meeting on 9/10 attended by Lucas
- NWSI Conference Planning Committee on 9/4 attended by Sasha, Caitlyn, and Lucas

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: September 2024

Submitted by: Amelia Kalagher

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

- The MRC designed and printed a new order of outreach cards in five new designs: pinto abalone, phytoplankton toxins, impact of dogs at Elwha Beach, Dungeness Bay, and a decorator crab.
- The pigeon guillemot monitoring season concluded mid-September, with prey deliveries extending later into the season than usual.
- The MRC conducted two kelp surveys at Freshwater Bay in late August and early September. The large bed at Freshwater Bay, in particular, is slightly larger this year and appears healthy.

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 September monthly meeting was held 9/16/24. The MRC hosted Phil Parisi, robotics researcher with Pacific Northwest National Labs, at the meeting for a presentation on BlueBoat and BlueROV technology for autonomous data collection, followed by a demo of the ROV in Port Angeles Harbor.
- On September 21st, the MRC will host an educational table at the local event Forever StreamFest, sharing its projects and local issues of importance.
- On September 27th, the MRC will host a similar educational table at the local Dungeness River Festival.

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 spat is being cultivated 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 printed a new order of coasters in five new designs and began distributing these.
- MRC members continued developing new displays for outreach at local festivals. Existing displays were revised and reprinted on permanent materials.
- 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. Initial survey dives have been scheduled for two days in early October.

- MRC member Bob Vreeland continues to sample shellfish for biotoxin monitoring every 2 weeks, in partnership with the Department of Health.
- The MRC's kelp surveys took place at Freshwater Bay in late August and early September. The large bed at Freshwater Bay, in particular, is larger this year and appears healthy.
- The pigeon guillemot monitoring season concluded mid-September, with prey deliveries extending later into the season than usual.

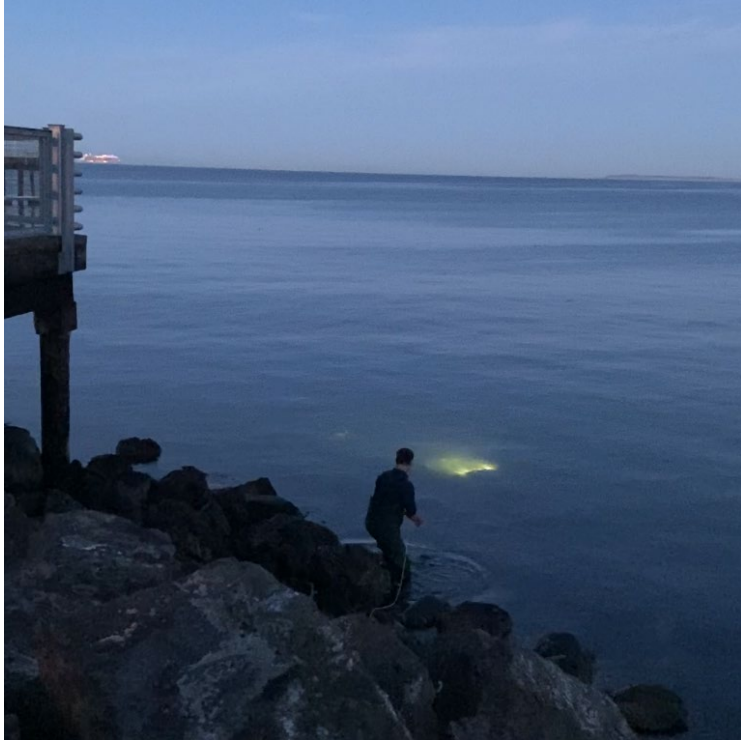
Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

- The MRC has begun developing a new strategic plan for 2025 and beyond.

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



MRC members cluster to view the video feed from BlueROV, underwater robotics technology. Phil Parisi, robotics researcher with PNNL (right), demonstrates the tech. Photo credit Amelia Kalagher.



Phil Parisi deploys BlueROV in Port Angeles Harbor. Photo credit Amelia Kalagher.



