



NORTHWEST STRAITS  
marine conservation initiative

## Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative

### SECOND ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

April 1, 2000 through March 31, 2001

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**Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative  
Second Annual Progress Report  
April 1, 2000 through March 31, 2001**

The purpose of this annual report is to review and evaluate progress in implementing the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative. The 1998 Murray-Metcalf Report to the Convenors requires preparation of annual progress reports by the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) and a panel of scientists/resource managers to evaluate it. Readers of this Annual Progress Report should have a basic understanding of the Initiative or should use the Murray-Metcalf Report and the First Annual Progress Report as references.

**I. Introduction and Background**

The Northwest Straits include the U.S. marine waters of the Straits of Juan de Fuca, the San Juan Islands and northern Puget Sound reaching from Everett to the Canadian border in Washington State (Reference A.) Seven counties, fifteen tribes, and many cities and other local governments have jurisdiction in the region.

In 1997, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D) and U.S. Congressman Jack Metcalf (R) convened a panel of citizens representing economic interests, the scientific community, conservation interests, universities, and local and tribal governments to assess the ecological health of the Northwest Straits marine ecosystem and to recommend steps to improve the region's sustainability. In August of 1998, the Murray-Metcalf Northwest Straits Citizens Advisory Commission issued, by consensus, the "Report to the Convenors" (Reference B).

The Commission concluded that the Northwest Straits marine ecosystem and some of its marine resources are in serious decline and that these problems cross geographical and jurisdictional boundaries. It also recommended a model for protecting and restoring vital marine resources based in part on a program established in 1996 in San Juan County. A network of local, county-based Marine Resources Committees (MRCs) would be established in each of the seven Northwest Straits counties to protect and restore marine resources. The MRCs would use existing state and local authorities, basing their actions on sound scientific information and the overall needs of the ecosystem. MRCs would coordinate their activities through the Northwest Straits Commission. The Commission would provide technical assistance, integrate scientific information, develop ecosystem-level coordination and guide funding. In addition the Commission would measure the performance of the Initiative using the eight Benchmarks for Performance found in the Murray-Metcalf Report.

In late 1998, with strong bipartisan leadership from Congressman Metcalf and Senator Murray, Congress authorized the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative (HR 3461) that, by reference, incorporated the entire "Report to Convenors." Congress also passed a \$350,000 appropriation to support the Initiative with funds made available through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and administered by Terry Stevens, the Director of the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. The effective date for beginning the Initiative was March 1999, when federal funds were received and made available for spending. The Initiative was given a five year timeline to accomplish its work. Congress appropriated \$652,000 for the Initiative's second year that was made available in May, 2000.

The Murray/Metcalf Commission emphasized the need for the Initiative to demonstrate progress in achieving the eight Benchmarks for Performance identified in the Report to Convenors. The Commission and the MRCs agree that this is the best way to evaluate results. Throughout this report, when activities demonstrate progress in achieving one or more of the eight Benchmarks for Performance, the following key words will identify the appropriate Benchmark:

<b>Involvement</b>	Broad county and citizen participation in MRCs
<b>MPA</b>	Achieve a scientifically based regional system of marine protected areas (MPAs)
<b>Habitat</b>	A net gain in highly ecologically productive nearshore, intertidal and estuarine habitat and no significant loss of existing high-value habitat
<b>Shellfish</b>	Net reduction in shellfish harvest areas closed due to pollution
<b>Bottomfish</b>	Measurable increases in factors supporting the recovery of bottomfish
<b>Key Species</b>	Increases in other key marine indicator species
<b>Science</b>	Coordination of scientific data
<b>Education</b>	Effective public outreach and education

For additional background information about the Initiative or the Murray/Metcalf Commission, the First Annual Progress Report and other information can be found at <[www.nwstraits.org](http://www.nwstraits.org)>

## **II. MRC Progress and Performance Benchmark Activities**

While all seven MRCs focus on conservation priorities and activities in their respective counties, they each have differences in organization and process. Most MRCs meet monthly but some meet twice a month; they range in membership from eleven to eighteen with the median thirteen members; in addition to Performance Benchmark goals, MRCs address other marine issues in their area. Since the Initiative is to be primarily evaluated on its ability to achieve the Performance Benchmarks, this report does not attempt to describe the numerous other activities and issues that the MRCs address.

