

COUNTY: Jefferson  
**Grant No: SEANWS-2019-JeCoWS-00007**

PROJECT TITLE: Jefferson County MRC Operations and Projects

TASK NUMBER: 4-Eelgrass and shellfish voluntary no anchor zones

T4.2

Year one final report (including buoy maintenance summary, copies of articles from local media, report on any presentations or ads, jpg photos of boats anchoring outside buoys, and a compliance summary)

PERIOD COVERED: October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020

DATE SUBMITTED: October 23, 2020



Jefferson County  
**Marine  
Resources  
Committee**



**Northwest  
Straits**  
INITIATIVE



**PUGET SOUND**  
PARTNERSHIP



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## **Voluntary No-Anchor Zones**

This summary report contains general information about the voluntary no-anchor zones in Port Townsend Bay and Mystery Bay, including a buoy maintenance summary, compliance summary, copies of articles and ads, and photos.

**Project Lead:** Troy McKelvey

**Subcommittee Members:** Gordon King, Nam Siu, Solenne Walker, Bryan DeCaterina, Sarah Fiskien, Brenda Johnson, Roy Clark

### **Project Overview**

The Jefferson County MRC has three buoy fields that protect eelgrass and shellfish beds. The buoys encourage boaters to anchor outside eelgrass and shellfish habitats to prevent anchor and chain damage.

- Thirteen buoys were installed just offshore of Port Townsend, primarily intended for eelgrass protection, with eight buoys installed in 2004 and five more added in 2015.
- Four buoys were installed in South Port Townsend Bay, near Port Hadlock, in 2014 to keep boats from anchoring too close to active shellfish beds there.
- Seven buoys were installed in Mystery Bay (Marrowstone Island) in 2010 to help limit the number of boats anchored near commercial and tribal shellfish beds – five buoys mark the voluntary shellfish protection area and two more to mark the seaward limits of the Mystery Bay State Park water area where boats can anchor.

The weather conditions are calmer in Mystery Bay and near Port Hadlock, so buoys here are left in place all year round and periodically maintained to remove marine growth and replace eroded underwater hardware. The Port Townsend buoys experience significantly more wave and wind action particularly in the winter months, so the MRC pulls the large (66 pound) buoys out in the fall and replaces them with much smaller buoys that do not exert as much pull on the anchors for the winter months. The MRC No-Anchor Zones Subcommittee monitors the buoy fields periodically throughout the year to ensure that they're in place and functioning properly, as well as boaters to assess compliance and effectiveness of the no-anchor zones.

### **Buoy Maintenance Summary**

Due to COVID-19 and resurfaced liability concerns, plans to have volunteers service the buoys in April were delayed. Subcommittee members worked through the logistics of servicing the buoys while practicing social distancing and other safety precautions, however, in anticipation of boat ramps reopening on May 5<sup>th</sup>. However, liability concerns surrounding diving activities resurfaced during the last week of April with conversations among the new WSU Jefferson County Extension director and the county's administrator and attorney. In effort to get the summer buoys out as soon as possible and take care of underwater hardware maintenance needs, the MRC contracted out the dive work to Marine Surveys & Assessments Cooperative (MSA), executing the contract on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Three MRC volunteers (Troy McKelvey, Gordon King, and Nam Siu) helped to pull out the summer buoys from storage on May 23<sup>rd</sup> to deliver to the dive company. MSA divers reinstalled the summer buoys off of the Port Townsend waterfront on

May 26<sup>th</sup> and serviced the buoys near Port Hadlock on May 28<sup>th</sup>, replacing shackles and other underwater hardware as needed. MSA reported back that all the Port Townsend and Port Hadlock buoys would be set for the rest of the year; however, noted that we should plan to replace all of the lines next year as they were becoming threadbare and pulled apart by tube worms. The divers noted that the Port Townsend buoy field is missing two (#3 and #10) of the ten buoys for which they were provided GPS coordinates. They tried diving on the GPS points but had difficulty in finding the anchors due to a large amount of kelp growing in the area.

In April-May, the MRC worked with DNR to combine and renew the Aquatic Conservation Lands License for all three no-anchor zones sites. The current license (No. 23-A92546) commenced on June 1, 2020 and will terminate on May 31, 2025. DNR has record of 13 buoys that the MRC is responsible for near Port Townsend, however, as noted above, only eight buoys are being actively maintained. Subcommittee members have noted the loss of buoys over the years and failed dive attempts to relocate their anchors. Moving forward, the MRC will work on documenting efforts to identify the missing buoy locations, assessing the benefits and risks to the marine environment where anchors should be reinstalled or removed, and amending the license with DNR as necessary.

