



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Date: April 25, 2025
Time: 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Location: [Virtual Zoom Link](#) Meeting ID: 820 0015 4545 Passcode: 055701

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:

- February Meeting Minutes
- NWSC Norms for Courageous Conversations

10:00 – 10:10 AM	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement February Meeting Minutes approval	Tim Ellis, Chair
10:10 – 10:20 AM	NW Straits Commission Chair and vice-Chair Elections	Tim Ellis, Chair
10:20 – 10:40 AM	Committee Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Advisory Committee • Executive Committee • External Relations Committee 	Emily Grason Alan Clark Elsa Schwartz
10:40 – 10:55 AM	Business Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May NWSC Meeting – in-person in Clallam County • NWSC Norms for Courageous Conversations • MRC Grants 	Caitlyn Blair Allie Simpson Sasha Horst



agenda

10:55 – 11:05 AM	Project Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kelp Kayak Kickoff and Kayak Safety Training• Impact Report• Green Crab Update	Jeff Whitty Jessica Owens Allie Simpson
11:05 – 11:15 AM	Retreat Debrief	Lucas Hart
11:15 – 11:45 AM	MRC Reports	
11:45 – 11:55 AM	Commissioner Updates (NW Indian Fisheries Commission, Puget Sound Partnership)	
11:55 – 12:00 PM	Public Comment and Partner Updates	
12:00 PM	Adjourn	

The next regularly scheduled NW Straits Commission meeting will be Friday, May 30, 2025, in person at The Dungeness River Nature Center (1943 W Hendrickson Rd, Sequim). Please see the [NWSC events page](#) for more information about our meetings.



Minutes

February 28, 2025, 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Rick Beauregard (Whatcom), Ginny Broadhurst, Christina Koons (San Juan), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit), Jamie Stephens, Elsa Schwartz, Emily Grason, Ken Collins (Island), Ahren Stroming (Puget Sound Partnership), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair)

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

Others in Attendance: Don Hunger, Bill Berger, Wayne Watne, Austin Rose

Absent: Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission)

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The Commission approved the January 2025 meeting minutes as written by consensus.

Committee Updates:

Science Advisory Committee: Emily Grason shared that the Committee is working on reviewing correspondence that will go out to MRCs, offering project consultation by members of the SAC on one new or ongoing project of each MRC.

External Relations Committee: Elsa Schwartz shared that Lucas is working on providing a NW Straits Commission 101 presentation to the new Department of Ecology Director, Casey Sixkiller.

Executive Committee: Alan Clark shared that himself, Lucas, and Tim had a meeting with Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation Director) and Betsy Lyons (NW Straits Foundation Board President) about the NW Straits Initiative definition. The Committee also shared that the Commission may be hosting Department of Ecology Director, Casey Sixkiller at the NW Straits Commission meeting in Whatcom County on July 25. The Committee also discussed the annual conference as NW Straits Commission staff are working with the Department of Ecology on a mechanism to receive payments to allow for the possibility of paid attendees at the event on November 7-8.



Minutes

Strategic Planning Update

Lucas Hart shared that the Strategic Planning Committee is working on the NW Straits Commission mission statement, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) exercise, and are in the process of securing a retreat facilitator.

Lucas facilitated an activity with meeting attendees and shared a summary of SWOT ideas the Committee came up with. Attendees added their thoughts and comments, which will be included in strategic planning materials for later discussion.

Business Items

Staff gave updates on the following business items:

NW Straits Commission Norms for Courageous Conversations: Allie Simpson shared a new example attached to Norm 4: Listen and don't assume. Staff is working on a commitment document for NW Straits Commissioners to sign.

DEI Phase 2 Wrap Up and Knowledge Base: The Commission's newly implemented [Knowledge Base](#) hosts a wealth of diversity, equity and inclusion resources for building engagement and community partnerships for MRCs. Start with the [Knowledge Base Guide](#) to see a quick description and link to each resource included in the Knowledge Base. Additionally, this Knowledge Base is meant to be built upon, and we intend to add resources to it as we continue this work. If you have/find resources you think would be beneficial to add, or have questions please contact Allie Simpson (simpson@nwstraits.org) or Caitlyn Blair (blair@nwstraits.org).

MRC Request for Proposal Policies: Sasha shared three policies for review and approval that will be incorporated into the pending MRC Request for Proposals. Two of the policies were already existing and one is new. The existing policies, including the Match Policy and Funding Policy, were approved as presented. The Commission approved by consensus the Conflict of Interest Policy with minor edits as suggested by the Commission during the meeting.

NW Straits Commission Retreat: Caitlyn reminded attendees about the NW Straits Commission retreat on April 3-4 at Padilla Bay. The retreat is held for NW Straits Commissioners, Commission staff, and MRC staff. More information about the agenda and logistics will be available in the coming weeks. If you have questions, please e-mail Caitlyn at (blair@nwstraits.org).

MRC Reports

Clallam MRC – Alan Clark



Minutes

- The MRC will hold a work session on February 24th to develop projects for the next biennium.
- The MRC will be hosting a [planting event on March 6th for the Ediz Hook revegetation project](#), in partnership with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Clallam Conservation District. Approximately 50 local elementary students are expected to attend and help plant native beach plants.
- The MRC hosted two presenters from WA DNR – Cynthia Harbison and Bree Turner – during the February monthly meeting who shared their work on marine vegetation strategy and held a collaborative discussion with the MRC.

Island MRC – Ken Collins

- Jan Holmes Award: The selection committee came together this year, and after many years of expressing that we wish we could celebrate more volunteer's and their hard work. We decided to update the award to "volunteers" of the year. Island County has so many amazing volunteers that we want to celebrate and acknowledge. This year's winners are Barbara Bennett for service, PaulBen & Jeanie McElwain for science, and Lee Badovinus for education.
- Sound Waters University: Kirk Larsen and Kelly Zupich taught two classes at Sound Waters University. The focus was on how community science makes a difference. Our audience had a lot of great questions. We shared about how our projects make a difference in our local area. Additionally, we brought in equipment from our various projects to show participants.

Jefferson MRC – Jeff Taylor

- Interviews were held for the Marine Science Alt member position on February 7. New member, Jon Waggoner, was offered the position and accepted. He is currently being onboarded and will officially start sometime in March 2025.
- Forage fish – Quilcene Marina: January 29 – Forage Fish sampling started at Quilcene Marina.

San Juan MRC – Christina Koons

- The Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled for April 12 on Lopez Island and April 26 on Orcas, San Juan, and Shaw islands. For more information, please see the [Plastic Free Salish Sea website](#).
- Monthly beach cleanups are back! The spring schedule is filling up quickly with local organizations who are helping the MRC host and successfully remove microplastics and debris from Jackson's Beach. Check out the PFSS webpage for more info: <https://plasticfreesalishsea.org/>.



Minutes

- The MRC has been invited to participate in a North Sound Marine Vegetation Brown Bag Luncheon on April 2 from 11:30-1pm. During this time we will hear about the latest implementation strategy from the Habitat Leads who use these strategies to guide investments and steer conservation and recovery projects. Groups will be encouraged to share their challenges with marine vegetation and share efforts taken to protect and recover these important marine habitats.

Skagit MRC – Lynne Wenberg

- Salish Sea Stewards classes commenced February 18 with 24 registered participants. First class included an introduction to the Skagit MRC and a brief history of the Salish Sea Stewards presented by MRC members Pete Haase and Darla Gay Smith. The second class included an introduction to the Northwest Straits Commission presented by Lucas Hart. [2025 training schedule](#) is available on the Skagit MRC website.
- Skagit MRC is collaborating with Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Island MRC, Jefferson MRC and NWSF on a potential derelict crab pot removal project in Skagit Bay. They are exploring the possibility of using an ROV for surveying and removing derelict pots. They have scheduled a demo with Oceanbotics ROV (<https://oceanbotics.com/>) on March 11 at Cornet Bay.

Snohomish MRC – Tim Ellis

- The starlight beach walk on Saturday 2/8 was well attended with over 100 members of the public.
- The MRC subcommittees are currently working on the annual report in Canva and deciding updates to the design.

Whatcom MRC – Rick Beauregard

- 2 members, Paul Meyer and Colin Wahl were appointed to the MRC in February.
- The MRC will be reviewing drafts of the Climate and Environment Chapters for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update and providing feedback, particularly on policies related to marine resources.
- The MRC is co-hosting two workshops with the Northwest Straits Foundation: A Shore Friendly Workshop and A Shore Friendly Contractors Workshop for Whatcom & Skagit Counties.

Commissioner Updates

Salish Sea Institute: Ginny went to a herring conference in Victoria hosted by the Tsartlip Nation. She is also giving talk at Lummi Island Heritage Trust talk.

Puget Sound Partnership: Puget Sound Day on the Hill is scheduled for April 29-May 2, 2025. The NW Straits reauthorization will remain one of the key priorities. More information as the event is planned can be found at <https://psdoth.org/>.



Minutes

Public Comment and Partner Updates

The NW Straits Foundation will be holding a Caroline Gibson Scholars Event on Saturday, March 29, 1:00 – 3:30 at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. All are welcome to attend. See the NW Straits Foundation website for more details and to RSVP.

DRAFT

Northwest Straits Commission Norms for Courageous Conversations

Background

The NW Straits Commission is committed to working with the broad constituencies of our region. To accomplish this goal, it is important to understand that Commission and MRC members, as well as those generally interested in marine conservation, come from different backgrounds and lived experiences. To be better partners and to understand the communities we are working with, and within, it is important to create expectations or “norms” that serve as a collective agreement about how we conduct Commission business. We have a desire to hold meetings and operate in a manner where all who participate feel respected. The norms below will help to ensure that we have a common understanding on how to build respectful conversations as well as navigate difficult conversations. They were adopted by the NW Straits Commission in January 2025.

Norm 1: *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 to avoid harm or offense. People don’t typically intend to hurt others, but it happens, and it matters that those affected by the 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. In other words, you cannot dictate how someone reacts to your responses.

Example: If person A makes a comment and person B is affected by this comment, but person A does not believe they said anything harmful or wrong, person A’s feelings, in this context, don’t matter, and it is important for person A to realize their impact on person B, and to learn why their comment was perceived as negative.

Norm 2: *Acknowledge harmful comments.* 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 and events. Encouraging reflection on actions and words can be done with care for the person who made the mistake. It is not an attack, but an opportunity to rethink their words or actions, and to learn and grow from them. Agreeing to this norm means that we accept someone acknowledging that we made a harmful comment and invite this as an opportunity to learn.

Example: In meetings where public attendees, NWSC members, and MRC members are present and everyone hears a harmful comment, the comment can and should be addressed in the meeting. This can be a simple statement that we need to be mindful of the words we use, then address in further detail offline.

Norm 3: *Understand that making mistakes is a normal part of learning.* We can recognize that everyone is at a different place and comfort level in their learning journey, and with



their experiences in community engagement. It is normal to make mistakes, and it is important to work together to learn from those mistakes. This also applies to instances where contentious topics are being discussed, creating an opportunity to learn from the different perspectives of others.

