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# Island County Marine Resources Committee Outreach: 2019-2020

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## I. Introduction

Outreach is an important aspect of the work of the Island County Marine Resources Committee (MRC), including internal communications to Island County leadership as well as external outreach to the local community. Outreach is an integral component of each MRC project – whether a highly visible restoration project or behind-the-scenes data analysis. By helping the community understand what the MRC does and why, the MRC hopes to increase public interest in learning about and caring for the local marine environment.

Due to the emergence of COVID-19 and subsequent precautionary measures, the MRC had to make adaptations to outreach efforts, such as making more materials and resources available online. These adaptations are likely to continue into the future, and offer the opportunity for creative outreach techniques, and the potential to increase accessibility of resources.

The MRC focused its 2020 outreach efforts through the following primary strategies:

- ◆ Workshops
- ◆ Presentations
- ◆ Educational Displays
- ◆ Events and Meetings
- ◆ Media and Resources

From these five strategies, several activities were identified, which are detailed in the following sections and appendices.

## II. Strategies and Activities

### A. Workshops

#### **CREOSOTE IDENTIFICATION AND REMOVAL WORKSHOPS, OCTOBER 2019**

The MRC hosted two workshops on creosote identification, to encourage the use of the MyCoast app to report loose creosote. The workshops were held on both Camano and Whidbey Islands. The MRC invited Chris Robertson from Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to present on the history of creosote in the region, its impact on the environment, DNR's creosote removal program, and techniques to identify creosote. The workshops included a field trip component to allow participants to practice their creosote identification skills and utilize the MyCoast app to report loose creosote-treated wood. In the month following the workshops, there was a 27% increase in creosote reports through the MyCoast app compared with the month prior to the workshops. A full report about the workshops is available in Appendix A.



*Right: Chris Roberston points out distinguishing features of creosote-treated wood at the creosote identification and removal workshop. Left: Workshop participants learn how to use the MyCoast app. Credit: Anna Toledo.*

## B. Presentations

### **PRESENTATIONS TO BOARD OF ISLAND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, OCTOBER 2019 AND MARCH 2020**

MRC staff, Anna Toledo, provided two updates to the Board of Island County Commissioners (BICC). The October update included a summary of work completed in fiscal year 2019, and information about upcoming projects in 2020. The March update included updates about existing projects.

### **PRESENTATION AT WSU EXTENSION ISLAND COUNTY SPEAKER SERIES, NOVEMBER 2019**

MRC member, Linda Rhodes, presented an overview of the marine nearshore environment and ways to protect and restore it. Linda shared about the work of the MRC, including bull kelp monitoring and nearshore restoration efforts. A recording of the presentation was made available [online](#).

### **PRESENTATION AT NORTHWEST STRAITS COMMISSION MEETING, JANUARY 2020**

MRC staff, Anna Toledo, presented to the Northwest Straits Commission about the sea level rise workshops the MRC has hosted in 2019. Anna provided an overview of the workshop background, objectives, publicity, and implementation, as well as post-workshop evaluation results.

### **PRESENTATIONS AT SOUND WATERS UNIVERSITY, FEBRUARY 2020**

The MRC had representation in three presentations at Sound Waters University, a one-day educational event hosted by Sound Water Stewards. MRC staff, Anna Toledo, presented about sea level rise and shoreline restoration. MRC member, Linda Rhodes presented about bull kelp in Island County, including the MRC's monitoring program. Northwest Straits Foundation staff, Lisa Kaufman, presented about shoreline restoration projects in Island County, and the partnership with the MRC.



*Participants in sea level rise workshop at Sound Waters University. Credit: Anna Toledo.*

### **PRESENTATION AT VIRTUAL TOWN HALL FOR EARTH DAY, APRIL 2020**

MRC member, Kelly Zupich, and MRC staff, Anna Toledo, presented about the work of the MRC at a virtual town hall event hosted by Island County Commissioner, Janet St. Clair. Kelly and Anna presented about the purpose of the MRC, and highlighted a few projects: forage fish monitoring, crabber outreach, and art contests.

### **PRESENTATIONS AT MRC SYMPOSIUM, AUGUST 2020**

Island County MRC participated in the Virtual MRC Symposiums hosted by the Northwest Straits Commission. MRC members, Kelly Zupich, Gwendolyn Hannam, and Barbara Bennett, provided presentations about Island MRC to members and staff from other MRCs and the Northwest Straits Initiative. Kelly presented an overview about the MRC. Gwendolyn presented about the Hoypus Point and Possession Point feasibility study. Barbara presented about communications work of the MRC.