The fringing kelp in front of Bachelor Rock at Freshwater Bay, as seen from surveying kayak. Project: kelp monitoring. Photo credit Amelia Kalagher.



Kelp monitoring volunteer Joanne LaBaw taking measurements at Freshwater Bay. Project: kelp monitoring. Photo credit Amelia Kalagher.

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:

- **Welcome to our newest member**
- **Shoreline Armoring Report**

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

- We welcome our newest member, Jeff Wheeler!

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
- Oct 19: Orca Recovery Day Event at Cornet Bay & Hoypus Point
- Oct 31: End of Year Volunteer Gathering

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 will be starting up again soon for the winter season Kirk Larsen the team lead has identified a new FF location on Camano. We will be discussing it at our next MRC meeting. Additionally, we are working on our final reporting for the year.

Bull Kelp Surveys: The teams have been successful at surveying the five sites June through September this year. In August our volunteers surveyed 170 acres of Bull kelp. The team has been working hard to write up the annual report and get all the data inputted from the season.

Stewardship – Cornet Bay/Hoypus Point: We're done watering for the season! It is now the time of year to get things buttoned up and ready for winter. The NWSF and Island MRC will be hosting 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 the workshop on October 5th. The Shoreline Armoring Report and Permit Analysis has been

completed. The Planning Department at Island County has reviewed the report and have given us approval to move forward. The report can now be shared widely.

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 adjust the scope of work to fit the actual work accomplished this year. The team has been working on annual reporting and getting the QAPP ready for review.

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.

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



Lowell Point – Bull kelp survey
Photo by Kelly Zupich

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: September 2024

Submitted by: Katie Kowal

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

- 9/5-8 – Wooden Boat Festival was a great success! We had 300 visitors at our tabling booth and 1403 visitors at our speaker series tent. The speaker series tent was a new outreach initiative for our MRC this year, and we partnered with WA Sea Grant and the Port Townsend Marine Science Center (PTMSC) to invite 21 speakers to present over 3 days, on topics ranging from Derelict Crab Pots, to Orcas of PT and the ecology of a whale fall, to sustainable fishing and boating practices. The success of this event is thanks to our amazing MRC volunteers, and our project lead Betsy Carlson! All hands were on deck for this 3-day event to help staff the tabling booth, act as MC's to introduce our presenters, provide tech assistance, and lead a morning hands-on plankton microscope activity.
- Project lead Neil Harrington visited Discovery Bay oyster restoration sites to do a visual survey of recruitment, found successful Olympia oyster settlers on Olympia oyster shell – past settlement has primarily been seen on Pacific oyster shell.

- **Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): New “Local Youth” member Akeyla Behrenfield started 9/3.

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

Past Events/Meetings

September 3 – MRC Monthly Meeting

September 5-8 – Wooden Boat Festival

September 16 – Kelp kayak monitoring – canceled due to weather

September 24 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting

Upcoming Events/Meetings

October 8 – MRC Monthly Meeting

October 15 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting

October 18 – Rain Garden Work Party

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 September.
- **Shoreline Landowner:** Nothing to report.
- **Kelp kayak monitoring:** 9/16-17 - North Beach kayak survey attempted, canceled due to weather.

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

2. Rain Gardens:

- October 2024 Rain Garden Work Party is scheduled for 10/18.

3. Education & Outreach:

- 9/5-8 – Wooden Boat Festival was a great success! We had 300 visitors at our tabling booth and 1403 visitors at our speaker series tent. The speaker series tent was a new outreach initiative for our MRC this year, and we partnered with WA Sea Grant and the Port Townsend Marine Science Center (PTMSC) to invite 21 speakers to present over 3 days, on topics ranging from Derelict Crab Pots, to Orcas of PT and the ecology of a whale fall, to sustainable fishing and boating practices.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- 9/19 - Project lead (Neil) visited Discovery Bay oyster restoration sites to do a visual survey of recruitment, found successful Olympia oyster settlers on Olympia oyster shell – past settlement has primarily been seen on Pacific oyster shell.
- 9/19 – Coordinator and project lead (Neil) met to discuss logistics for spreading shell in Discovery Bay by the end of the year using OTGP-2023 funds. Spending funds will require use of the county's bid process, an RFP is currently being written, and we expect the bid process to be finalized by end of October. Shell spread is planned to occur late November/early December.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- We will be purchasing 4 new backup buoys before 9/30/24.
- This project will be our spotlight project for the roundtable session at the November NWSC Conference.
- Monitoring of boater compliance was conducted over 3 days during the Wooden Boat Festival 9/6-9/8. Visual surveys showed only one catamaran was found to be moored inside the eelgrass conservation area. Satellite images taken of the NAZ area was coordinated by Jeff Taylor, and showed clear boater compliance withing the NAZ area.