The underwater hardware of the buoys in Mystery Bay buoy were not checked, however, will be a priority for maintenance in the coming year. Monitoring on September 8<sup>th</sup>, found only five buoys present here. On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, the MRC Coordinator picked up one of the MRC's "shellfish protection zone" buoys from the WDFW office in Port Angeles (reported by Larry Bennett), after someone had found it drifting near Sekiu. As all four Port Hadlock are functioning well in place, it is possible that the buoy came from Mystery Bay, otherwise may have been lost from and since replaced from the Port Hadlock no-anchor zone. Another buoy was picked up from Marrowstone Island Shellfish company on August 21<sup>st</sup>, after it had drifted into their shellfish beds. This buoy was a State Park boundary buoy and was recovered by the Mystery Bay State Park staff. On June 5<sup>th</sup>, a man left a voice message at the WSU Jefferson County Extension office saying he found a "shellfish protection zone" buoy; however, he did not leave contact information. An MRC member posted a local inquiry through the Nextdoor app, but there has been no further phone calls or word on this buoy.

The MRC Coordinator has been working with L&I and WSU Extension/Jefferson County to identify diving regulation requirements and a way forward for volunteers to resume the dive work. With confirmation from L&I maritime specialists that county volunteers can in fact dive for MRC projects in compliance with Occupational Health and Safety regulations for diving, the MRC Coordinator will be working on developing a diving safety manual and safety procedures so that volunteers may resume the dive work in the coming year.

## **Compliance Summary**

The MRC typically conducts monitoring of boater compliance on an annual basis during the Wooden Boat Festival which attracts hundreds of boats and thousands of visitors to Port Townsend Bay. Due to the pandemic, the festival was moved to an online format, so this year the MRC instead conducted informal monitoring of boater compliance throughout the summer with members snapping photos and/or emailing comments to the MRC Coordinator. Over the

course of the summer boating season, the MRC is noting roughly 98% boater compliance with anchoring out of the voluntary no-anchor zones.

#### Port Townsend

- May 4<sup>th</sup> - Prior to reinstalling the summer buoys in Port Townsend Bay for the summer boating season, one MRC volunteer noted four boats anchored inside the no-anchor zone.
- August 4<sup>th</sup> - Bryan DeCaterina noted a derelict vessel within the eelgrass habitat south of Boat Haven, with photo documentation. Another member who is also a DNR employee reported the vessel of concern through the proper channels.
- August 14<sup>th</sup> - The MRC Coordinator walked the waterfront up to the ferry terminal and noted that all anchored boaters were in compliance.
- August 15<sup>th</sup> - Frank Handler noted that all boaters were in compliance near the ferry terminal around 11AM.
- August 23<sup>rd</sup> - Frank Handler noted that all boaters were in compliance near the ferry terminal around 9AM. Solenne Walker also separately reported on boater compliance between the Port of PT to Point Hudson around 4PM, noting all boaters in compliance, except for the mastless sailboat originally reported on August 4<sup>th</sup>. It had moved closer to the Port jetty, on Port or City property, beyond DNR jurisdiction.
- September 8<sup>th</sup> - The MRC Coordinator and Troy McKelvey monitored the site. All 8 buoys were upright and functioning well. All boaters were in compliance except for one derelict vessel still inside the eelgrass habitat south of Boat Haven, first noted on August 4<sup>th</sup>.

#### Port Hadlock

- August 14<sup>th</sup> - The MRC Coordinator noted that all anchored boaters were in compliance.
- September 1<sup>st</sup> - Troy McKelvey noted one boat anchored inside the no-anchor zone.
- September 8<sup>th</sup> - The MRC Coordinator and Troy McKelvey monitored the site and noted that all buoys were upright and functioning well with all boaters are in compliance.
- Moving forward, the MRC will explore opportunities to partner with local shellfish companies to help maintain the buoys.

#### Mystery Bay

- September 8<sup>th</sup> - The MRC Coordinator and Troy McKelvey monitored the site, noting that 5 of the 7 buoys were visible from the shore/dock. Without a map or greater familiarity with the site, it is difficult to discern from the dock which buoys are for the state park boundary vs. shellfish protection zone. Plans to take a boat out to monitor the site more closely were delayed due to smoke from the wildfire season.
- Moving forward, the MRC will prioritize this site for maintenance in the coming year and explore opportunities to partner with the state park and/or local shellfish companies to help maintain the buoys.

## Photos

Contracted divers with Marine, Surveys, and Assessments (MSA) checking underwater hardware in South Port Townsend Bay (near Port Hadlock) on May 28<sup>th</sup>.



Derelict vessel within the no-anchor zone and eelgrass habitat in front of Boat Haven, reported by Bryan DeCaterina on August 4<sup>th</sup>.