Example: Person A mistakenly made a harmful comment and was informed by person B of that mistake. However, both person A and person B took care to understand that mistakes are a crucial part to the learning process, and rather than seeing mistakes as setbacks, view them as opportunities for growth.

Norm 4: *Listen and don't assume.* 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. Taking time to ask questions and listen to others helps to avoid making assumptions about who someone is or how they are feeling. Different opinions and ways of thinking are valued and honored.

Example: If someone has an idea about a project that you may not agree with, it's better to ask clarifying questions about their goals for the project and what they believe the successes could be rather than immediately disagreeing or turning the idea down. And if you are the one challenged, think to yourself, "what if they're right?"

Norm 5: *Understand and respect that we all bring different lived experiences.* Incorporating different lived experiences into our work leads to better understanding of projects, allows for new ideas to form, and puts people at the center of the work we're doing. Unique lived experiences give us a new framework through which we can find solutions, helping us approach marine resource issues in unique and productive ways.

Example: A recently recruited MRC member is aware of a marine resource issue in their neighborhood unknown to other MRC members. Due to the new MRC member's local knowledge, the MRC creates a new project that leads to the improvement of the marine environment and empowers other MRC members to expand the project to additional areas throughout the county.



Commission staff highlights - [April 2025]

MRC Support

MRC Grants: Sasha and Dana held individual meetings with all seven MRCs to review the proposal process, budget, and discuss MRC projects for the 2025-27 grant cycle.

MRC Meeting Attendance:

- Dana and Jeff attended Island MRC meeting 4/1
- Jessica, Sasha, and Dana attended Skagit MRC meeting 4/10
- Sasha attended Jefferson MRC meeting 4/1

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: Staff finalized and launched the WA Kelp Project Inventory, a collaborative tool to report and view information (i.e., metadata) on kelp "projects" (projects, programs, initiatives, etc.) in Washington State, i.e., a tool to see who is doing what with kelp in Washington. Staff also submitted recommendation for clarifying and strengthening protection for kelp in the SMA rules.

Kelp Monitoring: Staff finished preparations for two Kayak Kickoffs, which will occur at the Padilla Bay NERR (10:00-2:00 on May 2nd) and at WSU Jefferson County Extension Office in Port Hadlock (1:00-4:00 on May 14th), to run through the kelp monitoring protocol with the MRC kayak volunteers. Staff have also finished preparations for two kayak safety trainings that will occur at Bowman Bay, Fidalgo Island (May 31st and June 1st), and again at North Beach County Park, Port Townsend (June 7th).

European Green Crab: Staff hosted a week-long training (4/14-4/17) on green crab significance and trapping protocols for Washington Conservation Corps crew members who will assist in trapping efforts throughout the summer. Trapping for green crab began April 1 in Drayton Harbor and April 15 in Samish Bay. Staff attended a Molt Search Training Workshop on 4/18 and subsequently hosted a Molt Search Training for Skagit Conservation District volunteers on 4/23. Staff continue to coordinate with Padilla Bay NERR about pursuing additional funding for green crab efforts.

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: Staff held meetings with guidebooks, boater magazines, and recreational boating organizations to discuss the AnchorOut program and shared education and outreach strategies. Staff also continue to coordinate with partners on selecting sites for virtual voluntary no-anchor zone establishment and coordinated with DNR staff on a possible memorandum of understanding to allow virtual zones to overlay with state owned aquatic lands.



Commission staff highlights - [April 2025]

Derelict Vessels: Staff continue to work with project partners to coordinate the Whatcom vessel turn-in event planned for summer 2025.

SoundIQ: Suzanne Shull is working on developing a new SoundIQ system that will transition from where it is currently hosted with the City of Bellingham to Ecology servers. Additional information and a rollout plan will be coming in the next several months.

Operations

Staff: Leah Skare has returned to work on a two-day schedule (Tuesday/Thursday) as of the beginning of April.

Budget: The state legislative session ends April 27, and we await the final operating budget. The MRC funding for 2025-27 remains in the budget as of 4/16. The fiscal year 2022 award from NOAA is in closeout, and fiscal year 2023 funding remains active (award period Jan 2024-Dec 2026). Fiscal year 2024 NOAA funds are pending the final award, as is the EPA funding to the Puget Sound Partnership that includes funding for NW Straits Commission.

Communications: 2024 Impact Report published and shared. Anchor Out of Eelgrass for Safety & Salmon campaign launched www.anchorout.org.

Contracts and grants: The contract for the facilitation services by Communication Resources is ready for closeout as they have completed the work at the retreat and submitted final deliverables. Commission staff are continuing to work towards executing a contract to update the nwstraits.org website and are navigating agency requirements for contracting.

Broad Community Engagement: Commission staff continue to hold meetings to discuss implementation community engagement tools.

Other Meetings Attended

- North Sound Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy Event (4/2)- Jeff and Dana
- Finding Common Ground film screening (4/8) - Dana, Jeff
- Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program Nearshore & Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy (4/23 & 4/24) - Dana, Jeff
- Meet & Greet with ECY Bellingham Field Office Manager (4/10) - Allie
- Washington DNR Workshop: Addressing Threats & Stressors to Kelp and Eelgrass (4/22) – Jeff
- Salish Sea Institute advisory board meeting 4/23 – Lucas
- Ecology Program Management Team meeting 4/7, 4/14, 4/15, 4/21, 4/28 -- Lucas



Commission staff highlights - [April 2025]

- European green crab grant application meeting 4/7, 4/22 -- Lucas
- Sen. Murray staff meeting 4/9 -- Lucas
- Governor's office meeting about reauthorization 4/9 – Lucas
- State electeds meetings 4/10 – Lucas
- WCC 101 presentaiton 4/14 – Lucas
- Puget Sound Partnership Deputy Director meeting 4/16 -- Lucas



Commission staff highlights - [March 2025]

MRC Support

MRC Grants: The 2025-27 Request for Proposals was issued to MRCs, and Commission staff have scheduled consultations with MRCs to discuss preliminary project lists, identify questions or concerns, and ensure the process is clear for next steps.

MRC Meeting Attendance:

- Jeff attended the Whatcom MRC meeting on 03/06
- Dana attended the San Juan MRC meeting on 03/06
- Jeff, Caitlyn, Sasha, and Dana attended the Skagit MRC meeting on 03/13

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: Staff facilitated the winter Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee meeting on 03/05, to discuss the upcoming WA Kelp Project Inventory, SMA Rulemaking, and the Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy. Staff also developed recommendation for clarifying and strengthening protection for kelp in the SMA rules. Recommendations were approved by the Executive Committee and will be submitted by early April.

Kelp Monitoring: Staff facilitated the spring Kelp Monitoring Workgroup on 03/03 with representatives from each MRC kayak group as well as MRC, NWSF, and NWSC staff, to discuss what each MRC kayak group is working on/towards, kayak safety, and preparations for the 2025 Kayak Kickoff. Staff also began preparing for the 2025 Kayak Kickoff to review and practice the floating kelp monitoring protocol and safety.

European Green Crab: Staff participated in multiple outreach events including co-hosting a table with WSU Extension at the Wings Over Water event and presenting on Molt Search protocols during Salish Sea Stewards Training. Staff also created and led a one-day training on 03/20 for new WDFW green crab technicians to learn trapping protocols for Drayton Harbor and Samish Bay.

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: Staff led the transboundary eelgrass protection workgroup meeting on 03/13 to talk through next steps for bringing virtual no-anchor zones online. Staff continue to coordinate with partners on finalizing the list of sites and the process of permissions through DNR. Staff are also developing a communications plan for 2025 and the accompanying material creation needs and social media.

Derelict Vessels: Staff worked with WA DNR to update an intergovernmental agreement with the Makah Tribe to co-host a vessel recycling event. Staff also met with staff from the Nooksack Indian Tribe about the Whatcom vessel turn-in event and partnership opportunities.



Commission staff highlights - [March 2025]

Staff led a Whatcom turn-in event monthly planning meeting and assisted with the Snohomish vessel turn-in planning meeting as well.

Operations

Staff: Plans are in process for Leah's return to work, anticipated for April.

Budget: There is no new information on federal funding sources. Commission staff are monitoring the state budget process as the legislative session continues through April 27.

Communications: 2024 Impact Report published and shared. Anchor Out of Eelgrass for Safety & Salmon campaign launched www.anchorout.org.

Contracts and grants: Commission staff executed a contract for facilitation services for the retreat and are in the process for contracting to upgrade the Commission website over the next several months.

Broad community engagement: Commission staff continue to hold meetings to discuss implementation of community engagement tools.

Other Meetings Attended

- Marine, Economic, and Research Institute for Sustainability (MERIS) Workshop 03/04– Jeff
- Skagit, Island and Jefferson MRC ROV demonstration meeting 3/7 - Dana and Jeff
- SMA Rulemaking: Sea Level Rise Webinar Series #5 3/18 - Dana
- Salish Sea Stewards Training 3/18 - Allie
- Olympia Oyster Restoration Site Scouting w/ PSRF & Whatcom MRC 3/31 – Allie
- Ecology Program Management Team 3/3, 3/10, 3/17, 3/24 – Lucas
- Padilla Bay Leadership Team 3/5/25, 3/26 – Lucas
- Strategic Planning Committee meeting 3/10, 3/20, 3/25, 3/31 – Lucas
- Ecology Director presentation 3/19 – Lucas
- European Green Crab grant planning meeting 3/24 -- Lucas

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: April 2025

Submitted by: Amelia Kalagher

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

- The MRC hosted a HAZWOPER refresher and oiled wildlife response training on April 15th and 16th.
- The MRC shared an advisory letter with County Commissioners regarding shoreline armoring in the 3 Crabs Rd area.
- Alan Clark gave a presentation to the Sequim Bay Yacht Club on April 9th, explaining what the CCMRC is and works on.

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 MRC will hold its regular monthly meeting on April 21st.
- Alan Clark gave a presentation to the Sequim Bay Yacht Club on April 9th, explaining what the CCMRC is and works on.
- The MRC hosted a HAZWOPER refresher and oiled wildlife response training on April 15th and April 16th.

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 oysters*: Spat are being cultivated for later outplanting and are doing well.
- *Forage fish*: Forage fish sampling continues, with two new volunteers now trained and participating in sampling.
- *Elwha Beach*: Clallam MRC continued to steward the beach at the mouth of the Elwha River.
- *Pinto abalone*: Eight days of dive surveys west of Port Angeles have been tentatively scheduled for September 2025, with backup days for weather.
- *Kelp monitoring*: The MRC will prepare for the 2025 monitoring season in spring. At least three community volunteers are currently planning to participate this season, in addition to two MRC members.
- *Pigeon guillemots*: Project lead Ed Bowlby began reaching out to existing volunteers to plan summer 2025 monitoring.
- *Ediz Hook revegetation*: A planting event took place in March, and no additional planting was needed this month.
- *Education – outreach cards*: MRC members continued supplying local eateries and community establishments with educational outreach cards featuring information on local marine life.
- *Education – displays*: MRC members continued developing new displays for outreach at local festivals.