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.): Supported by funding and grant coordination from Strait ERN, the DEI subcommittee met with the USAWA DEI contractor on 9/19 to discuss feedback and observations from their attendance at our August monthly MRC meeting. We had a very positive and informative discussion on identifying our MRC's mission, goals related to monthly meetings and outreach activities, brainstorming ways to build community and foster connection within our MRC, and how to be more accessible to community members/members of the public.

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



*Photo: Olympia oyster 2024 recruitment seen 8/21/24 (Oly settler in yellow circle)
– Discovery Bay, WA
Photo Credit: Neil Harrington*



*Photo: Speaker series presentation stage – we ran out of chairs! – Wooden Boat Festival, Port Townsend, WA
Photo Credit: Betsy Carlson*



*Photo: Plankton hands-on activity setup at the speaker series tent! – Wooden Boat Festival, Port Townsend, WA
Photo Credit: Emily Buckner and Betsy Carlson*



*Photo: Tabling booth in action! (MRC Volunteers Gordon King, Troy McKelvey, Sarah Fisken) – Wooden Boat Festival, Port Townsend, WA
Photo Credit: Katie Kowal*



*Photo: MRC Volunteer Troy McKelvey gives out octopus hand stamps! – Wooden Boat Festival, Port Townsend, WA
Photo Credit: Katie Kowal*

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: September 2024

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

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

- The Fall Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled to happen on September 21 with events happening across Orcas, Lopez, Shaw, and San Juan Islands. This fall we are raising awareness about microplastics and focusing on gathering debris both big and small!
- Summer research projects including aerial surveys, vessel counts, and benthic habitat surveys, as well as summer boating outreach projects are wrapping up. We are compiling data and summarizing efforts for Q4 reporting.

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

Aaron Boyles will be stepping down from the MRC at the end of September, after providing insight, wisdom and expertise for the last few years. We will miss his jovial nature and wish him well in future endeavors. Recruitment efforts will begin again with a focus on diversity by island location as a many of members reside on San Juan.

At this past meeting, Karin Roemers-Klevin was unanimously voted to resume duties as Vice Chair of the MRC. She has done a wonderful job in this role before, and we appreciate her willingness to lead by example.

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

- Stewardship Network Meeting – September 4
- MRC/CAG/LIO Meeting – September 5 (in-person)
- ERTV Subcommittee Meeting – September 16
- NWSI Staff Retreat – September 19
- Fall Great Islands Cleanup – September 21
- Plastic Free Salish Sea Subcommittee Meeting – September 24
- Upcoming MRC Meetings: October 3, November 7

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 Fall Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, September 21 with events happening on Orcas, Lopez, Shaw and San Juan Islands. This year we are focusing education efforts on microplastics, every piece gathered from beaches and roadways helps prevent plastics from entering the Salish Sea. As part of this Fall's festivities, Plastic Free Salish Sea will join United by Blue, Slow Loris Designs, Friends of the San Juans, and the National Park Service for a focused beach cleanup on the south end of San Juan Island on September 20. Due to the sensitive ecosystem and historical/cultural resources, beach cleanups on National Park lands requires special training and education. We are thrilled to partner with the Parks Service again and grow this relationship. Photos from the cleanup events and totals will be included in next month's report.