### **Clallam County**

The Clallam MRC received a \$25,000 grant from the NWSC titled “Marine Resources of the Straits of Juan de Fuca: How we interact.” This project included a series of public education workshops that provided information on the marine environment, marine species and how they are currently being managed. They also provided a forum for local citizens to share their knowledge and views. Information gathered was used to help the county prioritize marine resources and geographic areas for further focus and study. Of particular concern are developing best management practices and other tools for bringing about measurable increases in bottomfish and other key indicator species including salmon and forage fish. All of the workshops were well attended and successful. The workshop themes were Coastal Erosion Processes, Shellfish and Water Quality, Oceanography of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Baitfish, Nearshore Marine Habitat, and Rockfish (Reference C). (MPA/HABITAT/ SHELLFISH/BOTTOMFISH/KEY SPECIES/EDUCATION)

With a small grant from the NWSC and leadership from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff, the MRC hired two interns to survey beaches for Surf Smelt spawning habitat under the Moulton, Penttila protocols developed by WDFW and the San Juan MRC. A total of 13 beaches were surveyed, totaling 19.75 miles, of which 14.75 miles were found to be suitable for spawning habitat (Reference D). (MPA/HABITAT/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE)

This small but successful mapping project led to a \$30,000 NWSC Action Grant award for “Nearshore Habitat Mapping of Central and Western Strait of Juan de Fuca.” In 2001, Clallam MRC will partner with WDFW to continue its nearshore mapping efforts along the central and western Strait using interns and volunteers. In conjunction with marine scientists, interns will catalog spawning sites for three species of forage fish (surf smelt, sand lance, and herring) and document juvenile salmon use of kelp beds. Forage fish and the habitats that they use are designated as a critical resource by the state of Washington. (MPA/HABITAT/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE)

The MRC sponsored a public workshop to learn more about shellfish issues and investigate restoration projects in light of the recent shellfish harvest downgrade in Dungeness Bay. The Washington State Department of Health (WDOH) and other experts explored and explained alternatives. The MRC used this information to make recommendations to the county commissioners regarding the required formation of a shellfish protection district. In turn, the county commissioners appointed a MRC member to the county’s Clean Water Advisory Committee. (SHELLFISH)

The MRC advises the county commissioners on marine waters and nearshore habitat issues. They made written recommendations to the commissioners on funding shellfish beach restorations and address ways to reduce environmental impacts regarding the planned removal of dams on the Elwha River. (HABITAT/SHELLFISH)

The MRC continued to receive technical and other training to improve their knowledge and abilities. Members attended several workshops and conferences and regularly scheduled presentations on marine issues by experts at their MRC meetings. (SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

### **Island County**

The Island County MRC received a \$25,000 Action Grant from the NWSC for “The Island County Eelgrass Survey.” This was a comprehensive eelgrass mapping and identification project. Tasks included identification of suitable habitat for eelgrass transplants and identification of potential areas suitable for designation as MPAs. Mapping used underwater videography and was accomplished by a contract with an independent consultant. The MRC also designed, produced and mailed a twelve-page eelgrass survey to all shoreline property owners in the county. The results from the 580 surveys returned were compiled and added to the inventory. Community involvement objectives included eelgrass identification, restoration, mitigation, and protection. The final report also included a CD-ROM of the underwater videography (Reference E). (MPA/HABITAT/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The MRC and the Washington State University Beach Watchers are leading efforts to identify and map shoreline-hardening developments. Ninety-five percent of all bulkheads have been mapped on Whidbey Island (Reference F). The remainder of the County’s shoreline armoring will be mapped in 2001. (HABITAT/SCIENCE)