- *Education – oil spill response*: The MRC hosted a training on April 15th and 16th that served as an 8-hour refresher for HAZWOPER certified attendees, and oiled wildlife response training for all attendees.
- *Sound Toxins (community partner project, Feiro Marine Life Center)*: MRC alternate Nancy Stephanz continues to process samples weekly for the Sound Toxins project, with Feiro Marine Life Center.
- *Shellfish biotoxins (community partner project, Clallam County Environmental Health)*: Shellfish sampling does not take place during the winter months and will resume in spring. Clallam County Environmental Health is seeking additional volunteers, and the MRC may collaborate to facilitate this.
- *New project development*: The following projects are being considered for the next biennium. These will be discussed at the April meeting to facilitate final decisions.
 - Nearshore Restoration at Co-Managed Wildlife Refuges
 - Elwha River Stewardship
 - Olympia Oyster Surveys
 - Pinto Abalone
 - Forage Fish Monitoring
 - HAZWOPER / Oiled Wildlife Response Training
 - Pigeon Guillemot Monitoring
 - Ediz Hook Debris Removal
 - Derelict Crab Pot Removal
 - Kelp Monitoring

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 shared an advisory letter communicating its concern about shoreline armoring (permitted and unpermitted) on Three Crabs Road in Sequim, a nearshore area prone to flooding during storm surges. This was sent to the Clallam County Commissioners, with notice to the Clallam County Director of Community Development, in late March.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info): none this month.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: April/ 2025

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- **Forage Fish Lab – Woodhaven Highschool**
- **Camano 101**

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):

Camano 101: Camano 101 is one of our favorite opportunities to connect with the Camano Island community. Our volunteers had engaging conversations with attendees and also enjoyed the chance to network with other environmental programs at the event.

Previous Meetings/Events:

- April 1: MRC Meeting
- April 5: Camano 101
- April 9: MRC Orientation – New members
- April 10: Forage Fish Lab w/ Woodhaven Highschool

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- April 21: Forage Fish Sampling w/ South Whidbey School District
- April 24: MRC Exec Committee
- April 28: Forage Fish Lab w/ South Whidbey School District
- May 02: NWSC Kayak Kickoff
- May 06: MRC Meeting
- May 10: Penn Cove Water Festival
- May 14: Community SLR Workshop – Camano
- May 20: Community SLR workshop – Whidbey
- May 24: Island Bull Kelp Training – Whidbey
- May 25: Island Bull Kelp Training - Camano
- June 11: Hoypus Mulching Event
- July 17: Cornet Bay Stewardship
- Aug 27: Hoypus Stewardship Event

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

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

Monitoring – Forage Fish: We continue our year-round monitoring for forage fish eggs at most sites. Teams conduct monthly monitoring at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Glendale, Keystone Preserve, Cavalero, and Seahorse Siesta. We are exploring ideas of how to

adapt our protocol to get more volunteer involvement and to gather more information about forage fish.

Bull Kelp Surveys: The team is actively holding regular meetings to prepare for the 2025 survey season. Several trainings are scheduled over the next month to ensure volunteers are well-equipped and ready. We've also been focusing on recruiting new volunteers to support and strengthen our teams.

Stewardship – Cornet Bay/Hoypus Point: We are beginning to plan for the 2025 growing season and are working to coordinate with the Island County Noxious Weed Coordinator for spraying at the Cornet Bay site to help control the Canada thistle. We met with the NWSF staff to check on the site and make plans for what is needed as far as watering and weeding. Our MRC will be contracting with the NWSF to water and help lead the stewardship events.

Water Quality: It was decided by our MRC to retire this project until we have more capacity.

Workshops: We are collaborating with WSU Extension and Shore Friendly to host two workshops aimed at high-risk communities affected by sea level rise. Both workshops will be held in May. One will be on Whidbey and one on Camano.

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 Planning Department is working on drafts of the Comprehensive Plan elements. MRC staff will get an opportunity for input early in 2025. The MRC will get another opportunity for comments sometime in the summer.

Crabber Education: We are looking to recruit volunteers from the next Sound Water Stewards class to assist with our outreach this year. We plan to get posters and brochures out to as many places in Island County as possible. We are working on ordering supplies and prepping for the season.

Forage Fish Lab: We had the pleasure of joining the Woodhaven High School class to teach students how to identify local forage fish egg species. The students were incredibly curious and did an excellent job documenting their findings—some even sketched detailed drawings of the different eggs they discovered! We're excited to continue this partnership and inspire more local students to explore and learn about marine science.

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



Camano 101

Photo by Scott Chase



Forage Fish Lab

Photo by Kelly Zupich

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: April 2025

Submitted by: Katie Kowal

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

- Olympia Oyster Restoration team emptied 1500 bags of Pacific oyster shell at the Discovery Bay Powerline site.
 - Searching for Seaweed Workshop was held on April 4th, 16 participants attended.
- **Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): New member Jon Waggoner (Marine Science Alt) started at the April 1, 2025 meeting.

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

Past Events/Meetings

April 1 – Olympia oyster shell spread event - Discovery Bay Powerlines site
April 1 – New member onboarding with Coordinator
April 1 – MRC Monthly Meeting
April 4 – Searching for Seaweed Workshop
April 9 – Coordinator met with NWSC staff for 2025-2027 project consultation meeting
April 11 – Bid process for ROV Crab Pot contractor closed
April 12 - Rain Garden Work Party – Water and Monroe St
April 14 – Betsy Carlson, Bryan DeCaterina, and Coordinator presented 2024 Annual Update to Jefferson BOCC
April 15 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting
April 17 – Forage Fish subcommittee meeting

Upcoming Events/Meetings

May 3 – Olympia Oyster shell spread event – Discovery Bay Lagoon site
May 6 - MRC Monthly Meeting
May 14 – MRC Kelp Kayak Kickoff, Port Hadlock, WA
May 15 – MRC-PSRF Kelp Lecture
May 18 – Digging for Dinner Workshop
May 20 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting
May 23 – Rain Garden Work Party – TBD
June 7 - Rain Garden Work Party – TBD
June 21 – Shrimpfest tabling event
June 25 – Crabbing 101 Workshop

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):

- Monitoring:
 - **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** Sarah Fisken will sample Dabob Bay in late April.
 - **Forage fish – Quilcene Marina:** Sarah Fisken will sample Quilcene Marina in late April.
 - **Shoreline Landowner:** Nothing to report.
 - **Kelp kayak monitoring:** Planning and volunteer recruitment for the 2025 sampling season has started.
 - **Storm surge monitoring:** Nothing to report.

- Rain Gardens:
 - Rain Garden Work Party held April 12 in Port Townsend (Water and Monroe St) with 6 attendees.

- Education & Outreach:
 - Searching for Seaweed event held April 4th, 16 participants.
 - Planning for Digging for Dinner and Crabbing 101 workshops in progress.

- Olympia Oysters:
 - Oly team (17 volunteers and MRC members) met on April 1st at the Powerlines site in south Discovery Bay to empty 1500 bags of Pacific oyster shell delivered in late December 2024.

- Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:
 - JARPA permit application submitted April 10th.
 - Team will swap buoys in Port Townsend Bay late April-May.

- ROV Lost Crab Pots:
 - Contract for late May/June on-the-water work is being finalized.

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.):

Quote received from Searching for Seaweed participant:

“Hi! I just got on your email list after taking the fantastic seaweed foraging workshop last week. I am over the moon to learn clamming next. Already registered; I just wanted to reach out to thank you for what you do. At this time of great change, having my county educate me about gathering food safely and legally in the wild is even more meaningful. Thank you so much.”

-Kristie Dahlia Home (she/her), 4/11/25

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



*Photo: The Olympia Oyster Restoration team poses for a photo after a successful morning of emptying 1,500 bags of Pacific oyster shell in South Discovery Bay. – 4/1/25, Discovery Bay, WA
Photo Credit: Anour Esa*



*Photo: Olympia Oyster Restoration team emptying bags of Pacific oyster shell in South Discovery Bay. – 4/1/25, Discovery Bay, WA
Photo Credit: Anour Esa*



*Photo: Olympia Oyster Restoration team heads down the path to the restoration site carrying buckets of supplies. Gordon King carries the rope that will be used to tie emptied shell bags together to be carried off the beach. – 4/1/25, Discovery Bay, WA
Photo Credit: Katie Kowal*



*Photo: Participants ID'ing a "mystery seaweed" held up by instructor Nam Siu at the Searching for Seaweed workshop. – 4/4/25, Point Hudson, WA
Photo Credit: Katie Kowal*



*Photo: Participants excited to be learning about edible seaweeds at the Searching for Seaweed workshop. – 4/4/25, Point Hudson, WA
Photo Credit: Katie Kowal*

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: April 2025

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

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

- The Spring Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled for April – 4/12 on Lopez Island and 4/26 on Orcas, San Juan, and Shaw islands.
- MRC members and staff participated in a North Sound Marine Vegetation Brown Bag Luncheon on April 2 to hear about the latest implementation strategy from the Habitat Leads who use these strategies to guide investments and steer conservation and recovery projects. Learning about different strategies and hearing what projects are happening across the North Sound was inspirational and a great opportunity to collaborate for greater impact.
- Salmon Recovery Site Visits were on April 3 and 4th, where MRC members learn in depth about potential salmon recovery projects and act as the Citizens Advisory Group to rank and score projects for the socioeconomic merits.

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

In January, MRC members voted to create a youth position on the committee. Including young people's voices in our work to protect valuable marine resources will strengthen the committee, bring fresh perspectives, and expand civic engagement opportunities to all ages. MRC members Sandy Wyllie-Echeverria and Kailey Genter collaborated to define the role and responsibilities of this new position.

The next step is for the San Juan County Council to approve a resolution to amend the MRC business rules, allowing for up to two youth membership roles in addition to the 15 existing positions. MRC staff will present the resolution to the Council in mid-May.

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

- North Sound Lunch & Learn: Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategies April 2
- MRC/CAG Salmon Recovery Site Visits – April 3-4 (NO APRIL MRC Meeting)
- April Monthly Beach Cleanup with AFSCME Local 1849 – April 6
- San Juan Island Yacht Club Presentation – April 7
- Great Islands Cleanup – April 12 Lopez, April 26 Orcas, Shaw and San Juan
- Next MRC Meeting – May 1
- UW Friday Harbor Labs Open House – May 3
- May Monthly Beach Cleanup with San Juan Island Visitors Bureau – May 4
- PFSS – San Juan Island Yacht Club – State Parks Cleanup – May 31, June 1, June 2

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):

MRC members and staff participated in the April 2 North Sound Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy virtual lunch hour. The session provided valuable insight into upcoming strategies to guide funding and actions for the protection of critical marine vegetation like kelp and eelgrass. Learning from peer organizations offers inspiration and potential for collaboration.

Opportunistic vessel counts are ongoing at known eelgrass sites. Data collected this spring will be uploaded to the Kobo Toolbox to help track vessel activity and inform protection efforts.