With the busy boating season slowing down, derelict vessel patrols will resume this Fall. It is much easier to identify problematic boats when there are fewer visiting boaters cluttering marinas and bays.

The final aerial survey was conducted on September 14. We will now be analyzing the data and looking into the results. Shore-based vessel counts have wrapped up as well and will included in the Q4 Year 1 report.

On September 16 the MRC subcommittee working on ERTV and oil spill prevention met with Brain Krik from the Department of Ecology, to discuss data within the ERTV analysis report. The 216-page published report analyses the

effectiveness an ERTV throughout the entirety of the greater Puget Sound region. When looking at the increase in vessel traffic projected with the coming Robert Banks Terminal 2 in Vancouver, knowing the effectiveness of a locally based ERTV is important and the data can be extracted from the published report. To better communicate this with Canada, the MRC is requesting data from Ecology to support outreach around this transboundary issue.

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.):

Last month, Department of Environmental Stewardship Staff participated in the Natural Resources Agencies' Congressional Staff tour on San Juan Island. One of the highlights of this tour was the showcase the incredible partnership with the Northwest Straits Commission around the work to remove 132 creosote pilings at Jackson's Beach. The old, creosote-soaked pilings were the remnants of a pier used for barging gravel off the island, leaching toxic chemicals into the sea. By removing these pilings, we are taking the first step in restoring Jackson's Beach. Not only will the marine environment benefit from these efforts, but the community will enjoy a more scenic and healthier beach. This project would not have been possible without key partnerships with the NWSC and Puget Sound Partnership.

San Juan County will be hosting training for the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) on September 16. This training will be recorded and made available to all members of the MRC. As an advisory group, it will be good for everyone to get a refresher on following the act when we gather and making sure we are not in violation of the OMPA.

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



Congressional Staffer Tour, looking at the Jackson Beach creosote removal site. Photos by Sam Whitridge

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: Sept/2024

Submitted by: Tracy/Lynne/Jenn

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

- **Fidalgo Bay Day**-(Aug 24): Despite the cold rainy weather, we had another successful Fidalgo Bay Day event. An estimated 300 attendees (just a little less than last year), 35 participating organizations, 31 Discovery Passport Outreach Stations (a new record), 155 Passport Booklets handed out, over 30 volunteers (much fewer than usual), and 5 local businesses supported the event this year. The Anacortes American published a recent [article](#) about the event.
- **Rep Larsen's Visit**- (Aug 27): The NWSC, NWSF, Padilla Bay, Samish Indian Nation, and Skagit MRC co-hosted a visit with Rep Larsen and his staff at the Fidalgo Bay Resort. We highlighted the NWS Initiative Reauthorization bill and shared several examples of our partnerships and collaborative work in marine conservation. Larsen participated in the beach seining activity with Kids on the Beach led by Annie England with Padilla Bay and Samish DNR staff.

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):

- **Sept 12- Monthly MRC Meeting**- via Microsoft Teams (9-11am). No guest speakers.
- **Sept 18- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment Progress Review Meeting**- via Microsoft Teams (11-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 is on their summer break but will begin planning for the 2025 SSS Training Program with an in-person meeting at Padilla Bay Reserve on October 18th.
 - Darla and Pete are working with PBNERR staff to recruit new AC members and a new MRC Project Lead.
 - On September 10, 2024, Darla participated in NOAA's 5-year Review of PBNERR at the Reserve.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
 - Negotiating with WDFW to include an additional Index survey site near the old Lovrick Marina on the Guemes Channel and now awaiting parcel owner permission to access.
- 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:
 - MRC leads met with the groundskeeper and school Principal to discuss updates and next steps. Cutting down the curb has been completed by County staff which will provide more drainage. We have reached out to native plants society to order culturally significant native plants, and have spoken with the school district signage person. Next step is to design signs, but waiting on cost estimates. In addition to plants, we will also need to purchase some mulch.

- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - The event was held Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Despite the cold rainy weather, an estimated 300 people showed up, which is close to the crowd numbers we usually get. We received lots of positive feedback.
 - We had 35 participating organizations, 31 Discovery Passport Outreach Stations (a new record), 155 Passport Booklets handed out, over 30 volunteers (much fewer than usual), and 5 local businesses supporting the event this year.
 - A few planned activities were canceled including the Samish Canoe family canoe rides and Corra the Selkie.
 - Jude Apple is the MC and will kick off the event at 11am followed by a Samish welcome from Rosie Cayou.
 - Jason Morgan with the help of volunteers led the very popular beach seining demonstration.
 - Food included complimentary popcorn and chowder and shellfish samples and a traditional No-Host Coast Salish BBQ Salmon and Indian Tacos.
 - There was a raffle drawing just for the volunteers. 13 names were drawn for gift certificates to local seafood restaurants.
 - The Anacortes American published a recent [article](#) about the event.
 - Thank You cards and emails are being sent out.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinneel:
 - 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 Dinneel:
 - 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.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Cynthia Nielsen:
 - The City of Anacortes hosted a booth for the Thompson Trail trestle Rebuild project that included handouts with a QR code to the project [Storymap](#) with links to partner websites, including Skagit MRC.
 - The MRC, DNR, and Padilla Bay worked on developing messaging about the current conditions and the benefits this project will have on the Fidalgo Bay ecosystem. That information was included in the project storymap and will be included in the interpretive signage and the short video clips.
 - The City started filming short video clips with some footage of the Samish DNR beach seining in Fidalgo Bay. They will be conducting interviews with stakeholders later this month.
- 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).

Updates: Kelp Season is wrapping up! September are the last surveys of the year:

 - Coffin Rocks: August 18, Steven lead the team of Hal Lee and Joan Magee.
Observations: Kelp bed surrounds Coffin Rocks completely; very healthy in appearance. Thick clusters close to rocks, and numerous outliers on edges (2-4 single kelp). Rock top

exposed with a flock of seagulls perched on top. One juvenile pigeon guillemot observed. Two-three porpoises surfaced north of rock with a harbor seal surfacing after the porpoises left.

- Shannon Point: August 15, Lynne lead the team of Hal Lee, Dorothy Bradshaw and Elizabeth Drozda-Freeman. *Observations: West Bed Observations: Nanoose was more accurate reflection of currents (again). The current and winds were calm with little boat wakes. The "new" southern kelp bed grew into a full larger bed connecting with typical north kelp bed. Additional sparse kelp was found along the shoreline outside of track. Some sargassum observed nearer to shore. "New" bed formed south of traditional west bed with narrow but connecting row of bulbs to make a single track. Kelp very healthy with long blades. Sparse sargassum observed close to shore. Two harbor porpoise and one bald eagle in a tree observed. East Bed Observations: Current and winds were calm, few boat wakes. Some single kelp bulbs were observed outside of track both near shore and far off shore. Kelp was healthy and very sparse, but enough bulbs and spacing to get a small track. The sargassum has died way back to shore from last two months. There were other single kelp bulbs outside track. Two herons, belted kingfisher and a purple sea star observed.*
- Biz Point: August 5: Lynne lead the team with Joan Magee and Catherine. *Observations: Calm winds, light fog / mist. Current was slack. Sparse kelp observed outside of main bed and outside of the "new" south and north beds. Kelp was very healthy, long blades and dense in places. Tracks provided for "new" south and north beds - more kelp was observed outside of all the tracked beds. Two harbor porpoises, many harbor seals, pigeon guillemots, fried egg jellyfish, belted kingfisher and large schools of small silver fish among the kelp beds.*
- Lone Tree: August 20, Steven lead the team with Catherine Houck and Joan Magee. *Observations: Localized winds picked up to 15-25 knots so paddle was cut short. Several crab trap buoys trapped in kelp beds on north side of reef. Possibly still anchored to crab traps below surface. Kelp appears very healthy and very dense/thick on NW side of reef. Kelp bed extends westward of survey area toward Hope Island. Conditions too rough with white caps to survey further. About one hour after slack water flood current submerged kelp north of reef.*
- 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 took place Sept 9.
 - **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 completed watering of the restoration site this summer.
 - We will schedule a planting event, possibly in lieu of Orca Recovery Day, as well as another fall stewardship day for cutting back more blackberry.
 - Planning to schedule a planting day at Bowman for that Thursday before (October 17th).
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

The Shoreline Needs Assessment project with Confluence Environmental is underway.