The MRC emphasizes the importance of public education and outreach. It sponsored a booth at the Penn Cove Water Festival and made several presentations on nearshore and marine issues at public events. It co-sponsored an event called Sound Waters, a one-day workshop on nearshore issues attended by hundreds of citizens. The MRC conducted an event on a Coupeville beach to provide identification and explain the functions of eelgrass and other intertidal and nearshore resources. Senator Patty Murray, all three county commissioners, the mayor of Coupeville and others, attended this event. (EDUCATION)

The county commissioners rely on advice from the MRC regarding all marine resources issues and appointed a MRC member to the Citizens' Advisory Group on Shorelines. (EDUCATION)

The MRC received a \$25,720 NWSC Action Grant, a \$17,000 grant from the Marine Ecosystem Health Program (MEHP) and \$160,300 from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) for "Island County Forage Fish Habitat Assessment." In 2001, the Island County MRC will identify and locate forage fish stocks, map nearshore eelgrass beds and spawn deposition areas. In partnership with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, they will hire qualified marine scientists and train volunteers who will sample and resample the county's smelt and sand lance spawning beaches, gathering eggs and submitting them for laboratory analysis. Other teams will gather eelgrass and other sea grass samples containing egg deposits. Analysis and mapping will result in reliable identification of areas requiring legal protections and will establish a baseline for future monitoring, MPA designation, and other measures to guide the county's shoreline users. (MPA/HABITAT/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE/ EDUCATION)

The MRC co-sponsored a Salmon Recovery Conference in Juneau, Alaska and the MRC chair attended. (KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The MRC continued to receive technical and other training to improve their knowledge and abilities. The meetings were well attended by the public. MRC member participation was high throughout the year. Members attended several workshops and conferences and regularly scheduled presentations on marine issues by experts at their MRC meetings. (SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

### **Jefferson County**

With part of a \$25,000 NWSC Action Grant, the MRC conducted the successful "Community Process for Establishing MPAs in Jefferson County." They developed outreach materials and sponsored a series of public meetings/workshops to encourage citizen participation in guiding the formation of one or more MPAs. Topics of the workshops were Shellfish and Marine Invertebrates, Seabirds and Marine Mammals, Marine Habitats, and Marine Fish (Reference G, H). (MPA/HABITAT/BOTTOMFISH/SCIENCE/EDUCATION/SHELLFISH)

The MRC was awarded \$17,000 NWSC Action Grant for a 2001 project titled "Jefferson County Forage Fish Habitat Assessment." In collaboration with the North Olympic Salmon Coalition (using a \$93,000 grant from the SRFB), the MRC will conduct a two-year survey of potential forage fish spawning beaches along the entire eastern portion of Jefferson County. This will involve contacting all landowners, coordinating a community outreach effort, and recruiting citizen volunteers. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will provide training and supervision. (HABITAT/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

Using a \$13,000 NWSC Action Grant, in 2001 the MRC will continue to build on the 2000 MPA project by exploring MPA models that can be used in Jefferson County and identify social factors that would support or oppose the creation of MPAs. They have established an MPA committee that will work closely with a contractor in accomplishing tasks identified in the Action Grant. The committee will review MPA literature and synthesize bibliographies; hold focus groups with strategic groups in the community (commercial and recreational fishers, tribes, landowners, decision-makers, etc.) with professional facilitation and documentation; identify MPA criteria and protocols, and create guidelines. (MPA/BOTTOMFISH/EDUCATION)

The MRC's Library Committee completed its collection of relevant marine resources documents, prepared a summary and an electronically searchable bibliography, allowing for the use of the database on the worldwide web (Reference I). (SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