Plastic Free Salish Sea (PFSS) is actively preparing for the spring Great Islands Cleanup. Lopez Island held its cleanup on April 12, and the remaining islands will participate on April 26. Outer island residents have also been contacted, and San Juan County will assist in collecting their cleanup materials after the event. Including non-ferry-served islands has become an essential component of the cleanup effort, ensuring that sources of marine debris are addressed across the San Juan Islands.

Monthly beach cleanups continue to be a success, with AFSCME Local 1849 hosting the April cleanup on April 6. Despite wet weather, 11 dedicated volunteers removed microplastics and litter from Jackson’s Beach.

Looking ahead, Plastic Free Salish Sea, the San Juan Island Yacht Club, and Washington State Parks are partnering for a multi-day cleanup effort (May 31–June 2). Volunteers will travel by boat to Stuart, Sucia, and Jones islands to clean State Park beaches. This collaboration is a great opportunity to strengthen ties with local boaters and promote stewardship of these remote and ecologically significant areas.

The MRC will also participate in the Friday Harbor Labs Open House on May 3. This annual community event is a fantastic opportunity to share our work with the public. We'll be distributing whale flags to recreational boaters, offering information on oil spill prevention, how to report derelict vessels, and promoting the Marine Stewardship Area.

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 April 3 and 4, the MRC performed one of its most significant advisory duties—attending site visits for proposed salmon recovery projects. Despite ferry delays, members were able to visit one site each on Lopez and Orcas Islands. On Friday, presentations were held virtually for two additional projects. This year’s potential projects include restoration areas, land acquisition proposals, and outreach projects aimed at engaging landowners in high priority nearshore habitat protection. These in-person visits allow the MRC to directly engage with project sponsors, ask questions, and better understand the vision and anticipated outcomes of each proposal. Acting as the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) for salmon recovery, MRC members will score projects based on their socioeconomic impact.

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





Images from AFSCME Local 1849 monthly beach cleanup at Jackson's Beach. Photos by Frances Robertson



MRC Members at Salmon Recovery Site Visits. Photos by Frances Robertson.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: April/2025

Submitted by: Tracy/Lynne

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

- **Bowman Bay Beach Seining:** On April 7, Bowman Bay beach seiners caught 831 Chum in one day! It exceeded the total annual counts from previous sampling years.
- **Native Oyster Restoration Story Map:** Now available on the Skagit MRC website homepage: [click here](#)
- **Forage Fish Surveys:** After 13 years of leading the forage fish surveys, Pete officially handed the baton over to Catherine Houck. Pete will continue to be the Skagit MRC's Project Lead.
- **2025 Salish Sea Stewards Graduation Celebration- April 29th!** Victor Garcia, one of the new volunteers in the 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training program and an active forage fish survey volunteer, was recently appointed by the Governor to serve on the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission for a six-year term. The Commission oversees the fish and wildlife rules and regulations.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Dale Fournier was appointed as the newest member of the MRC. Dale has a background in Environmental Education and is a volunteer actively involved in kayak kelp surveys, forage fish surveys, Fidalgo Bay Day, and the Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee.

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

- **April 10- Monthly MRC Meeting** via Teams 9am-11am. Discussed Skagit MRC's eight project proposals for the 2025-2027 RFP and prioritization process. The collaborative Derelict Crab Pot project was selected for consultations with the Science Advisory Committee.
- **April 15- NEAP Tool Updates Meeting** with Confluence Environmental- noon-1pm
- **April 16- Skagit MRC Proposal Consultation** with NWSC staff at 1pm
- **April 17- NEAP Story Map Tutorial Walk Through** at 9:15am
- **April 17- Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee Meeting** – Via Teams at 1pm.
- **April 22-23- Kids on the Beach at Padilla Bay** with Concrete High School at Bay View State Park, 10:30am-1:30pm. A call for volunteers has been sent out. County Commissioner Browning will be attending the field day on April 23.
- **April 29- 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Class Graduation Day!** At Padilla Bay, 1pm-5pm. MRC members and NWSC staff are all invited to attend.
- **May 2- Kayak Kelp Kickoff at Padilla Bay-** at Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve from 10:00am-2:00pm.
- **May 6 –8- Kids on the Beach Field Days at Padilla Bay-** from 11-2:30pm- with Sedro Woolley Middle School.
- **May 8- Monthly MRC Meeting** via Teams 9am-11am.
- **May 17- Collaborative Celebration Event at Larrabee State Park-** in partnership with NWSF, Skagit MRC, Whatcom MRC, and state parks.
- **May 21- Kids on the Beach at Padilla Bay-** from 9:30am-1:30pm with Allen Elementary.
- **May 29** – Skagit Kayak Team BBQ and revisit kelp plans
- **May 31- Kayak Safety Training at Bowman Bay-** from 8am - noon and 1pm -5pm

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 2025 Training Program commenced on February 18 and will continue through April 29, 2025. Classes held Tuesdays 1-5pm at the Padilla Bay Reserve.
 - [2025 Training schedule](#) and curriculum posted on the Skagit MRC website.
 - 24 registered participants. A very enthusiastic and engaged group. Several have already started volunteering.
 - The Stewards Advisory Committee met on April 17th to start planning for the SSS graduation celebration on April 29. MRC members are invited to attend the SSS graduation celebration.
 - Darla is stepping down as the MRC Project Lead at the end of June 2025. Dale Fournier, a newly appointed MRC member, will become the new SSS Project Lead starting July 1, 2025.
- Forage Fish Surveys – *Pete Haase*:
 - The Sub-Award Agreement with The Salish Sea School Forage Fish Monitoring Coordination has been fully executed. The Salish Sea School hired Catherine Houck to coordinate the forage fish surveys for the Skagit MRC.
 - After 13 years of leading the forage fish surveys, Pete officially handed the baton over to Catherine Houck. Pete will continue to be the MRC Project Lead for forage fish.
 - Pete gave a talk and demo on forage fish surveys for the Salish Sea Stewards class. Will likely get a few new volunteers from the 2025 Salish Sea Stewards class to help with forage fish surveys.
 - Forage fish survey volunteer and Salish Sea Steward (class of 2025), Victor Garcia, was recently appointed by the Governor to represent one of the western Washington positions on the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission for a six-year term. The Commission oversees the fish and wildlife rules and regulations.
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue. Haven't seen too many live eggs in the samples but will likely pick up in May and June.
 - Surveys take around 1.5 -2 hours to complete.
 - April 2025 forage fish survey schedule:
 - April 16- Guemes Channel at 11am
 - April 16- Similk Bay at 10am
 - April 21- Bowman Bay at 9:30am
- Kids on the Beach:
 - **April 22-23:** Field Days with 45 students from Concrete High School -10th and 11th grades from two classes will be held at Bay View State Park and Padilla Bay Interpretive Center from 9am-1:30pm. County Commissioner Peter Browning will be attending on April 23. Elizabeth, Jude, and Tracy will be there to meet with Commissioner Browning. A call for volunteers has been sent out.
 - **May 6-8:** Field Days with 86 students from Sedro Woolley Evergreen Middle School - 3 classes of 6th graders.
 - **May 21:** Padilla Bay Field Day with 42 students from Allen Elementary 4th & 5th grades (English is a second language for majority of students- engaged interpreters).
 - Fall program is currently being developed: Concrete and Mount Vernon High Schools signed up to participate.
- La Conner School Rain Gardens – *Elizabeth Drozda*:
 - The La Conner School Rain Garden is looking great! The red currant and Camas are starting to bloom.

- Drafted the School Rain Garden curriculum for the 4th & 5th grade science class that includes learning objectives, lessons and a set of hands-on activities and resources as a starting point. The curriculum is currently being reviewed by the science teacher.
- Looking into the possibility of purchasing a contoured watershed model as an educational tool for classroom rain garden curriculum.
- With feedback and photos of native plants from the MRC, the interpretive sign design has been revised by Westar. It looks great!! Just a few minor edits before its ready for fabrication. Looking into the possibility of adding a QR code to the MRC website for more rain garden information. Hope to get installed before the end of the school year.
- Elizabeth reached out to Don Hunger with the NWSF about getting some intern help with rain garden stewardship. NWSF is currently in the process of applying for grant funding for shoreline stewardship and seasonal field techs and will add La Conner and Mt. Erie School Rain Gardens to their work plans if successful. In the meantime, NWSF staff will help with weeding, pruning, mulching this spring if able.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for **Saturday, September 13, 2025**, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Save the Date cards and links to the online registration form has been shared with past participating organizations and volunteers.
 - 20 organizations have already registered to participate. We have space for 35.
 - 5 volunteers have signed up so far including one new Salish Sea Stewards volunteer.
 - Darla Gay Smith and Erin Merklen both shared Fidalgo Bay Day volunteer opportunities with the new Salish Sea Steward class which seemed to spark some interest.
 - A Puget Sound Corps Member with DNR offered to reach out to local high school environmental clubs or key clubs to see if their members would help with our kid’s craft tables, face painting, popcorn, or refreshments or other things at the event.
 - Will be reaching out to the Master Composters for help with Zero Waste at the event. Our county intern will be tasked with coordinating the Zero Waste effort.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Field work continues through mid-May with Puget Sound Restoration Fund and the Samish Indian Nation including monitoring and seeding restoration plots with juvenile abalone.
 - Annual partners meeting is scheduled for early December 2025. Paul plans to attend.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Paul will start collecting next native oyster recruitment bags in late April or early May 2025 to monitor the annual 2024 recruitment status as well as the locations of oyster larvae settlement.
 - Paul will be putting up shell strings (shells on a stick) in Weaverling Spit and at the trestle in Fidalgo Bay, sampling tools used by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to monitor oyster recruitment throughout Puget Sound.
 - Paul gave a presentation to the Salish Sea Stewards on the Olympia Oyster Restoration project.
 - The Native Oyster Restoration Story Map has been finalized and is now accessible on the Skagit MRC website homepage: [click here](#). A huge shoutout to Lynne for taking the lead and working with Paul and Confluence to create it.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year 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).

- Presented at the April 1 SSS Training session and got interest from possibly 3 kayakers who are interested in joining the effort.
- The three Kayak Team leads have published their survey schedules for the 4 Skagit Survey Sites for June – September and the schedule has been posted for volunteer sign-ups.