## **C. Educational Displays**

### **MARINE FOOD WEBS DISPLAY, DECEMBER 2019**

MRC member, Kelly Zupich, developed a display on the marine food web that was showcased at the Oak Harbor Library. The display included images of marine species from the film “Discover Our Island Shores,” and showed how they are connected to each other by placing a string between the predator and the prey. The resulting web highlighted how the codependence and complexity of marine life. There was also information about the MRC on a poster and handout available by the display.



*Marine food web display at Oak Harbor Library. Credit: Anna Toledo.*

### **SOUND WATERS UNIVERSITY, FEBRUARY 2020**

The MRC participated with a poster display and handouts at Sound Waters, a one-day “university” that drew over 600 attendees. The poster provided an overview of the MRC, forage fish, and shoreline restoration.

### **CAMANO 101, MARCH 2020**

The MRC participated with a poster display and handouts at Camano 101, an event to educate Camano residents about local organizations and volunteer opportunities. The event drew over 130 attendees.

### **RAIN GARDEN SIGNAGE**

With support from the Northwest Straits Foundation, the MRC designed two interpretive signs for rain gardens. One sign was designed for a rain garden at the Greenbank Farm, and highlighted the connection between stormwater management and orca recovery. The second sign was designed for a rain garden at Crescent Harbor Elementary School, and explained how rain gardens work, encouraging students to think about how their actions on land can help keep our marine waters clean. Full images of the signs are available in Appendix B.



Rain garden sign at Greenbank Farm. Credit: Anna Toledo.

## D. Events and Meetings

### ORCA RECOVERY DAY, OCTOBER 2019

The MRC partnered with Whidbey Island Conservation District, Northwest Straits Foundation, Sound Water Stewards, and WSU Extension Island County to recognize Orca Recovery Day. The MRC participated in three events: native vegetation planting and maintenance at Sunlight Shores restoration site, native vegetation planting and maintenance at Cornet Bay restoration site, and renovation of a rain garden at Greenbank Farm. At each site, an MRC representative spoke about the MRC and had materials available to share more about the MRC's work and ways to get involved.



Left: Volunteers planting native vegetation at Sunlight Shores restoration site for Orca Recovery Day. Credit: Anna Toledo. Volunteers renovate rain garden at Greenbank Farm for Orca Recovery Day. Credit: Kelly Zupich.



*Randy Berthold (left photo) and additional volunteers plant native vegetation at Cornet Bay for Orca Recovery Day. Credit: Kelly Zupich.*

### **NEARSHORE RESTORATION TOUR, DECEMBER 2019**

The MRC participated with Island County Department of Natural Resources in a nearshore restoration tour for Island County Commissioners. The tour told the story of how a restoration project goes from initial identification to implementation and stewardship. In addition to stops on Camano and Leque Islands, the tour stopped at two sites where the MRC has been a partner: Oak Harbor Marina where a restoration feasibility study was in progress (completed June 2020) and Sunlight Shores, where a community bulkhead removal was completed in 2018.



*Island County Commissioners learn about the Sunlight Shores restoration project on the nearshore restoration tour. Credit: Dawn Spilsbury Pucci.*

### **BEACH SEINING EVENT WITH SCHOOL GROUP, JANUARY 2020**

The MRC hosted a group of students at the first beach seining event of the season at Cornet Bay, in partnership with the Northwest Straits Foundation and Island County Salmon Recovery. Students learned about the restoration project and the importance of protecting and restoring habitat for salmon.



*Jason Morgan (Northwest Straits Foundation) explains about beach seining and nearshore restoration to students at Cornet Bay. Credit: Dawn Spilsbury Pucci.*

**JAN HOLMES ISLAND COUNTY COASTAL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD, FEBRUARY 2020**

The MRC, in partnership with Sound Water Stewards and Washington State University Extension – Island County, honored volunteer Nicole Luce as the 2020 Jan Holmes Island County Coastal Volunteer of the Year. The award was presented at Sound Waters University, and recognized Nicole’s extensive volunteer work on projects including pigeon guillemot monitoring, assisting the Marine Mammal Stranding Network, K-12 environmental education, beach cleanups, fundraising, and more.