Public outreach and education is a priority for the MRC. The MRC's Public Outreach Committee developed multiple public outreach materials including a logo, brochure, banner, display and handouts to use in conjunction with meetings and events. The MRC sponsored an educational boat tour of the nearshore waters, conducted a community open house with expert speakers, sponsored a booth at the County Fair that included surveying the community and answering questions about MRC activities and sponsored an Emergency Management Workshop that focused on oil spill preparedness. They also made multiple presentations to community groups in the county and developed and published a comprehensive report about local marine issues and information that was included in all issues of the local newspaper as an insert (Reference J). (EDUCATION)

The MRC continued to receive technical and other training to improve their knowledge and abilities. Members attended several workshops and conferences and regularly scheduled presentations on marine issues by experts at their MRC meetings. (SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

### **San Juan County**

The MRC was awarded \$24,950 Early Action Grant for the "Forage Fish Assessment Program." This project developed a protocol of standardized procedures for beach sampling and lab work that will be used to map Pacific Sandlance and Surf Smelt nearshore spawning habitat. The information will be in a form useable to county personnel involved in land use decisions. The project also identified potential spawning habitat in the San Juan Islands that will be inventoried in future projects. Letters were sent to nearly 2000 waterfront landowners with beaches that appear to have suitable spawning habitat, requesting permission to inventory. Seventy percent of respondents gave permission to have their beaches sampled and 15% asked that their names be removed. The reports by Larry Moulton and Dan Penttila "Forage Fish Spawning Distribution in San Juan County" and Protocols for Sampling Intertidal and Nearshore Regions" will be used by all the Northwest Straits counties when inventorying beaches for forage fish (Reference K, L). (HABITAT/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The MRC was awarded a \$24,975 Action Grant to "Restore the Bottom Fish Population in San Juan County." It also received a \$15,000 grant from a private foundation. The project continues the several years old Bottomfish Recovery Program that was established to help recover a seriously declining population of fish. The program established a system of voluntary bottomfish recovery zones to discourage fishing. The project monitored bottomfish populations by counting fish in the recovery zones and monitoring compliance with non-fishing by volunteer observers. It included a large public outreach and education component and also surveyed the public for attitudes regarding the objectives and methods. For example, salmon fishing derby contestants (240 boats) were alerted that no bottomfish were allowed in the event, there were multiple presentations at the local schools about the program and video cameras were deployed to survey bottomfish habitat and make it available to the public. An ad was purchased and placed on the back cover of the WDFW Fishing Regulations booklet (750,000 copies) requesting that fishers respect the no fishing requests in the Bottomfish Recovery Zones (Reference M). (MPA/BOTTOMFISH/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The MRC, in partnership with the Friends of the San Juans, received an MEHP Grant for \$47,000 and SRFB grant for \$165,000 to fund a forage fish spawning habitat assessment. In 2001, the project partners will identify and locate salmon forage fish stocks, map nearshore eelgrass beds and spawn deposition areas. In coordination with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, they will hire qualified marine scientists and train volunteers who will sample and resample the county's smelt and sand lance spawning beaches, gathering eggs and submitting them for laboratory analysis. Other teams will gather eelgrass and other sea grass samples containing egg deposits. Analysis and mapping will result in reliable identification of areas requiring legal protections and will establish a baseline for future monitoring, MPA designation, and other measures to guide the county's shoreline users. (MPA/HABITAT/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE/ EDUCATION)

The MRC was awarded a \$30,000 Action Grant for 2001 for the "San Juan County Bottomfish Recovery Program Biological Assessment Project." The project will include 12 months of data collection on bottomfish abundance, demographics and seasonal habitat use for the purpose of establishing an ecological baseline at three of the eight Bottomfish Recovery Zones. It will also expand a recent pilot study on spatial localization of acoustically tagged bottomfish, and will include a public outreach component. (MPA/BOTTOMFISH/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The University of Washington Friday Harbor Labs is an active partner with the MRC. MRC priority issues are incorporated into ongoing classes and students help with MRC priorities. (SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The San Juan County Commissioners asked the MRC to take the lead in establishing a transborder MPA in cooperation with the Islands Trust, which is British Columbia's governmental body responsible for land-use planning in the Gulf Islands. The MRC prepared a county position statement for the transborder MPA network and presented their findings at a workshop on Saturna Island, BC. The purpose of the workshop was to prepare a strategy and design for the MPA network. The workshop concluded with the San Juan County Commissioners and the Islands Trust Council signing an agreement to create one or more transborder MPAs (Reference N). (MPA)