Upcoming events:

- May 2 – NWSC Kelp Kickoff workshop at PB
- May 29 – Skagit Kayak Team BBQ and revisit kelp plans
- June 6 – Skagit Kayak Team Shakedown Cruise
- June survey dates: June 8 (Biz Point), June 9 (Coffin Rocks), June 10 (Lone Tree), June 17 (Shannon Point)
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**
 - Beach seining is now occurring twice a month at Bowman Bay - funding is in place for NWSF to continue January – December 2025.
 - Jason Morgan has provided the upcoming seining schedule for January – June so far.
 - Beach seining statistics for **March 7**: Caught 72 fish total: staghorn sculpin (5), English sole (5), sharpnose sculpin (4), and Chum salmon (58). 8 volunteers contributed 13.5 volunteer hours.
 - Beach seining statistics for **March 21**: Caught 39 fish total: stary flounder (3), staghorn sculpin (3), shiner perch (1), Dungeness crab (2), Chum salmon (30). 6 volunteers contributed 15.5 volunteer hours.
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**
 - Nothing happening right now.
 - Funding is in place for NWSF to continue in the 2025 growing season
 - June 4 is currently in the works for the kickoff of plant maintenance activities with volunteers. NWSF, SFEG, and MRC are working to have beach seining and forage fish teams there as well. More details to come.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

The contract with Confluence Environmental has been through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K) to:

 - Make improvements for simplified user functionality to the Nearshore Assessment and Prioritization tool while protecting sensitive landowner data.
 - Improve MRC useability and access to parcel-level data within the tool.
 - Build out details of high potential restoration projects proposed for the MRC.
 - Conduct training and tutorials for improved user experience in using the tool.
 - Provide editorial edits to text, photos and links to the two previously completed Story Maps as directed by MRC.
 - A meeting with Confluence was held March 18 to kick off these tasks and an additional meeting with Suzanne Shull, GIS to ensure the final product is compatible with the new SoundIQ.
 - The Olympia Oyster Story Map was updated by Confluence and is now LIVE on the Skagit MRC website as of April 3, 2025 [click here](#)
 - The NEAP Tool is in the process of being updated for improved public access and simplified user interface.
 - The NEAP Tool Story Map is in process of revision to also be a “tutorial” to help explain how it can be explored and better understood.

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):

Pete Haase Officially Passes the Forage Fish Notebooks and Sampling Gear Over to Catherine Houck-March 29



Photo Credit: Lynne Wenberg-Davidson

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: April 2025

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The MRC 2024 Annual Report is available on the Snohomish County MRC website.
- The MRC presented their Annual Report to County Council on April 15 and is planning to follow up to the Council with recommendations.

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

Staff conducted interviews and is in the process of hiring a Marine Ecology Intern.

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

Members attended the NWSF Scholars Showcase on March 29

Elisa Dawson attended the North Sound Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy Lunch Event on April 2

The MRC meeting was on April 16

Elisa Dawson attended the Planners Briefing for Puget Sound Parcel-Scale Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment on April 18

Elisa Dawson attended the Puget Sound Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy Workshop on April 23-24

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 Admin: The MRC annual report was finalized and used as a base to present to Snohomish County Council and the Executive on April 15. The MRC is working on recommendations to Council to be delivered via letter after the presentation.

Forage Fish Monitoring (MRC Grant 2024-2025): Picnic Point and Meadowdale were sampled on April 10. Howarth Park occurred on April 12.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring (MRC Grant 2024-2025): MRC Staff are working on prep for summer monitoring ensuring insurance, the QAPP, and permits are in place.

Marine Vegetation Outreach (MRC OTGP grant project for 2024 – 2025): The final draft of the updated memo regarding marine vegetation information and community groups was completed. The subcommittee begun early event planning for the September outreach event.

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

Nearshore Restoration: Final changes are being incorporated into the short summary report of Year 2 for Meadowdale Beach Park Restoration. The final report will be available online in May.

Outreach: Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. The quarter one cleanup occurred at Howarth Park on March 30.

Crabber Outreach/Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: The subcommittee is in early draft stages of writing an article for boaters on oil spill preparedness and prevention. They plan to have the article reviewed by MRC and discussed at May MRC meeting. The crabber subcommittee is reviewing if they will be conducting crabber outreach at the Everett 10th street boat launch this year.

Marine Water Quality: MRC staff are in discussion with Snohomish County Communications Staff to assess the available support for going through a design process on a Marine Report Card. ORCA staff would also participate in a series of meetings in order to finalize language for the report card.

Derelict Vessels: At least 1 vessel has been identified for removal for 2025. A second vessel is currently being reviewed for potential removal.

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area: Signage for Kayak Point is being designed in-house at Tulalip Tribes utilizing the information provided by the MRC. The MRC will review and provide feedback on signage once available.

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.):

Upcoming Events:

- Forage fish monitoring Picnic Point and Meadowdale – May 15
- Forage fish monitoring Howarth Park – May 10
- Next MRC Meeting: May 21, online via zoom.

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

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: April 2025

Submitted by: Dana Flerchinger and Austin Rose

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

- The MRC will be hosting the first Beach Seine with Kids event on April 22nd with Harmony Elementary School.
- On March 31st, staff with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund conducted a reconnaissance survey in Drayton Harbor to identify key habitat features, target species, and assess the general distribution of Olympia oysters at selected sites in Drayton Harbor. This goal of this survey was to inform the MRC about Olympia oyster restoration possibilities within Drayton Harbor.

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):

- The April MRC meeting was held on April 3rd. Highlights included:
 - Staff are working to schedule a presentation on the MRC 2024 Annual Report to the Whatcom County Council. This will likely happen in May or June.
 - The MRC is amending their grant to remove the “Remote Beach Cleanup” project and transferring funds to support site assessments for Olympia oyster restoration sites in Drayton.
 - The MRC discussed their list of projects for the 2025-2027 NWSC funds. Projects include:
 - Continuing bull kelp monitoring as is but see about adding in an “exploratory site” per year where if we come across a kelp bed that we don’t currently regularly map, we can at least note its existence and map its perimeter if we have the time.
 - Synthesizing the MRC’s water quality data from N. Chuckanut Bay and developing a report with recommendations on actions to improve water quality in the bay.
 - Forage fish surveys will continue at established sites. HABs will continue as is.
 - Acquire cultch and permits for the Olympia oyster restoration project in Drayton Harbor.
 - Beach Seine with Schools will continue as is

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

NA

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

- Beach Seine with Kids
The MRC is preparing to host 4 schools across 3 Beach Seine with Kids field events. Harmony Elementary School will attend the April 22nd field event, Carl Cozier Elementary School will attend the May 6th event, and Alderwood Elementary and Acme Elementary Schools will attend the May 20th event. Across the 4 schools, seven, 4th grade classrooms will be participating with a total of 166 students. This year, the MRC

is also partnering with the Salish Sea School to run additional stations at the field events for a more interactive learning experience for the students. MRC members will also be conducting pre and post field trip classroom visits to each of the participating classrooms.

- Intertidal Monitoring

In 2025, the MRC will be piloting intertidal monitoring at 2 sites within the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve. Barnacle Rock will be surveyed on June 12th and Neptune Beach will be surveyed on July 24th. This work was previously conducted by RE Sources, who no longer has the funding to continue the program. Staff and MRC members have been meeting with other groups conducting intertidal monitoring to determine how the data will be utilized and managed to determine if the MRC wants to continue these surveys in the future. The MRC has also formed a subcommittee to internally discuss the value of the data and how the monitoring plan could be changed to better reflect the interests of the MRC.

- HABs

As the days are beginning to get longer and temperatures are starting to rise, the HAB team has switched from biweekly sampling to their weekly spring sampling schedule. Samples were/will be collected on April 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th.

- Chuckanut PIC

In addition to regular monthly sampling, the MRC has continued to conduct microbial source tracking (MST) in North Chuckanut Bay 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. Results will be available in September of 2025. The MRC conducted the routine monthly sampling and MST sampling in North Chuckanut Bay on April 23rd.

- Forage Fish Surveys

The MRC conducted a forage fish survey at Little Squalicum Beach on April 10th.

- Bull Kelp Monitoring

The MRC has tentatively scheduled survey dates for the 2025 bull kelp monitoring season. Staff have started reaching out to volunteers and will be attending a kayak safety training in late May or early June.

- Olympia Oyster Restoration

On March 31st, staff with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) conducted a reconnaissance survey in Drayton Harbor to identify key habitat features, target species, and assess the general distribution of Olympia oysters at selected sites in Drayton Harbor. MRC project lead, Jackie Dexter, and NWSC staff, Allie Simpson, also attended the survey. PSRF staff will provide the MRC with a summary report from the survey and recommendations for next steps. The MRC will also be working with students from Bellingham Technical College to conduct the North Chuckanut Bay population survey on May 27th and 29th. This will be the last population survey in North Chuckanut Bay as this site has not yielded promising results for Olympia oyster restoration over the past 6 years.

Other:

- Whatcom County Vessel Turn-In Event: The next vessel-turn in planning meeting is scheduled for April 29th. Attendees will include Dana Oster (NWSC staff), Kurt Baumgarten (Port of Bellingham), DNR DVRP staff, and Whatcom MRC staff. The current goal is to begin advertising the event in April (open for at least 2 months ahead of deadline) with applications closing mid to late June.

Photos



Puget Sound Restoration Fund staff, Brian Allen and Sophie Schwager, and MRC Olympia oyster project lead, Jackie Dexter, conduct an Olympia Oyster Reconnaissance survey in Drayton Harbor on March 31st. Photo credits: Allie Simpson.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: March 2025

Submitted by: Amelia Kalagher

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

- The MRC hosted a planting event on March 6th, planting native beach plants on Ediz Hook (more details below).
- The MRC is developing projects for its next biennium, and held a work session on February 24th to do so as well as discussing projects at its regular March 17th meeting.

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

- Chelsea Korbolic, NOAA affiliate, was designated by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe as their alternate representative.
- Kelly Burger, Sequim City Councilor, replaced Harmony Rutter as the City of Sequim's alternate representative.

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

- **Work session:** The MRC held a special meeting on February 24th, as a work session for the next biennium's project development.
- **Ediz Hook planting:** A planting event was completed on March 6th on Ediz Hook, with a short follow-up planting on March 13th. A total of 3,500 native beach plants were added to nearshore areas previously restored by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, which was also a key partner for the planting. Clallam Conservation District partnered to organize volunteers and the event. 108 total volunteers participated (68 elementary students, 15 teachers and chaperones, 22 community adults, 3 MRC members, plus staff with Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Clallam Conservation District and MRC).
- **Monthly meeting:** The March monthly meeting was held March 17th, with a presentation from Don Hunger on the work of the Northwest Straits Foundation and how MRCs can reach out with requests for partnerships and resources.
- **Upcoming – HAZWOPER / oiled wildlife training:** The MRC will be hosting a training on April 15th and 16th in Port Angeles for oiled wildlife first response, which serves as an 8-hour HAZWOPER refresher for those certified. The goal of this project and training is to get more community members prepared as initial responders in the event of an oil spill. International Bird Rescue will present the training. The [flyer is available on the MRC's homepage](#) and [signup is available here](#) (through the training date).

