



## Northwest Straits Conference- 2024

### Session Title: Knowledge and Resources! Meet the Science Advisory Committee

#### Summary of discussion themes

- Long-term projects (particularly monitoring & restoration) (from Ron, Tom, and Kathryn's tables):
  - purpose and ability to maintain volunteer engagement/benefit
  - when to sunset and move to other projects or sites
  - simplifying protocols and goals
  - assessing and re-evaluating goals of long running projects
  - *Does the data we are collecting help answer the question we set out to answer?*  
Need to identify the goal/question that they want to pursue.
  - more holistic monitoring of select sites (intertidal surveys, additional info vs just forage fish)
  - better data communication back to volunteers
- NWSI internal needs (from Anne and David's tables)
  - Cross MRC communication and coordination
  - Project prioritization
  - Moving to be more strategic with priorities (MRC strategic planning or using structured decision making)
  - Improved information sharing
  - Shared data resources
  - NWSI wide data assessment
- Awareness to Action (from Julia, Kathy, and David's tables)
  - Effective communication/messaging/story telling
  - Social marketing/communication tools and platforms
  - evaluation

Overall: Student engagement opportunities

## Table Notes

**SAC Member:** Ron Thom

**Table theme:** Conservation and Restoration (and eelgrass)

Themes from topics/challenges:

- Permitting issues
- Maintaining resources (e.g. buoys)
- Human support (volunteers)
- How to really engage community, esp. tourists?
- Eelgrass restoration and reference (sites)
- Need to fix the system to get good response of restoration.
- Figure out what is “wrong” before trying to restore

Takeaways:

- Need baseline and continuous monitoring (of eelgrass)
- Oysters + Eelgrass = Thrive

Follow up ideas/actions:

- Seek out success stories...takeaways?
- Explore funding opportunities
- Figure out how to navigate permit issues
- Conservation boating app -> virtual anchor out

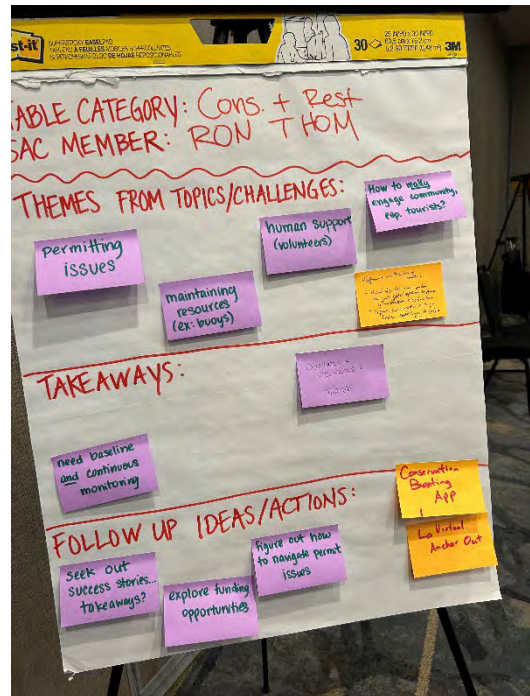
### Additional notes from SAC member:

Sea Level rise and heat waves make the job harder for eelgrass.

Understand better how to minimize impact and how to compensate for issues with a site.

Four charts to help eelgrass were discussed (Dana has a copy):

1. Simple conceptual model helps to organize an approach to conservation and restoration.
2. Enhance resilience in these systems.
3. Utilize or develop a “safe operating space” for eelgrass.
4. Consider ‘net ecological gain’ with the project.





**SAC Member:** Tom Mumford

**Table theme:** Conservation and Restoration (and kelp)

Themes from topics/challenges:

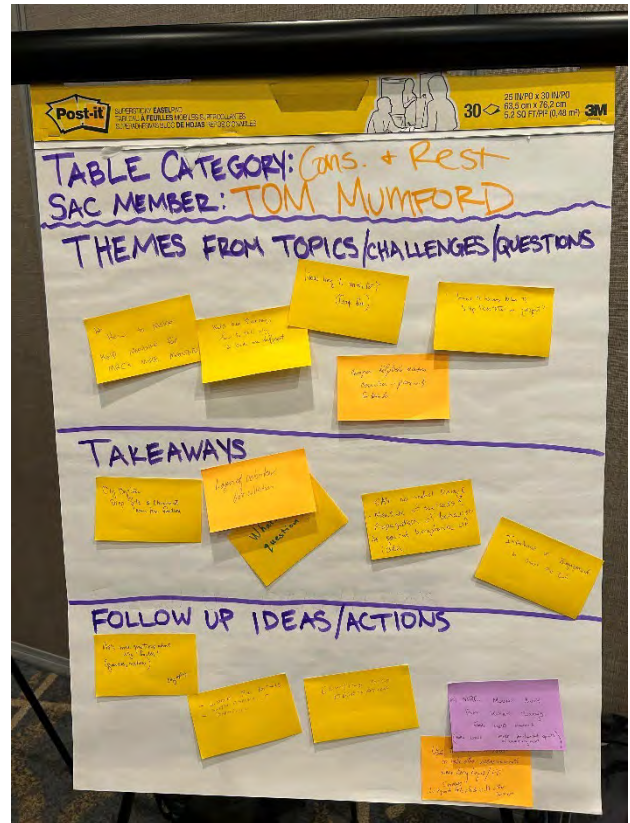
- How to make kelp monitoring for MRCs more meaningful?
- Kelp bed surveys: how to tell why 2 beds are different
- How long to monitor? (e.g. forage fish)
- Compare kelp beds across counties in proximity for trends
- How to know when to stop restoration project? (this was specifically in context to an oly oyster pilot)

Takeaways:

- Oly Oysters- drop site at N. Chuckanut, learn from failure
- Layers of volunteer data collection
- What's the question?
- SAV no anchor buoys – measure of success? Propagation of behavior (i.e. social acceptance of idea)
- Importance of engagement to collect the data

Follow up ideas/actions:

- Ask more questions about why we failed (growers, natives) – oly oysters
- Look for partners with capabilities and experience
- Continuous (Baseline) Observation
- MRC: moving away from kayak surveys for kelp monitoring (more drone, more photo/quadrat counts of understory kelp)
- Use the volunteer labor to take other measurements when doing kayak/FF surveys. Integrate the data with other sources



**SAC Member:** Kathryn Sobocinski

**Table theme:** Monitoring & Research

Themes from topics/challenges:

- ERTV effectiveness analysis peer review of the ecology model and report
- How to make monitoring on beaches local focused and more holistic. What value can be added? How do the pieces fit together?
- Intertidal monitoring as baseline data
- Move from project to project rather than long-term planning
- What do the results mean?
- Emergency rapid assessment protocol?
- How to get help with analysis?

Takeaways:

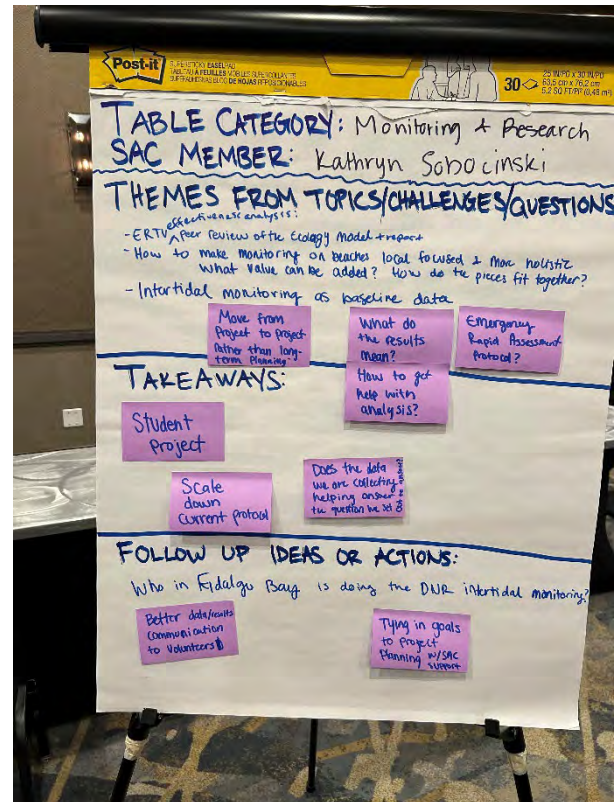
- Student project
- Scale down current protocol
- Does the data we are collecting help answer the question we set out to answer?

Follow up ideas/actions:

- Who in Fidalgo bay is doing the DNR intertidal monitoring?
- Better data/results communication to volunteers
- Tying in goals to project planning with SAC support

**Additional notes from SAC member:**

- Value of this was in getting to know MRC members and their interests for future follow up.
- Cross-MRC priorities: e.g., rapid response program for spills
- *Does the data we are collecting help answer the question we set out to answer?* Need to identify the goal/question that they want to pursue.