The MRC investigated the possible impact of whale watching on the health of the resident Orca population. This led to facilitated efforts that resulted in significant public participation regarding voluntary whale watch guidelines. The MRC also facilitated discussions about proposed boat and shoreline surveillance systems. (KEY SPECIES/EDUCATION)

A 300-gallon aquarium, on loan from the Padilla Bay NERR, was installed in Friday Harbor to display local marine resources to help educate the general public. (EDUCATION)

Many presentations to local community groups and schools (Lions Club, Soroptomists, Power Squadron, etc.) were given to educate the public about the status of marine resources and the activities of the MRC. (EDUCATION)

The MRC continued to receive technical and other training to improve their knowledge and abilities. Members attended several workshops and conferences and regularly schedule presentations on marine issues by experts at their MRC meetings. (SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

## **Skagit County**

The Skagit MRC was awarded a \$25,000 Action Grant for a "Preliminary Assessment of Rocky

Reef Bottom Fish Resources and Habitats in Skagit County.” This project included a scientific study to assess and identify potential MPAs for rocky reef fishes and public outreach regarding habitat protection. A literature search identified scientific studies and monitoring data on rocky reef habitats and fish resources in Skagit County. The MRC sponsored a boat cruise through potential MPA areas as a way to “kick-off” the project by initiating public and media exposure. They followed this with substantial public outreach to interest groups and partners, and the public. The MRC developed a slide-show presentation and presented it to the Puget Sound Anglers, Audubon, Anacortes Rotary, Swinomish Tribe and five public meetings throughout the County (Reference O). (MPA/HABITAT/BOTTOMFISH/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The MRC received a \$30,000 Action Grant for a 2001 project titled “Citizen Inventory of Skagit County’s Critical Shoreline Habitat.” The MRC will coordinate a citizen-based survey of shoreline habitat in Skagit County. Using established protocols and methodology, volunteers will collect shoreline data, such as shoreline structures, bluff ecology, vegetation, invasive species and wildlife sightings. From these data, maps will be developed to show shoreline armoring, invasive species, eelgrass and potential forage fish spawning areas. The project will also incorporate existing data from other sources, such as the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. (NEARSHORE/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The MRC investigated shellfish bed closures due to on-site sewage system failures in the Similk Bay area. They sponsored a meeting where residents from the Bayview/Edison community were invited to meet with Similk Bay residents to share their experiences and success with community-based solutions. (SHELLFISH/EDUCATION)

The MRC continued to receive technical and other training to improve their knowledge and abilities. Members attended several workshops and conferences and regularly scheduled presentations on marine issues by experts at their MRC meetings. (SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

## **Snohomish County**

The Snohomish MRC applied for and received a \$15,000 NOAA CZM grant for a public outreach project on priority marine resources issues in the county. They developed a PowerPoint presentation and conducted a series of five public workshops that provided information on marine species and how they are currently being managed and also provided a forum for local citizens to share their knowledge and perspectives. The workshops also helped the MRC set priorities for marine resources and geographic areas for further focus and study. The MRC collected existing data on marine resources and compiled an extensive library of information (Reference P). (HABITAT/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The MRC was awarded a \$30,000 Action Grant for 2001 for a "Snohomish County Shoreline Inventory and Outreach." The MRC will coordinate a shoreline inventory and outreach project that will involve gathering new shoreline data and integrating it with existing data, conducting community outreach events and supporting identification of potential MPA sites. Contractors using mobile computers and Global Positioning Equipment will gather field data. Target information will include substrate, vegetation, shoreline alterations, outfalls, and barriers to wildlife migration. Community outreach events will be held at key locations along the shoreline to expose the public to marine resource issues in Snohomish County. (HABITAT/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The MRC designed and developed a website, produced an insert for the NWSC brochure, pro-