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 oysters*: Spat are being cultivated for later outplanting and are doing well.
- *Forage fish*: Forage fish sampling continues, with two new community members trained on March 18th to participate in sampling. The MRC is working on the purchase of a second set of sampling gear so multiple volunteers/groups can sample in different sites on the same or adjacent days.
- *Elwha Beach*: Clallam MRC continued to steward the beach at the mouth of the Elwha River.
- *Pinto abalone*: Eight days of dive surveys west of Port Angeles have been tentatively scheduled for September 2025, with backup days for weather.
- *Kelp monitoring*: The MRC will prepare for the 2025 monitoring season in spring. At least three community volunteers are currently planning to participate this season, in addition to two MRC members.
- *Pigeon guillemots*: Preparation of volunteers and training for the 2025 season will begin in spring.
- *Ediz Hook revegetation*: A planting event was completed on March 6th on Ediz Hook, with a short follow-up planting on March 13th. A total of 3,500 native beach plants were added to nearshore areas previously restored by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, which was a key partner. Clallam Conservation District partnered to organize volunteers and the event. 108 total volunteers participated (68 elementary students, 15 teachers and chaperones, 22 community adults, 3 MRC members, plus staff with Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Clallam Conservation District and MRC).
- *Education – outreach cards*: MRC members continued supplying local eateries and community establishments with educational outreach cards featuring information on local marine life.
- *Education – displays*: MRC members continued developing new displays for outreach at local festivals.
- *Education – oil spill response*: An 16-hour training is scheduled in April, as an 8-hour refresher for people with previous HAZWOPER certification and an introductory oiled wildlife response training for others.
- *Sound Toxins (community partner project, Feiro Marine Life Center)*: MRC alternate Nancy Stephanz continues to process samples weekly for the Sound Toxins project, with Feiro Marine Life Center.
- *Shellfish biotoxins (community partner project, Clallam County Environmental Health)*: Shellfish sampling does not take place during the winter months and will resume in spring, likely in April.
- *New project development*: The following projects are being considered for the next biennium. These were discussed at the February 24th work session and March 17th meeting, and will continue to be refined and narrowed down.
 - Nearshore Restoration at Co-Managed Wildlife Refuges
 - Elwha River Stewardship
 - Olympia Oyster Surveys
 - Pinto Abalone
 - Forage Fish Monitoring
 - HAZWOPER / Oiled Wildlife Response Training
 - Pigeon Guillemot Monitoring
 - Ediz Hook Debris Removal
 - Derelict Crab Pot Removal
 - Kelp Monitoring

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 plans to share an advisory letter communicating its concern about shoreline armoring (permitted and unpermitted) on Three Crabs Road in Sequim, a nearshore area prone to flooding during storm surges. This will be sent to the Clallam County Commissioners, with notice to the Clallam County Director of Community Development.

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



Ediz Hook: community volunteers gather to hear planting instructions from Allyce Miller (Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe staff and LEKT MRC representative). Photo credit Ann Soule, 3/6/25.



Ediz Hook: Close up on Allyce Miller explaining which parts of plants to plant in what direction, and what parts to leave free of the soil. Photo credit Ann Soule, 3/6/25.



Ediz Hook: Students from Dry Creek Elementary hard at work planting native beach plants. Lots of hands were needed to work through the rocky soil and make large holes for the plants. Photo credit Rebecca Mahan, 3/6/25.



Ediz Hook: Students from Queen of Angels Elementary learning about connections to marine life, especially forage fish through the lens of the MRC's forage fish monitoring project, while they enjoy a well-earned break after finishing their planting for the day. Photo credit Rebecca Mahan, 3/6/25.



Work Session: The MRC came together for a special meeting on February 24th, as a project development work session. Members spent about 2.5 hours discussing newly proposed projects, reviewing existing projects, and gauging the interest level in each. At the end of the evening – the most complete group photo in awhile. Photo credit Katie Kowal, 2/24/25.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: March/ 2025

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- **New member – Joshua Berkowitz**
- **Plankton Class – SWSD ALE Program**

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

Our newest member, Joshua Berkowitz, has been approved for a one-year term. The Board of Island County Commissioners has informed us that they reserve the right to adjust term lengths and make changes to MRC membership as they deem necessary. [About Us | Island County Marine Resource Committee](#)

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

Previous Meetings/Events:

- Mar 4: MRC Meeting
- Mar 10: Cornet Bay – ROV Demonstration
- Mar 13: Plankton Class w/ Woodhaven School
- Mar 20: MRC Exec Committee

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- April 1: MRC Meeting
- April 5: Camano 101
- April 9: MRC Orientation – New members
- April 21: Forage Fish Sampling w/ South Whidbey School District
- April 24: MRC Exec Committee
- April 28: Forage Fish Lab w/ South Whidbey School District
- May 6: MRC Meeting
- May 10: Penn Cove Water Festival
- May 14: Community SLR Workshop – Camano
- May 20: Community SLR workshop – Whidbey
- June 5: Hoypus Mulching Event

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

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

Monitoring – Forage Fish: We continue our year-round monitoring for forage fish eggs at most sites. Teams conduct monthly monitoring at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Glendale, Keystone Preserve, Cavalero, and Seahorse Siesta. We are exploring ideas of how to adapt our protocol to get more volunteer involvement and to gather more information about forage fish. Surf

smelt eggs were found at Glendale for the first time and eggs were found at Cornet for the first time since 2017.

Bull Kelp Surveys: The team is holding regular meetings to advance plans for the 2025 survey season. Initially, we aimed to require all Bull Kelp volunteers to complete the on-the-water safety training class. However, due to significant pushback, we have decided to revert to recommending the training rather than making it mandatory.

Stewardship – Cornet Bay/Hoypus Point: We are beginning to plan for the 2025 growing season and are working to coordinate with the Island County Noxious Weed Coordinator for spraying at the Cornet Bay site to help control the Canada thistle.

Water Quality: It was decided at our MRC Retreat that we will move this project into a pilot project until we can get a better grasp on what and how we can manage this work.

Workshops: We are collaborating with WSU Extension and Shore Friendly to host two workshops aimed at high-risk communities affected by sea level rise. Both workshops will be held in May. One will be on Whidbey and one on Camano.

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 Planning Department is working on drafts of the Comprehensive Plan elements. MRC staff will get an opportunity for input early in 2025. The MRC will get another opportunity for comments sometime in the summer.

Crabber Education: We met with Skagit County MRC and the Swinomish Tribe to talk about strategies for getting Crabber education to our communities. We put together some initial ideas and will move forward with what each of our groups have capacity for. Island is looking to recruit volunteers from the next Sound Water Stewards class.

Plankton Class: We joined the Woodhaven High School class on South Whidbey to examine plankton under microscopes, discovering a variety of fascinating specimens. The students observed a significantly higher presence of zooplankton compared to phytoplankton. We look forward to sampling again later in the spring to explore changes in species diversity.

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



Underwater ROV Demo – Cornet Bay

Photo by Kelly Zupich



Plankton Class

Photo by Amanda Pitts

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: March 2025

Submitted by: Katie Kowal

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

- Jeff Taylor attended a demonstration of the Oceanbotics SRV-8 Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV). Planning is ongoing for Jefferson's spring ROV Derelict Crab Pot project.
 - 3 Upcoming Spring Workshops scheduled – Searching for Seaweed (4/4), Digging for Dinner (5/3), Crabbing 101 (6/25)
-
- **Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): New member Jon Waggoner (Marine Science Alt) will officially start at the April 1, 2025 meeting.

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

Past Events/Meetings

March 1 – Rain Garden Work Party – Taylor and Clay St
March 4 – MRC Monthly Meeting
March 4 – E+O planning meeting
March 7 – Olympia Oyster site visit
March 8 – Connectivity Fair tabling
March 11 – ROV Demo meeting
March 14 – Quilcene School District Rain Garden Meeting
March 18 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting
March 22 – Forage Fish sampling at Quilcene Marina and Dabob Bay

Upcoming Events/Meetings

April 1 – Olympia oyster shell spread event - Discovery Bay Powerlines site
April 1 – MRC Monthly Meeting
April 4 – Searching for Seaweed Workshop
April 12 - Rain Garden Work Party – Water and Monroe St
April 15 – MRC Executive Committee Meeting
May 3 – Digging for Dinner Workshop
May 3 – Olympia Oyster shell spread event – Discovery Bay Lagoon site
May 6 – MRC Monthly Meeting
June 21 – Shrimpfest tabling event
June 25 – Crabbing 101 Workshop

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):

- Monitoring:
 - **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** Sarah Fisker sampled Dabob Bay on March 22.
 - **Forage fish – Quilcene Marina:** Sarah Fisker sampled Quilcene Marina on March 22.
 - **Shoreline Landowner:** Sarah attended the Shoreline Friendly Workshop in Clallam County on March 27.
 - **Kelp kayak monitoring:** Nothing to report.
 - **Storm surge monitoring:** Nothing to report.

- Rain Gardens:
 - Rain Garden Work Party held March 1 in Port Townsend (Taylor and Clay St).
 - Janette met with Justin Lake, Quilcene School District teacher and Community Garden Coordinator, on March 14 to discuss maintenance of their 3 rain gardens.

- Education & Outreach:
 - The E+O team met on March 4 to plan for upcoming 2025 outreach workshops.
 - Betsy Carlson has been reaching out to potential presenters for Wooden Boat Festival later this year.

- Olympia Oysters:
 - Neil Harrington made a site visit on March 7 to check on bags of shell delivered at Discovery Bay in December 2024.

- Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:
 - Nothing to report.

- ROV Lost Crab Pots:
 - On March 11, Jeff Taylor “attended a demonstration of the Oceanbotics SRV-8 Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV). Skagit and Island counties are interested in community based derelict gear project similar to the ours. Skagit arranged a demo of the SRV-8 at Cornet bay. Ryan Gates gave an overview of the ROV and then allowed us to operate the ROV. The ROV was equipped with Sonar and a Doppler Velocity Log (DVL). The DVL with the Oceanbotics software makes the ROV easy to control and navigate, and the sonar allows crab pots to be spotted from longer distance, even in low visibility conditions. It also had an USBL acoustic positioning which would allow the ROV to navigate directly to where crab pots were detected by side scan sonar surveys. Onboard sonar and navigation equipment would make derelict gear removal much quicker.”
 - RFP and contract for late May/June on-the-water work is being finalized.
 - On March 28, Jeff Taylor met with Tim Behrenfeld and the Blackfish (student ROV team) to discuss logistics and scheduling for the spring ROV Derelict Crab Pot project.

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.



*Photo: Jeff Taylor attended a demo where an ROV and multiple technologies were used in tandem to improve the ability to locate and remove derelict crab pots. Attendees got hands-on practice with the ROV in the water. – 3/11/25, Cornet Bay, WA
Photo Credit: Lynne Wenberg*



*Photo: Akeyla Behrenfeld, Sarah Fiskien, Janette Mestre, and Troy McKelvey (not pictured) sieving a forage fish sediment sample from Dabob Bay! – 3/22/25
Dabob Bay, WA
Photo Credit: Troy McKelvey*

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: March 2025

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

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

- The Spring Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled for April – 4/12 on Lopez Island and 4/26 on Orcas, San Juan, and Shaw islands. Monthly beach cleanups are back! The spring schedule is filling up quickly with local organizations who are helping the MRC host and successfully remove microplastics and debris from Jackson’s Beach. Check out the PFSS webpage for more info: www.plasticfreesalishsea.org.
- The MRC has been invited to participate in a North Sound Marine Vegetation Brown Bag Luncheon on April 2 from 11:30-1pm. During this time we will hear about the latest implementation strategy from the Habitat Leads who use these strategies to guide investments and steer conservation and recovery projects. Groups will be encouraged to share their challenges with marine vegetation and share efforts taken to protect and recover these important marine habitats.
- Salmon Recovery Site Visits will be on April 3 and 4th, where MRC members act as the Citizens Advisory Group and help to rank and score projects.