**SAC Member:** Anne Beaudreau

**Table theme:** Monitoring & Research

Themes from topics/challenges:

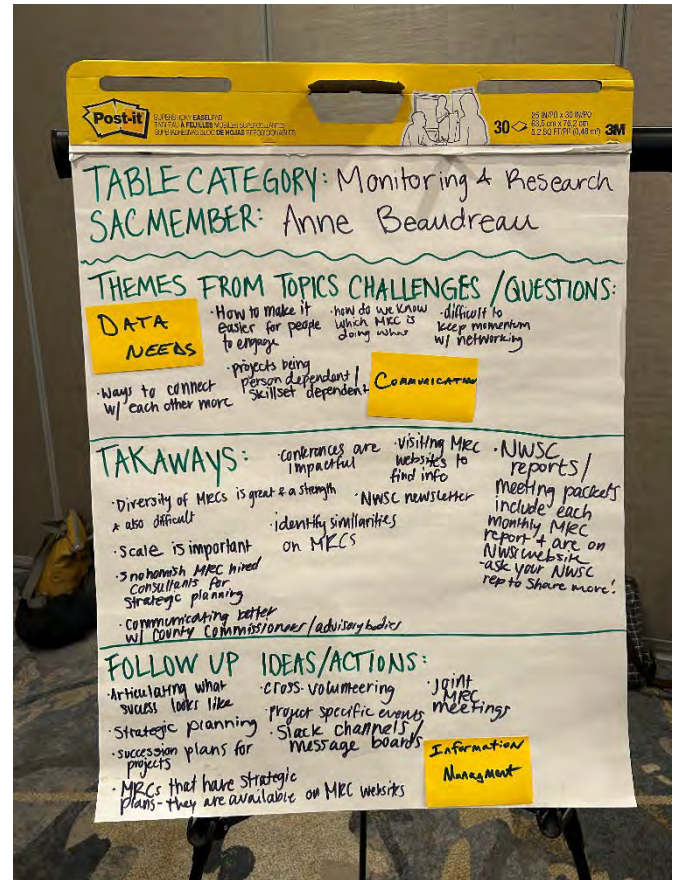
- Data Needs
- Ways to connect with each other more
- How to make it easier for people to engage
- Projects being person dependent/skillset dependent
- Communication
- How do we know which MRC is doing what
- Difficult to keep momentum with networking

Takeaways:

- Diversity of MRCs is great strength and difficult
- Scale is important
- Snohomish MRC hired consultants for strategic planning
- Communicating better with county commissioners/advisory boards
- Conferences are impactful
- Identify similarities on MRCs
- Types of Communication:
  - Visting MRC websites to find info/NWSC newsletter
  - NWSC reports/meeting packets include each monthly MRC report and are on NWSC website
  - Ask your NWSC rep to share more!

Follow up ideas/actions:

- Articulating what success looks like
- Strategic planning
- Succession plans for projects
- MRCs have strategic plans-they are available on MRC websites
- Cross-volunteering
- Project specific events
- Slack channels/message boards
- Joint MRC meetings
- Information management





**Additional notes from SAC member:**

**Discussion questions** (these emerged from the participants, paraphrased):

- How to prioritize MRC projects and local efforts?
- How to better connect individual MRC work with broader NW Straits Initiative goals?
- What are best ways to share information among MRCs and build collaborations?
- How to more efficiently and effectively share information about the network of people, places, and ecological systems doing MRC work?
- How do we share data and make it widely available after projects are completed? How can capacity be built for long-term sustainability of data management processes and tools?

**Challenges:**

- Scale (how to scale up local work, how to understand what is happening across scales, how to scale communication effectively, how to scope a project)
- Communication and flow of information roadblocks (social/political, technical, time/capacity)
- Reliance on individuals to champion projects or processes; Need for leadership to move projects and collaborations forward
- Defining what successes look like
- Prioritizing what efforts are most important, impactful, and feasible
- Administrative and logistical limitations in electronic communication (e.g., legal restrictions on MRC communication among members) and funding (sources, timing, focus)
- Limited capacity for doing the work (need for people, particular expertise)

**Ideas for information sharing** (the prompting question was “What are the best ways for MRCs to share information and collaborate?”)

In-person and virtual meetings

- Annual conference is a high impact, high commitment effort; LOTS of value, but easy to lose momentum afterwards and not everyone can attend each year
- Semi-annual virtual meeting with all MRCs could add value
- Periodic joint MRC meetings, especially for neighboring MRCs
- Periodic topical project meetings with other MRCs (e.g., workgroups for common topics such as forage fish, kelp, derelict vessels, etc.)