duced three marine resources fact sheets and began to develop partnership relationships with others that are involved in local marine issues (City of Edmonds Beach Ranger Program, City of Everett Jetty Island Program, Snohomish County Parks Department, Tulalip Tribes, Edmonds Underwater Park and the NMFS research lab at Mukilteo) (Reference Q). (SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The MRC continued to receive technical and other training to improve their knowledge and abilities. Members attended several workshops and conferences and regularly schedule presentations on marine issues by experts at their MRC meetings. Four marine shoreline over flights were conducted to observe and discuss issues including eelgrass beds, marine life, estuary systems, beach replenishment, shoreline erosion and shoreline hardening. (SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

### **Whatcom County**

The Whatcom MRC received a \$25,000 Action Grant for a "Shoreline Inventory of Whatcom County." The project included a data compilation report and shoreline survey to help the county set priorities for and make recommendations for future habitat projects. Marine mammals, finfish, shellfish, aquatic vegetation, and nearshore environments were all studied.

Anchor Environmental, Inc. compiled a Whatcom County Marine Resources Inventory. They built data layers for vegetation types, substrate, bathymetry, bottom fish, finfish and shellfish. Rapid Shoreline Inventory (RSI) training was led by the non-government organization ReSources, with People for Puget Sound as a sub-contractor. After the training sessions, many volunteers (about 25 for each survey) participated in the nearshore inventory and most of the selected beaches were covered. The last 10 miles of selected beaches are privately owned and securing permission to inventory the beach was problematic. Therefore, it was inventoried by boat. Observations included discovery of a sewage leak, derelict bulkheads, and a vast amount of non-native species (Reference R, S). (HABITAT/BOTTOMFISH/SHELLFISH/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

The MRC was awarded a \$30,000 Action Grant for 2001 titled "Identification and Action Project for Habitat Protection and Restoration in Whatcom County." They will seek to encourage community involvement in marine issues and implement high priority marine protection and restoration projects. The project will include disseminating the Marine Resources of Whatcom County report via web site, discs and hard copies; coordinating a Marine Summit with scientists and local groups to identify opportunities for partnership and set priorities for key areas for habitat protection and restoration; and selecting high priority projects to fund and implement. (HABITAT/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

With the help of Coastal Geological Services, the MRC investigated and recommended improvements to the design of a seawall at the Marine Park by the Port of Bellingham. The Port changed the original design in order to incorporate the recommendations and preserve habitat. (HABITAT)

Dales Griggs from the Nooksack Tribe compiled a bibliography of available reports and data sets from a wide range of studies and reports for the MRC. Included were the Intalco Sediment Investigation Draft Report, Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy EIS Statement, Regional Risk Assessment of Cherry Point Harvest Stock, and the Puget Sound Ambient Monitoring Project (PSAMP). (SCIENCE)

The MRC sponsored a successful "open house" to showcase the work of the MRC, discuss the RSI and the Anchor report, and to introduce marine resources issues to the public through a poster

session. (EDUCATION)

The MRC continued to receive technical and other training to improve their knowledge and abilities. Members attended several workshops and conferences and the MRC established a speaker's bureau to ensure that there are regularly scheduled presentations on marine issues by experts. (SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

### **III. Northwest Straits Commission Coordination and Activities**

The Commission is charged with providing and coordinating technical assistance, training and funding for the MRCs, providing a science-based ecosystem focus and taking actions to help achieve the Performance Benchmarks.