*Nicole Luce accepts 2020 Jan Holmes Island County Coastal Volunteer of the Year award. Credit: Anna Toledo.*

## GREAT NORTHWEST GLASS QUEST, FEBRUARY 2020

With support from the Northwest Straits Foundation, the MRC participated in the Great Northwest Glass Quest, an interactive treasure hunt hosted by the Camano Island Chamber of Commerce. The MRC hid “clue balls” at parks on Camano Island, which, when found, were redeemed for hand-blown glass balls. The MRC posted clues on their website and the Island County DNR Facebook page to help Questers find the clue balls. This event increased the number of new visitors to the MRC website by 137%. In addition, clue ball finders met up with MRC member Elsa Schwartz to receive their prize ball and hear a little bit about the MRC. A full report about the event is available in Appendix C.



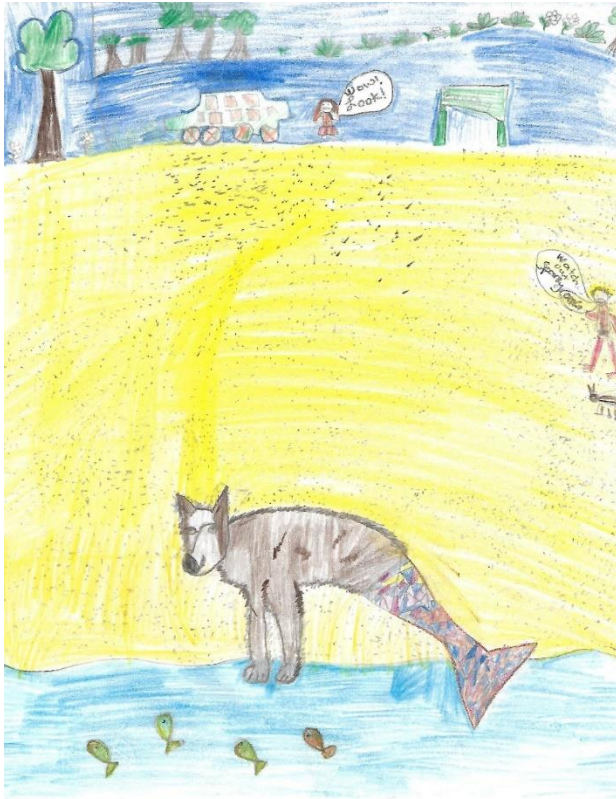
*First Quester to find an MRC-sponsored ball. Credit: Elsa Schwartz.*

## VIRTUAL EARTH DAY AT GOOSEFOOT, APRIL 2020

Due to COVID-19 precautions, most Earth Day events were not held in-person. The MRC participated in a virtual Whidbey Earth and Ocean Month event, hosted by Goosefoot. The MRC provided online resources, including a link to the “MRC Diaries” video, on the [whidbeyonday.org](http://whidbeyonday.org) webpage.

## ART CONTESTS, JUNE-AUGUST 2020

The MRC partnered with Sound Water Stewards to host two art contest in summer 2020. The “Discover Our Island Shores” art and essay contest invited students to watch the film “Discover Our Island Shores,” depict a Salish Sea creature of their own design, and describe its habitat, diet, and ways to protect it. The “Design Your Own Salish Sea Creature” art contest invited students to design and name their own Salish Sea creature.



Top Left: The “Coyphin,” created by Inari, winner of the “Discover Our Island Shores” art and essay contest winner. Top Right: The “Squicken,” created by Ellie, 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Grade First Place winner in the “Design Your Own Salish Sea Creature” art contest. Bottom Left: The “Seacorn,” created by Amelia, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade First Place winner in the “Design Your Own Salish Sea Creature” art contest. Bottom Right: The “Fire Fish,” created by Luna, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade Runner-Up in the “Design Your Own Salish Sea Creature” art contest.

## CATCH MORE CRAB OUTREACH, JULY 2020

The MRC participated in Catch More Crab outreach by distributing 225 educational cards to local retail and partner locations on Whidbey and Camano Islands, such as hardware stores, marinas, docks, and other public locations. Due to COVID-19 precautions, the MRC did not hand out any materials at boat launches. Instead, the MRC made crabber resource packets available for pickup on Camano and in Coupeville. Seventy-five packets were distributed, containing crab gauges, rot cord, and information cards with tips on how to avoid losing crab pots. Details were posted via social media, MRC website, Stanwood Camano News, and the Crab Cracker newsletter on Camano.



*Crabber outreach packets available for pickup during crabbing season at Camano Annex. Credit: Scott Chase.*

## PARTICIPATION IN PARTNER MEETINGS, ONGOING

The MRC maintains a connection with relevant local and regional work through integration with partner organizations. MRC members provide representation on the Island Local Integrating Organization and Island County Salmon Recovery Technical and Citizen Committee. Several Sound Water Stewards sit on the MRC and help foster the connection between the two organizations. MRC members also participate in the Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program (PSEMP) nearshore, forage fish, seabird, and diseases workgroups.