 - Meeting with Confluence every 2 weeks.
 - Confluence is coordinating directly with Skagit Co GIS (Renee McMinn) and NWSC Sound IQ (Suzanne Shull) for geodatabase requirements.

- Lynne is working with Betsy Stevenson (Skagit Shoreline Master Plan Lead) to obtain Skagit’s Management Unit GIS/Shapefiles from consultant to determine if these could be useful references in our geodatabase.
- Progress Review Zoom meeting will be held Sept 18
- Task 1 – Initial new Geodatabase
 - The Initial geodatabase structure provided in a memo describing the proposed database structure, with attached snapshots of the current parcel and drift cell. MRC Team will review proposed structure and data types and provide feedback, provide recommendations for identifying geographical sub-groups for zoning, and identify key words for searches filtering data.
 - The types of attributes to be added to individual parcels (polygons) on the GIS mapping will include proposed new projects based on Task 3 prioritization methods.
- Task 2 – Literature Review
 - The initial Data Inventory list was provided with 167 data sources and brief descriptions for MRC review (attached). The entire inventory will become an online resource for Skagit Co use in the future, however, it is expected that only 20 or so data sources will be utilized for this specific shoreline assessment.
 - MRC Team reviewed data list and provided feedback. Concerned the data sources/sites might be difficult to scale and how to deal with overlapping and redundant data sources.
- Task 3 – Develop Prioritization Process, Perform Analysis, Identify MRC Focus Areas
 - Provide recommendations for identifying geographical sub-groups for zoning (3-5 max.) to capture areas of interest to the MRC. Discussed using drift cells (drift cells will not address kelp or eelgrass) or using Management Units used in the Skagit Shoreline Management Program.
 - ❖ Landscape Context
 - ❖ Ecosystem Process
 - ❖ Habitat Function
- 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):

Fidalgo Bay Day, Aug 24



Rep Rick Larsen's Visit- Aug 27



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: September 2024

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The MRC and WSU Beach Watchers hosted an ETAP beach cleanup event at Mukilteo Lighthouse Park on September 21.
- The Marine Ecology Internship for 2024 concluded in September and Cassie completed her project, a Shoreline Health Assessment protocol. The MRC thanks Cassie for her work!

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):

The MRC hosted their annual picnic at Kayak Point Park on August 21

Elisa Dawson attended the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Working Group on September 11

Staff attended the NWSI Retreat on September 19

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 final draft of the 2025-2030 Snohomish MRC Strategic Plan was completed. The MRC will formally vote to enact the plan at the October MRC meeting.

Marine Vegetation Outreach (MRC grant project for 2024 – 2025): Outreach materials for both the public and policy makers were reviewed and finalized in September. Planning for the in-person event in October is also continuing. The event will be held at the Edmonds Plaza Room on October 12.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): Two vessels were removed in August. The contractor is being paid, and then Snohomish County will submit paperwork to DNR for reimbursement.

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

Forage Fish Monitoring: Picnic Point and Meadowdale are scheduled for monitoring on September 26. Howarth Park sampling is also scheduled for September. Samples from all sites were delivered to WDFW in August.

Nearshore Restoration: There was a Meadowdale Monitoring group meeting on September 10th. The monitoring team discussed website updates and began making plans for Year 3 monitoring.

Outreach: Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. An ETAP beach cleanup will be held at Mukilteo Lighthouse Park on September 21.

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 this fall.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring: Kelp monitoring has been completed for 2024 and data is being submitted via KoboToolbox.

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.):

The UW Bothell Digital Scholars Intern completed their summer internship. Their project was to revamp and convert the MRC annual report in Canva to make future editing easier and potentially accessible to members. Final drafts were received in August and will be utilized to create the 2024 annual report.