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):

- Oil Spill Prevention Subcommittee Meeting March 18
- PFSS Subcommittee Meeting – March 25
- North Sound Lunch & Learn: Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategies April 2
- MRC/CAG Salmon Recovery Site Visits – April 3-4 (NO APRIL MRC Meeting)
- April Monthly Beach Cleanup with AFSCME Local 1849 – April 6
- San Juan Island Yacht Club Presentation – April 7
- Great Islands Cleanup – April 12 Lopez, April 26 Orcas, Shaw and San Juan
- Next MRC Meeting – May 1

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):

Planning is underway for the next grant cycle of MRC projects. Members are keen to keep progressing on ongoing topics and utilize funds strategically to explore more opportunities for protecting, educating, and monitoring valuable marine resources that make the San Juan Islands so special.

Plastic Free Salish Sea continues to engage local community groups through hosting beach cleanups at Jackson’s Beach. The Youth Conservation Corp hosted the monthly beach cleanup for March with 10 students and 6 community members. The group found many nurdles, helping with the removal of microplastics plaguing Jackson’s Beach, as well other debris culminating in about 10 pounds of litter. Next month the cleanup will be hosted by AFSCME Local 1849, May by the San Juan Visitors Bureau and June by the San Juan Island Pride Foundation. We have been talking with the San Juan Island Yacht club to plan for an outer island beach cleanup later this summer at the marine state parks at Sucia and Matia Island.

The Spring Great Islands Cleanup is happening on April 12 on Lopez and April 26 on Orcas, Shaw and San Juan Islands. Outreach to outer islands is underway to see where else we can make a difference. There has been a lot of excitement

from community member for this beloved event and we are anticipating a great turn out and lots of debris to be removed from county beaches and roadways.

Five boats from the islands were accepted into DNR's Voluntary Turn-In Program this March: 3 from Lopez, 1 from Orcas and 1 from Friday Harbor. This effective prevention program is open to vessel owners year-round with removals usually done boat-by-boat as needed. However, due to an increase in county applicants this past year, DNR decided to process all 5 recently accepted vessels all at one time. Completing the vessel towing, hazardous inspections and removals, stripping and dismantling for salvage, recycling and disposal all at once and at a single location has proven to be cost effective and allows for more of this work to stay local. TowBoatUS Friday Harbor moved 2 old wooden fishing boats, a cute but dilapidated houseboat and a funky fiberglass cabin cruiser to the Port of Friday Harbor for dismantling. DNR attributes the increased interest in the VTIP program to the successful Turn-In Event with the county last April and from the Derelict Vessel Prevention & Removal Program promoting and assisting residents with turning in vessels at the end of their life before they pose a threat to the marine environment. Another Win-Win for the islands!

Level Pratt presented to the greater MRC with updates about shipping and vessel traffic passing through the islands to Vancouver. In recent months there has been significant increase in large vessel traffic due to the completion of the transmountain pipeline last May. With more ships traveling throughout the islands, many of which are carrying oil substances between the pipeline and refineries across the West Coast of the US, there is an increased risk to the marine resources the MRC strives so hard to protect. The ERTV subcommittee has continued to advocate for having emergency response ready and available to act if something awful happens. The MRC will be working with the Local Integrating Organization to share these findings with the Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council at their meeting in the San Juans in August.

In conjunction with the Island, San Juan, Snohomish/Stillaguamish, and Whatcom Local Integrating Organizations (LIOs) and accompanying MRCs, we will be participating in the North Sound Marine Vegetation virtual lunch hour focused on the Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy for kelp and eelgrass. On April 2 from 11:30am – 1pm we will hear from the Habitat Strategic Initiative Leads about the latest comprehensive strategy, combining key elements from both the Puget Sound Eelgrass Recovery Strategy and the Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Restoration Plan. This virtual luncheon will be a great opportunity to hear about the key objectives of the strategy, ask questions and provide feedback. The new strategy will guide investments for marine vegetation projects and through this conversation we can have better regional coordination and support for conservation and recovery. Groups will be encouraged to share their challenges with marine vegetation and share efforts taken to protect and recover these important marine habitats.

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.):

At the March MRC meeting, we heard a presentation from Tyler Clark of MoorBuoys, a new program similar to Airbnb but for mooring buoys, where buoy owners can offer their buoy for rent by the hour or day to other vessels in the area. The idea is to better utilize the number of buoys that exist in the San Juans, however mooring buoys can be a controversial subject here due to the number of unpermitted buoys in the water, the lack of capacity for enforcement, and concerns about sensitive habitats and resources. There was good discussion and the group has decided to convene a subcommittee surrounding mooring buoy topics.

The MRC will be fulfilling their role as the Citizens Advisory Group for Salmon Recovery and reviewing upcoming proposals. Site visits for potential projects will happen on April 3 and 4. MRC members will have an opportunity to see the areas for proposed projects and ask project sponsors questions. This is one of the most important advisory actions the MRC takes on annually.

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

Images from YCC Beach Cleanup – Photos by Julie Curtis



YCC Beach Cleanup. Photos by Julie Curtis

Great Islands Cleanup Social Media Graphic

THINK GLOBAL.
ACT LOCAL.

Follow **Great Islands Clean Up** on
 
#GICU2025

THE GREAT ISLANDS CLEAN UP

SAVE THE DATES

Lopez: Saturday, April 12th
Orcas, Shaw, San Juan: Saturday, April 26th

For more info visit: www.PlasticFreeSalishSea.org/Events



Houseboat included in VTiP Program this spring. Photo by TowBoatUS



One of the boats accepted into the VTiP – Photo by Kari Koski

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: March/2025

Submitted by: Tracy/Lynne

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

- **Kids on the Beach:** Field days on April 22-23 with 45 students from Concrete High School -10th and 11th grades from two classes at Bay View State Park and Padilla Bay Interpretive Center from 9:00am – 1:30pm. County Commissioners have been invited to attend. A call for volunteers and educators has been sent out.
- **School Rain Gardens:** The curriculum has been drafted and is currently being reviewed by the La Conner Elementary School Science teacher. MRC Project Lead, Elizabeth Drozda, is working with the science teacher to schedule a rain garden workshop at the school with some fun hands-on learning activities. Elizabeth is also working on a rain garden maintenance plan.

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):

- **March 3- Kelp Monitoring Workgroup Meeting** via Zoom 3pm-4pm
- **March 11- Oceanbotics ROV Demo-** Cornet Bay 10am-1pm
- **March 13- Monthly MRC Meeting** via Teams- 9am-11am. Bree Turner, HSIL/DNR presented on the Habitat Strategic Initiative Lead's (HSIL) Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy.
- **March 20-** Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee Meeting. Reviewed and updated the program evaluation survey questions.
- **March 21- Shore Friendly Contractor Workshop**, 9:30-4:00pm at the WECU Education Center in Bellingham hosted by the Northwest Straits Foundation in partnership with Skagit and Whatcom MRCs.
- **April 10- Monthly MRC Meeting** via Teams 9am-11am
- **April 22-23- Kids on the Beach at Padilla Bay** with Concrete High School, 10:30am-1:30pm.

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 2025 Training Program commenced on February 18 and will continue through April 29, 2025. Classes held Tuesdays 1-5pm at the Padilla Bay Reserve.
 - [2025 Training schedule](#) and curriculum posted on the SMRC website.
 - 24 registered participants.
 - March topics included: Deception Pass State Park- tide pools/beach naturalists, stormwater and water quality monitoring, European Green Crabs, and marine birds and mammals.
 - The Stewards Advisory Committee met on February 20, 2025, and March 20. Discussed future training topics and presenters, ideas to engage non-active Salish Sea Steward volunteers, and updated the program evaluation survey for the SSS class of 2025. The next AC meeting will take place April 17th.
 - Darla announced she will be stepping down as the MRC Project Lead starting July 1, 2025. MRC members formed a SSS subcommittee to work on drafting the 2025-2027 project proposal until a new Project Lead is appointed. The Volunteer Coordination tasks will not be included in the project proposal.

- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly forage fish surveys for restoration and index sites continue.
 - Surveys take around 1.5 -2 hours to complete.
 - March 2025 forage fish survey schedule:
 - March 14- Fidalgo Bay East at 10:30am
 - March 14- Fidalgo Bay West at 10:30am
 - March 21- Bowman Bay at 10am
 - March 29- Guemes Channel at 10am
 - March 29- Similk Bay at 10am
 - It is a quiet time for forage fish spawning in this area. But the survival rate is also higher this time of year with the cooler weather.
 - It is anticipated the Sub-Award Agreement with The Salish Sea School Forage Fish Monitoring Coordination will get signed in the next couple of weeks.
 - QAPP Addendum with Skagit Sites has been signed.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - **April 22-23:** Field Days with 45 students from Concrete High School -10th and 11th grades from two classes will be held at Bay View State Park and Padilla Bay Interpretive Center from 9am-1:30pm. County Commissioners have been invited to attend. A call for volunteers has been sent out.
 - **May 6-8:** Field Days with 86 students from Sedro Woolley Evergreen Middle School - 3 classes of 6th graders.
 - **May 21:** Padilla Bay Field Day with 42 students from Allen Elementary 4th & 5th grades (English is a second language for majority of students- engaged interpreters).
 - Fall program is currently being developed: Concrete and Mount Vernon High Schools signed up to participate.
- La Conner School Rain Gardens – Elizabeth Drozda:
 - The La Conner School Rain Garden is looking great!
 - Drafted the La Conner Elementary School Rain Garden curriculum for the 4th & 5th grade science class that includes learning objectives, lessons and a set of hands-on activities and resources as a starting point. The curriculum is currently being reviewed by the science teacher.
 - Looking into the possibility of purchasing or borrowing a contoured watershed model as an educational tool for classroom rain garden curriculum.
 - Shared MRC comments about the rain garden interpretive sign with Westar. Found some images that could potentially work. Waiting for feedback from Westar. Hoping to get the sign made and installed before the end of the school year.
 - Elizabeth reached out to the NWSF about getting some help from interns with rain garden stewardship. NWSF is currently in the process of applying for grant funding for shoreline stewardship and seasonal field techs and will add La Conner and Mt. Erie School Rain Gardens to their work plans if successful.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - 2025 Fidalgo Bay Day has been set for Saturday, September 13, 2025, 11am-3pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort!
 - Created online registration forms for volunteers and for organizations and started reaching out to past participating volunteers and organizations about participating in this year's event.
 - Matt confirmed he will coordinate the beach seining demo.
 - Paul confirmed he will coordinate shellfish tasting.
 - The NW Straits Foundation will help coordinate the chowders.
 - Organizational outreach booth space is limited, so it will be first come first serve to register. We reached full capacity last year.