A couple of the summer buoys (inside yellow circles) in Port Townsend Bay, just off the waterfront and north of the ferry terminal, with boats anchored outside of the eelgrass protection no-anchor zones in compliance on August 14<sup>th</sup>.



Boats anchored outside of the shellfish protection no-anchor zones (delineated by buoys seen in yellow circles) in South Port Townsend Bay, near Port Hadlock, on August 14<sup>th</sup>.



Photos snapped by Frank Handler, noting all boaters in compliance near the ferry terminal in Port Townsend Bay on August 15<sup>th</sup> (left) and August 23<sup>rd</sup> (right).



Derelict vessel (a mastless sail boat) still located within the eelgrass protection no-anchor zone in Port Townsend Bay as of August 23<sup>rd</sup>.



Other boaters in compliance, as of August 23<sup>rd</sup>.



## Media Coverage

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, the Times Colonist published an article about marine debris removal project in Victoria that references the Port Townsend eelgrass protection buoys (though does not name the Jefferson MRC): <https://www.timescolonist.com/life/victoria-based-conservation-society-collects-20-tonnes-of-debris-from-sea-floor-1.24124241>

Victoria-based conservation society collects 20 tonnes of debris f...

<https://www.timescolonist.com/life/victoria-based-conservation-s...>

TIMES  COLONIST

### Victoria-based conservation society collects 20 t sea floor

Group's efforts at removing marine debris part of five-year effort to restore Salis

[Pedro Arrais](#) / Times Colonist

APRIL 24, 2020 09:38 PM



Starfish with a television found in Porpoise Bay in Sechelt Inlet by the SeaChange Marine Conservation Society.  
Photograph By JAMIE SMITH, COASTAL PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

The more than 20 tonnes of marine debris a Victoria-based non-profit has collected from 1 proverbial kitchen sink.

The sink was pulled out of Porpoise Bay as part of a Sechelt Inlet debris-removal project in pieces of household trash the SeaChange Marine Conservation Society has hauled out of s including a clothes washer, chairs and a sewing machine.

The garbage removal is part of the society's Salish Sea Nearshore Habitat Recovery Project debris and restore shallow marine habitat on the Canadian side of the Salish Sea. The project until 2022.

Their efforts centre around eelgrass (*Zostera marina*), a perennial flowering marine plant that grows in meadows found in the shallow estuaries and bays of the Salish Sea.

The plant provides important habitat for migrating salmon and spawning grounds for Pacific halibut. It is also vital for crabs and other marine life. The plant reproduces by sending new shoots as it grows. Plants flower in late spring, with seeds drifting with the currents.

The region's Indigenous Peoples, including the Salish, Nuuchah-nulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and others, have harvested rhizomes and leaf bases around May, gathering them at low tide from canoes. The plant, called *laxagw*, is used to flavour meat, eaten dipped in ooligan grease or made into cakes and dried for the winter.

A second harvest occurred after spawning herring deposited their eggs on the eelgrass. The eggs were either attached to the plant or removed and eaten separately.

Aside from dumping of trash in the ocean, eelgrass habitat is under threat from everything from boat wakes to shading from docks, scouring by anchor chains, marine pollution, nutrient runoff from farmland, sewage runoff and flushing of boat sewage — not to mention global warming and rising sea levels.

"Removing kitchen sinks and generators from the seabed can be rewarding in the moment, but it's also despondent as humans have collectively been treating the ocean as a toxic waste dump for decades," said executive director for SeaChange.

Once the garbage has been removed, SeaChange begins some underwater gardening — transplanting from healthy colonies into areas where debris has been removed, or filling in gaps in existing meadows.

Two eelgrass-habitat restorations have already taken place on the Gulf Islands: Clam Bay on Pender Island.

The plan was for divers to clear the waters off Lasqueti Island, Indian Arm in Burrard Inlet. But those cleanup efforts have been put on hold during the COVID-19 outbreak, said project manager.

When they're established, the restored meadows improve water quality and stabilize shorelines by trapping suspended in the water — particles of sediment settle to the bottom when they reach the seabed.

Part of the initiative involves educating and engaging the community so it does less harm to the environment, she said.

"It's about changing behaviour," she said. "By and large, people want to make good decisions, but they just need guidance on best practices."

Catanzaro said a good start would be for boaters to use environmentally friendly mooring chain scouring of sensitive sea beds — and not to anchor near eelgrass habitats.

A similar awareness program initiated in Port Townsend, Washington, has seen 98 per cent goal is not only to protect and restore these habitats, but to restore people's connection to of community-based stewardship."