## WEBSITE UPDATES, ONGOING

The MRC website is regularly updated with information on upcoming meetings and events, as well as project reports and past meeting minutes.

## MRC MONTHLY MEETINGS, ONGOING

The MRC meets monthly, and frequently includes educational presentations as part of those meetings, which the public is invited and encouraged to attend. The MRC has offered a virtual video/teleconferencing option for several years, which both members and guests have utilized. In May 2020, due to COVID-19 precautions, the MRC transitioned to fully virtual meetings. Presentation topics in the 2019-2020 grant year included: bull kelp monitoring, shoreline restoration, salmon recovery projects, Hoypus Point and Possession Point feasibility study, Coastal Restoration Toolkit, historical kelp research, Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan, and ecosystem services valuation.



*MRC members at strategic planning meeting in February 2020. Credit: Anna Toledo.*

## **E. Media and Resources**

### **OCTOPOD PODCAST, NOVEMBER 2019**

MRC members Elsa Schwartz and Gwendolyn Hannam participated in the OCTOPOD podcast recorded at the 2019 MRC Conference. They shared about the work of Island County MRC, including forage fish monitoring and nearshore restoration work at Cornet Bay. The podcast is available [here](#).



*Gwendolyn Hannam and Elsa Schwartz participate in the OCTOPOD podcast recording at the MRC Conference. Photo credit: Nicole Jordan.*

### **“DISCOVER OUR ISLAND SHORES” AVAILABLE ONLINE, APRIL 2020**

To adapt to COVID-19 changes in educational models, the MRC worked with Florian Graner to offer a password-protected version of the “Discover Our Island Shores” film on the [MRC website](#). The video was placed on the MRC website in April in celebration of Earth Day, and will be available in this format into the future to allow local teachers and students to continue to access this resource while engaging in remote learning.

### **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN, JUNE 2020**

The MRC communications subcommittee, led by Barbara Bennett, developed a communications plan to help guide MRC outreach and communications for upcoming years. The plan included an overview of existing communications efforts and provided recommendations for future communications work. The communications plan is available on the [MRC website](#).

### **NORTHWEST FISH PASSAGE PODCAST, SEPTEMBER 2020**

MRC staff, Anna Toledo, was interviewed on the Northwest Fish Passage podcast, where she highlighted the work of the MRC, including bull kelp and forage fish monitoring, as well as outreach and restoration work. The episode is available [here](#).

### **ISLAND COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES NEWSLETTERS, ONGOING**

Starting in March 2020, Island County Natural Resources initiated a monthly e-newsletter containing updates and announcements from the MRC, Salmon Recovery Technical and Citizen Committee, Island Local Integrating Organization, and other Natural Resources programs. The newsletter audience grew from 360 recipients in March 2020 to 929 recipients in September 2020. The newsletters are attached in Appendix D.

### **MRC HANDOUT**

The MRC updated a handout about the MRC, and printed it on cardstock. Several were used during multiple outreach opportunities, including the library display, Sound Waters University, the Great Northwest Glass Quest, and Camano 101. The handout is attached in Appendix E.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

The MRC posts news and announcements on social media through the Island County Environmental Health/Department of Natural Resources [Facebook page](#). The MRC provided regular topics for posting, including photos and updates about monitoring activities, resources for recreational crabbers, and announcements about events and activities hosted by the MRC and partners.

### **LOCAL MEDIA**

The MRC was featured in local media in the following articles:

- ◆ A restoration tour, from beginning to end: <https://medium.com/puget-sound-partnership/a-restoration-tour-from-beginning-to-end-2d5dd1a8969f>
- ◆ Get cracking: Crabbing season opens Thursday: [https://www.goskagit.com/scnews/news/get-cracking-crabbing-season-opens-thursday/article\\_09a6996f-527a-5f4c-8fa3-fa01956bf29b.html](https://www.goskagit.com/scnews/news/get-cracking-crabbing-season-opens-thursday/article_09a6996f-527a-5f4c-8fa3-fa01956bf29b.html)
- ◆ Contest invites kids to get crafty: <https://www.whidbeynewstimes.com/news/contest-invites-kids-to-get-crafty/>

### **III. Appendices**

**A. Creosote Workshops Report**

**B. Rain Garden Signs**

**C. Great Northwest Glass Quest Report**

**D. Island County Natural Resources Newsletters**

**E. MRC Handout**