- The Friends of the Salish Sea cannot support more than 35 Passport Stations. Outreach booths will be encouraged to share a passport station.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - Paul reviewed WDFW’s Draft 5-year status report for Pinto Abalone.
 - Recommendation is to keep Pinto abalone on the Endangered Species list.
 - Total number of abalone at WDFW index sites (not seeded sites) across the region increased from 12 abalone in 2017 to 13 abalone in 2024. For the first time in decades, abalone numbers have increased instead of decreased!
 - Encouraging signs of some reproduction/juvenile recruitment occurring in the wild!
 - Field work continues with Puget Sound Restoration Fund and the Samish Indian Nation including monitoring and seeding restoration plots.
 - In Skagit County there are around 11 sites that have been seeded monitored.
 - 3 new sites are being explored for seeding additional juvenile abalone in April.
 - The Samish Indian will be responsible for 3 pinto abalone restoration sites in Skagit County waters.
 - The [2024 Pinto Abalone Report](#) is on the MRC website.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinnel:
 - The next native oyster recruitment bag sampling and placement will take place in June 2025.
 - The next bay-wide population survey is slated for 2028.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:

Skagit surveys generally take place from June-September each year 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).

 - Kelp monitoring will start up again in June.
 - The 2025 kelp kayak survey season will start around April.
 - Skagit Kelp Kayak Team Leads Steven, Brad and Lynne are scheduled to present at the upcoming 2025 Salish Sea Stewards Training on April 1 to share information about the Bull Kelp Surveys and hopefully recruit new experienced kayakers as possible.
- Bowman Bay Beach Seining and Plant Maintenance– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Bowman Bay Beach Seining Updates:**
 - Monthly beach seining will continue at Bowman Bay through December 2025.
 - This is the last beach seining effort for the foreseeable future at any of the Skagit MRC restoration sites.
 - Jason Morgan provided the upcoming seining schedule for January – June.
 - Beach seining statistics were provided for February 14. Caught 27 fish total: stary flounder (1), staghorn sculpin (6), English sole (16), sharpnose sculpin (3), and juvenile flatfish (1). 7 volunteers contributed 12.5 volunteer hours.
 - **Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance Updates:**
 - Nothing happening right now.
 - Funding is in place for NWSF to continue in the 2025 growing season (approx. May – October)
 - **Miscellaneous Bowman Bay Updates (non-MRC projects):**
 - Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group has been collecting beach seining data from the NWSF for the Bowman Bay Wetland Reconnection Feasibility study. They recently issued a [Request for Proposals](#) for the study on their website. They will be invited to provide an update at a future MRC meeting.
 - The Parks Department plans to remove the failing fishing pier as soon as they can get enough funds to do so.

- The Parks Department plans to remove the boat launch that has also been eroding away and is becoming unsafe and replace it with a gravel access to the water for kayaks.
- The shoreline around the interpretive signage is also eroding away. The sign will eventually need to be removed or moved to a different location which would require a cultural study.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- *Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*:
The contract with Confluence Environmental has been extended through December 31, 2025, for an additional follow-on statement of work (\$10K) to:
 - Make improvements for simplified user functionality to the Nearshore. Assessment and Prioritization tool while protecting sensitive landowner data.
 - Improve MRC useability and access to parcel-level data within the tool.
 - Build out details of high potential restoration projects proposed for the MRC.
 - Conduct training and tutorials for improved user experience in using the tool.
 - Provide editorial edits to text, photos and links to the two previously completed Story Maps as directed by MRC.
- A meeting with Confluence was held March 18 to kick off these tasks.
- Once Confluence modifications are complete, Lynne will work with Suzanne Shull to pull the NEAP Tool with interactive functionality into SoundIQ for public education and awareness.

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):

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: March 2025

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The MRC 2024 annual report will be completed by the end of March and the MRC will present to County Council and the Executive in the coming months.
- Representatives from the Port of Everett, DNR, and County staff are working on logistics of a vessel turn in event for February of 2026. Staff conducted reconnaissance for derelict vessels in March. At least 1 vessel has been identified for removal for 2025, and staff are considering additional vessels that could be removed this year.

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

Staff is currently working on hiring a Marine Ecology intern for this year.

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

Staff and members attended the Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program Vital Sign Marine Veg on February 27

Staff and members attended the Kelp Monitoring Workgroup on March 3

Elisa Dawson presented to the students in the WSU Beach Watchers class on March 25

The March MRC meeting was held on March 19 virtually.

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 Admin: The last draft of the annual report for 2024 was reviewed by the full MRC at the March meeting. The final report will be complete by the end of March and the MRC will present to Snohomish County Council and the Executive in the next two months.

Forage Fish Monitoring (MRC Grant 2024-2025): Picnic Point and Meadowdale were sampled on March 20. Howarth Park occurred on March 15.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring (MRC Grant 2024-2025): MRC Staff and Members met with Jeff Whitty and Suzanne Shull to go over the details of how surveys are analyzed and max acreages determined.

Marine Vegetation Outreach (MRC OTGP grant project for 2024 – 2025): The first draft of the memo was reviewed by the subcommittee at their meeting in March. The final draft will be completed in the next few weeks.

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

Nearshore Restoration: Final changes are being incorporated into the short summary report of Year 2 for Meadowdale Beach Park Restoration. The final report will be available online in April.

Outreach: Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. The quarter one cleanup occurred at Howarth Park on March 30.

Crabber Outreach/Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: The subcommittee met in February and discussed remaining spill kits and working with Sea Grant to get more for this year.

Marine Water Quality: ORCA staff and Snohomish County employees met to discuss moving forward on a one-pager to communicate information about Possession Sound to the public.

Derelict Vessels: Representatives from the Port of Everett, DNR, and County staff are working on logistics of a vessel turn in event for February of 2026. Staff conducted reconnaissance for derelict vessels in March. At least 1 vessel has been identified for removal for 2025, and staff are considering additional vessels that could be removed this year.

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area: Signage for Kayak Point is being designed in-house at Tulalip Tribes utilizing the information provided by the MRC. The MRC will review and provide feedback on signage once available.

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.):

Upcoming Events:

- NWSF Scholars Showcase March 29
- Beach Watchers Beach Cleanup at Howarth Park, March 30
- Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy Meeting – April 2
- Forage fish monitoring Picnic Point and Meadowdale – April 10
- Forage fish monitoring Howarth Park – April 12
- Next MRC Meeting: April 16

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

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: March 2025

Submitted by: Dana Flerchinger and Austin Rose

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

- The MRC co-hosted two workshops with the Northwest Straits Foundation: A Shore Friendly Workshop in Point Roberts and A Shore Friendly Contractors Workshop for Whatcom & Skagit Counties.
- The MRC provided feedback on the Climate Chapter for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update.
- MRC project leads and staff selected 4 schools for participation in the 2025 Beach Seine with Kids events that will take place on April 22nd, May 6th, and May 20th.

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):

- The March MRC meeting was held on March 6th. Highlights included:
 - An update on the Puget Sound Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy development by Bree Turner with the WA Department of Natural Resources.
 - Members discussed their comments on the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update.
 - Approval of the 2025 addendum to the MRC Policies and Procedures document, which includes the roles of Committee members and MRC staff.

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

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

- Beach Seine with Kids
MRC project leads and staff selected 4 schools for participation in the 2025 Beach Seine with Kids events. Harmony Elementary School will attend the April 22nd field event, Carl Cozier Elementary School will attend the May 6th event, and Alderwood Elementary and Acme Elementary Schools will attend the May 20th event. Across the 4 schools, seven, 4th grade classrooms will be participating with a total of 166 students. This year, the MRC is also partnering with the Salish Sea School to run additional stations at the field events for a more interactive learning experience for the students.
- Intertidal Monitoring
In 2025, the MRC will be piloting intertidal monitoring at 2 sites within the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve. Barnacle Rock will be surveyed on June 12th and Neptune Beach will be surveyed on July 24th. This work was previously conducted by RE Sources, who no longer has the funding to continue the program. Staff and MRC members have been meeting with other groups conducting intertidal monitoring to determine how the data will be utilized and managed to determine if the MRC wants to continue these surveys in

the future. The MRC has also formed a subcommittee to internally discuss the value of the data and how the monitoring plan could be changed to better reflect the interests of the MRC.

- HABs
As the days are beginning to get longer and temperatures are starting to rise, the HAB team has switched from biweekly sampling to their weekly spring sampling schedule. Samples were collected on March 3rd, 11th, 18th, and 25th.
- Chuckanut PIC
In addition to regular monthly sampling, the MRC has continued to conduct microbial source tracking (MST) in North Chuckanut Bay 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. Results will be available in September of 2025. The MRC conducted the routine monthly sampling and MST sampling in North Chuckanut Bay on March 11th.
- Forage Fish Surveys
The MRC conducted forage fish surveys at Clayton Beach on March 13th and at Little Squalicum Beach on March 14th.
- Bull Kelp Monitoring
MRC staff are starting to schedule dates for the 2025 bull kelp monitoring season. Staff have started reaching out to volunteers and will be attending a kayak safety training in late May or early June.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration
Staff with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) will be leading site assessments to determine the feasibility of conducting Olympia oyster restoration at sites within Drayton Harbor. The first survey is scheduled for March 31st. The MRC will also be working with students from Bellingham Technical College to conduct the North Chuckanut Bay population survey on May 27th and 29th. This will be the last population survey in North Chuckanut Bay as this site has not yielded promising results for Olympia oyster restoration over the past 6 years.

Other:

- Whatcom County Vessel Turn-In Event: Another vessel-turn in planning meeting is scheduled for March 26th. Attendees will include Dana Oster (NWSC staff), Kurt Baumgarten (Port of Bellingham), DNR DVRP staff, and Whatcom MRC staff. The current goal is to begin advertising the event in March (open for at least 2 months ahead of deadline) with applications closing mid to late June. The Whatcom MRC team is reaching out to the Coast Guard, All American Marine, the City of Blaine, the City of Bellingham, and Whatcom County departments about the event to coordinate advertisement and possible additional partnership roles.
- Shore Friendly Workshop: The MRC co-hosted a Shore Friendly Workshop at the Point Roberts Community Center and a beach walk at South Beach on March 15th with the NWSF and Herrera. About 15 people attended the workshop.

- A Shore Friendly Contractors Workshop for Whatcom & Skagit Counties was held on Friday, March 21st from 9:30am – 4:00pm at the WECU Education Center in Bellingham. About 25 arborists, landscapers, landscape architects, and excavation servicers attended the workshop, which focused on information about tree removal regulations, permit requirements for drainage system upgrades or maintenance, and other information regarding permits for planting projects.
- Protecting the Salish Sea Through Science, Local Policy, and Community Engagement. Councilmember, Kaylee Galloway, and MRC Staff, Austin Rose, provided a presentation with the College of the Environment/Salish Sea Institute at WWU on March 13. The presentation highlighted the innerworkings of Whatcom County government and its work pertinent to climate issues including the Climate Action Plan, Climate Vulnerability Assessments, and the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update. It was emphasized that Whatcom County depends on scientific and policy expertise, community engagement, and regional partnerships, and the Whatcom MRC is a great example of that.

Photos



Left: *A beautiful day for a forage fish survey at Clayton Beach.* Right: *The Shore Friendly Contractors Workshop held on March 21st.* Photo Credits: Dana Flerchinger.