Regular information sharing

- Commission newsletter
- MRC websites
- Set aside time at MRC meetings for county rep to give updates and vice versa
- Provide more in depth information to Caitlyn for the Commission report

Relationship-building

- Communication with individual contacts through phone/video calls, email (networking and keeping in touch informally)



- Opportunities for MRC members to volunteer with other MRCs
- Remembering to follow up with each other after conference and meetings

#### Other communication tools

- Discussion forum like Slack for MRC members to more efficiently and inclusively communicate project updates, volunteer needs, share ideas, etc. [Note: participants noted that this may not be allowable under DOE rules]
- Sharing MRC strategic planning resources (process and outcomes incl. the final strat plans) among MRCs; Link NW Straits Initiative planning with MRC planning more systematically



**SAC Member:** Julia Parrish

**Table theme:** Awareness to Action

Themes from topics/challenges:

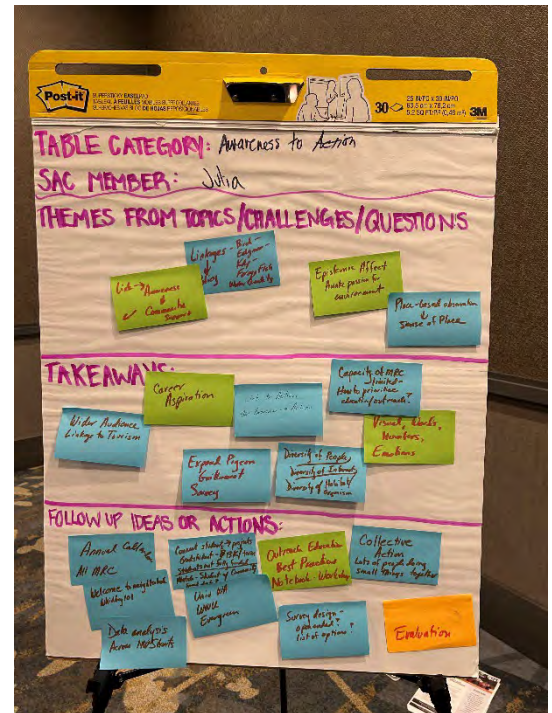
- Link -> awareness -> community support
- Linkages -> Policy (bird-eelgrass-kelp-forage fish-water quality)
- Epistemic affect – awake passion for environment
- Place-based observation -> sense of place

Takeaways:

- Wider audience – linkage to tourism
- Career aspiration
- Link to action – more awareness -> Action
- Expand Pigeon Guillemot surveys
- Diversity of people, diversity of interest, diversity of habitat/organism
- Capacity of MRC linked- how to prioritize education/outreach?
- Visual, words, numbers, emotions

Follow up ideas/actions:

- Annual calendar, all MRC
- Welcome to neighborhood- Whidbey 101
- Data analysis across NW Straits
- Connect students ->projects, grad student - \$13k/term, students not fully funded. Match-student of community speed date?
- UW, WWU, Evergreen
- Outreach Education best practices notebook-worksheet
- Survey design – open ended? List of options?
- Collective action- lots of people doing small things together
- Evaluation



**SAC Member:** David Trimbach

**Table theme:** Engagement, Education & Outreach

Themes from topics/challenges:

- How to make project prioritization decisions?
- How do we get groups to better collaborate?
- How to get decision-makers to make data informed decisions?
- How to synthesize and use data AND be literate of the data and info?
- How to select the “best” method to collect human data?
- Use humor in communications?
- How to tell stories or link data and stories?

Takeaways:

- Communication tailored to demographic needs
- State of work – Need one strong data center
- Environment and geography -literacy tools.

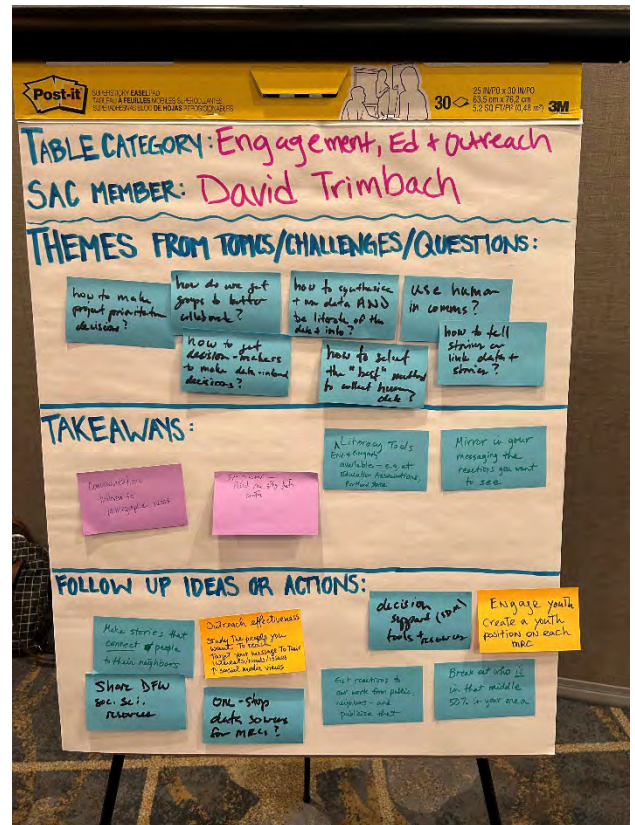
Available – e.g. at Education Associations, Portland State:

- o [Center for Geography Education in Oregon \(C-GEO\) | Portland State University](#)
- o [Home Page | Oregon Environmental Literacy Program](#)

- Mirror in your messaging the reactions you want to see

Follow up ideas/actions:

- Make stories that connect people to their neighbors
- Share DFW social sciences resources
- Outreach effectiveness: study the people you want to reach. Target your message to their interests/needs/issues/ increase social media views
- One-stop data sources for MRCs?
- Decision support tools and resources (e.g. structured decision making)
- Get reactions to our work from public, neighbors – and publicize that
- Break out who is in that middle 50% in your area
- Engage youth – create a youth position on each MRC

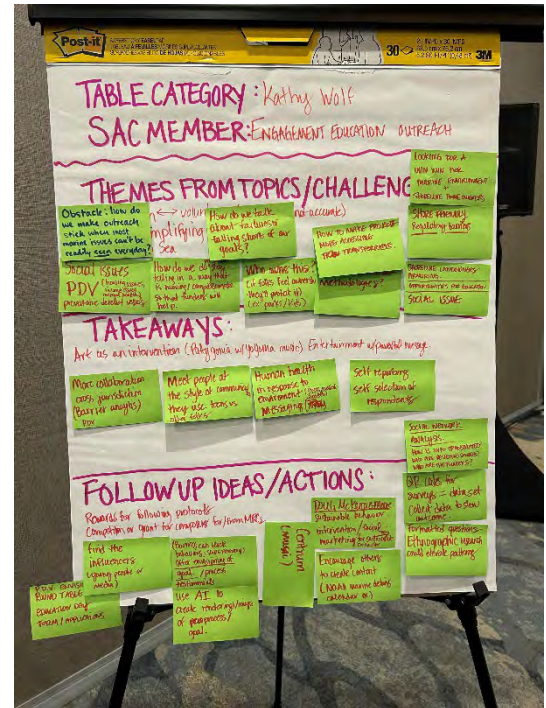


**SAC Member:** Kathy Wolf

**Table theme:** Engagement, Education & Outreach

Themes from topics/challenges:

- Obstacle: how do we make outreach stick when most marine issues can't be readily seen everyday?
- Social issues: Prevent Derelict Vessels (housing issues, income issues, mental health)
- How do we do personal story telling in a way that is moving/compassionate so that funders will help?
- How do we talk about failures or falling short of our goals?
- Who owns this? (if folks feel ownership they protect it) e.g. parks/kids
- How to make projects more accessible/transferrable?
- Looking for a win win for marine environment + shoreline homeowners
- Shorefriendly/regulatory barriers
- Shoreline landowner armoring/opportunities for education/social issue



Takeaways:

- Art as an intervention ([Pattie Gonia with Yo-Yo Ma music](#)) Entertainment with powerful message
- More collaboration cross jurisdiction (barriers analysis for derelict vessel prevention)
- Meet people at the style of communication they use. Teens vs older folks
- Human health in response to environment messaging (stress, mental health)
- Self reporting/self selection of respondents

Follow up ideas/actions:

- Rewards for following protocols
- Competition or grant for composers for/from MRC
- Vessels- envision round table/education day form/applications
- Find the influencers (young people or media)
  - (Barriers can block behaviors: Shorefriendly) Offer envisioning of goal/process testimonials
    - Use AI to create renderings/images of process/goal
- Doug McKenzie-Moore: sustainable behavior intervention/social marketing for sustainable behavior
- Encourage others to create content (e.g. NOAA marine debris calendar)
- Centrum (music) <https://centrum.org/>



- QR codes for surveys = dataset. Collect data to show outcome
- Formatted questions- ethnographic research could elevate patterns
- Social networks analysis- how is info transmitted? Who are the respected sources? Who are the funders?