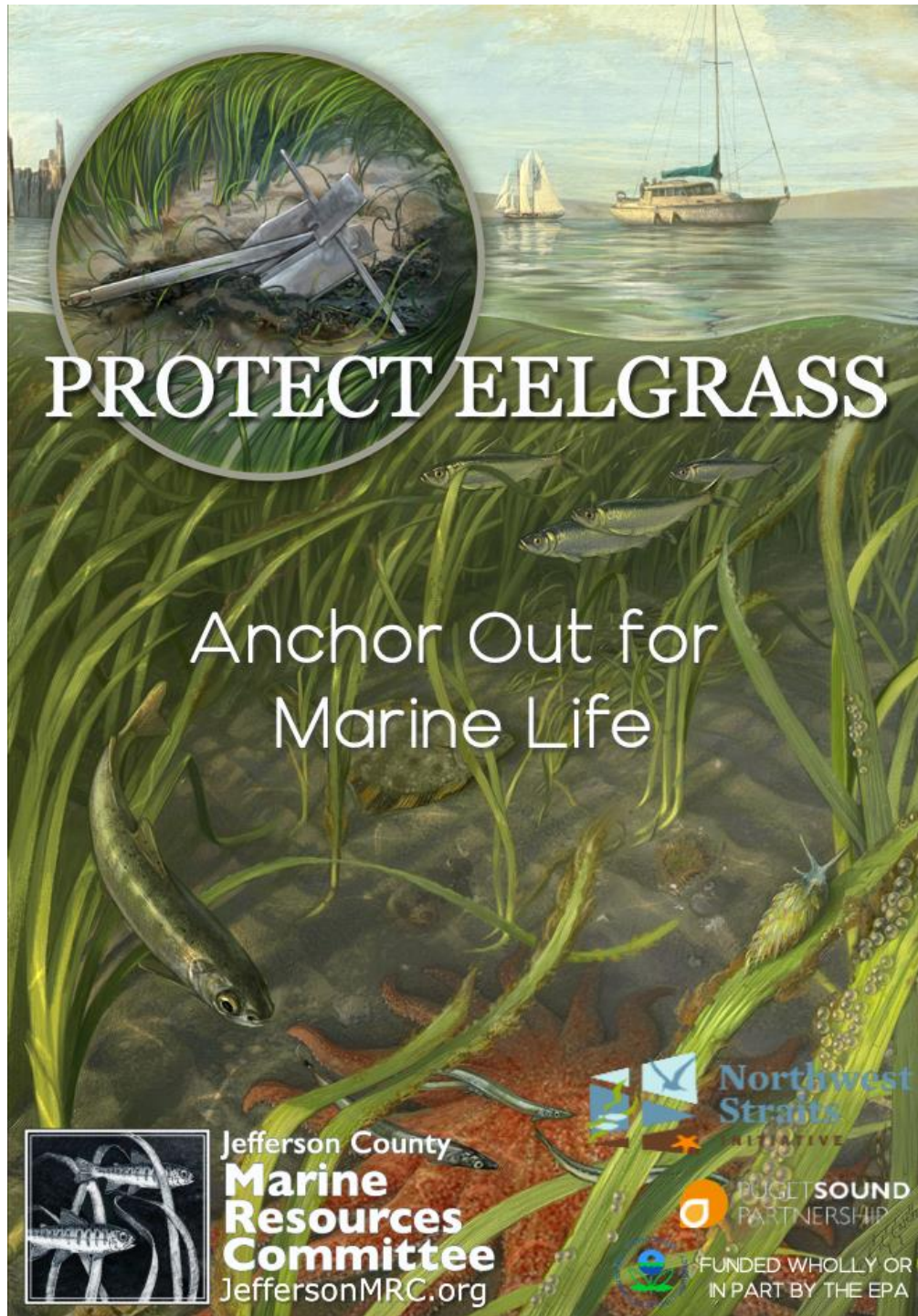
The project is funded by Fisheries and Ocean Canada as part of its Coastal Restoration Fund contributed additional funding, with the District of Sechelt offering donated dock space, and The Sunshine Coast Regional District has waived landfill fees for collected debris that cannot

Local communities also come together to help lend a hand on days when restoration work or to volunteer, go to [seachangesociety.com](http://seachangesociety.com).

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The MRC placed a boater targeted ad about “anchoring out for marine life” and protecting eelgrass habitat in the [June](#) issue of NW Yachting (page 31 of magazine). This magazine reaches 84,000 readers each month along the West Coast, from Alaska to San Diego, with readership saturated between Vancouver, B.C and Portland, OR areas.





# PROTECT EELGRASS

## Anchor Out for Marine Life

 **Jefferson County  
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