The Marine Ecology Internship for 2024 concluded in September and Cassie completed her project, a Shoreline Health Assessment protocol. The MRC thanks Cassie for her work!

Upcoming Events:

- ETAP Beach Clean Up – Sep 21
- Forage fish monitoring Picnic Point and Meadowdale – Sep 26
- Marine Veg event – Oct 12

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: September 2024

Submitted by: Dana Flerchinger and Austin Rose

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

- The MRC will be hosting an educational booth at SeaFeast in Bellingham on Saturday, October 5th.
- The MRC will be conducting additional water quality sampling at North Chuckanut Bay over the coming year starting in September. Additional samples for eDNA analysis will be taken at priority sites that have demonstrated consistently high fecal coliform levels over the past years.
- The MRC participated in a site visit at Clayton Beach on September 13th with Governor Jay Inslee, and project affiliates. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the scope and cost of the restoration project, which includes removing over 1,300 linear ft of rock armor, pilings, and debris and filling a 14-acre offshore dredge hole to restore critical eelgrass habitat.

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):

- The September MRC meeting was held on September 5th. Highlights included:
 - The MRC was reminded of the effort from Whatcom Agricultural Advisory Committee to provide coordinated input to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan update. If MRC members are interested, a meeting will be set up with the members of the AAC to discuss/identify commonalities on the goals and policies within the Comp plan update. Advisory Committees will have an opportunity to review and comment on a draft after October.
 - Rick Beauregard shared info about a funding opportunity to increase harvestable shellfish bed acreage in Puget Sound. The Request for Proposals (RFP) targets work that addresses fecal pollution impacts to shellfish growing area classification protection and restoration, including supporting innovative solutions, regional scoped work, and addressing impacts from wastewater treatment plants. The MRC has discussed opening up the shellfish beds on the outside of Semiahmoo Spit (Lighthouse Beach). This funding could be a good fit.
 - Staff are working with NWSC staff on the possibility of Whatcom hosting a vessel turn-in event. More info will be shared as details come together.

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 for the season. In total, 5 surveys were completed at Alden Bank, Aiston Preserve, SW Lummi Island, and two surveys at Cherry Point/ Gulf Road (one in August and one in September). Due to poor weather conditions on the scheduled survey dates and backup dates, the kelp bed at Point Whitehorn was not surveyed this season.
- Social Marketing at Wildcat Cove
Northwest Straits Foundation interns, Alex Haase and Dylan Trainer, finished their term and thus concluded their efforts in Wildcat Cove. Overall, the interns found that a majority of launch users were familiar with eelgrass habitats and were interested in learning more about the ways they could reduce damage to these habitats. The main strategies that the interns communicated to boaters and launch users were to launch boats at higher tide stages and to limit launching/dragging kayaks and other equipment to a single lane within the cove to minimize impacts to eelgrass.
- 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 starting in September. 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.

Other:

- The MRC will be hosting an educational booth at SeaFeast in Bellingham on Saturday, October 5th.
- The Whatcom MRC participated in a moderated panel discussion titled “Protecting Our Waterways: Community Stewardship in Whatcom County” on September 17th during Whatcom Water Week. Other panel participants were from NSEA and the Whatcom Conservation District. The panel described the role that local organizations play in enhancing water quality and habitat in Whatcom County and discussed how folks could contribute.
- Whatcom MRC participated in a site visit at Clayton Beach on September 13th with Governor Jay Inslee, NW Straits Foundation staff, State Parks staff, Herrera consultants, WA Fish and Wildlife representatives, and Sinclair representatives. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the scope and cost of the restoration project, which includes removing over 1,300 linear ft of rock armor, pilings, and debris and filling a 14-acre offshore dredge hole to restore critical eelgrass habitat.

Photos:



Left: Volunteers prepare to start the September kelp survey at Cherry Point. Photo credit: Eleanor Hines. Right: Kelp bed at Cherry Point. Photo Credit: Suzanne Shull.



Photo credit: Dana Flerchinger. HABs volunteers collect a vertical plankton tow and environmental data at Semiahmoo Marina.