In order to accomplish these responsibilities, the Commission encourages collaboration with numerous government and non-government organizations, most notably, the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team (PSAT), Washington Sea Grant Program, University of Washington and People for Puget Sound. The Padilla Bay NERR houses NWSC staff, has overall financial oversight of the Initiative and provides numerous cost effective administrative tasks for the Commission. PSAT has statutory responsibilities for coordinating state agency involvement in Puget Sound issues, helping to coordinate technical assistance from state agencies. In addition, PSAT has staff, known as Local Liaisons, that are assigned to work with and help each of the seven MRCs. Washington Sea Grant Program has assisted with producing outreach materials, hosting workshops and providing scientific review. People for Puget Sound has established a North Sound office that has the same geographic boundaries as the Initiative. They regularly attend MRC meetings and provide important communication services. (PARTICIPATION/SCIENCE)

Organizing, evaluating, providing and monitoring Action Grants to MRCs is a major function of the Commission. During this second year, six Action Grants for \$25,000 each were provided to MRCs. The scope and purposes of these projects are described in the MRC sections of this report. Additionally, seven \$30,000 Action Grants were awarded to MRCs for projects scheduled for 2001. Although Action Grants are awarded only to MRCs, the funds are competitive, requiring a detailed scope of work, schedule and budget and projects must address Performance Benchmarks. The Commission feels strongly that every project must be sound with a high expectation of full success. Applications are sent to at least three independent scientists and resource managers for review and evaluation. The project must then be revised to address any concerns raised by the reviewers before money grants are awarded.

\$10,000 Administrative grants are also provided annually to each MRC to partially defray staff and miscellaneous MRC meeting costs (materials, agendas, minutes, rentals.) Each MRC must agree to write an annual report of activities, annual work plans and to participate in regular training events. (PARTICIPATION)

The Commission sponsored and coordinated all activities for the 2nd annual MRC training conference titled "Marine Resources Protection: Tools and Strategies for Success." This 1 1/2-day conference, held in Island County, was designed to help train MRC members, agency representatives and elected officials. Approximately 100 people attended. Agenda topics included How to Protect Local Marine Resources, Designing a MPA, Perspectives on Tribal Rights and How to Effectively Market Your Message. There were also considerable opportunities for MRC members

to network, problem-solve and share experiences (Reference T). (EDUCATION)

Considerable effort has gone into designing and producing education and outreach materials. An Initiative logo was designed, a web site was developed and a slide show about the Initiative was developed for use by the MRCs in educating the general public and interest groups. A full color brochure and MRC fact sheets were designed for distribution at meetings and events (Reference U, V). (EDUCATION)

Commission staff actively sought opportunities to educate public officials, marine resources professionals and organizations and the general public about the Initiative. Presentations and briefings were provided to members of Congress, county commissioners/councils, the Marine Ecosystem Health Program (MEHP), the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the Puget Sound/Georgia Basin International Task Force (ITF), watershed councils, the International Symposium on Society and Resource Management, NW GIS Users Group, the Northwest Aquatic and Marine Educator's Conference, the Washington State Shoreline and Coastal Planners Association meeting, the Sound Waters Conference and numerous other public events and meetings. Additionally, the Commission's director is a member of the ITF and the Board of MEHP. (EDUCATION)

At its annual strategic planning retreat, the Commission set priorities to improve tribal relations by hiring a Tribal Liaison. This followed considerable discussion and agreement that it would be nearly impossible to achieve some of the Benchmarks without tribal cooperation. MRCs have been reaching out to local tribes with mixed results and a concentrated one-year effort with a \$40,000 budget should make better progress. It was agreed to ask the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission to help organize and lead this effort.

Commission staff participated in a two-day workshop, sponsored by the San Juan County commissioners and the Islands Trust Board (Gulf Islands, BC), to develop a strategy and design for a transborder MPA. (MPA/EDUCATION)

From time to time, all of the MRCs have expressed frustration in obtaining data, maps, inventories and other technical information needed by them to better understand issues and opportunities for action. In some cases, they knew where the data were located, but could not gain access to it, and in other cases, they knew information had been researched and compiled, but could not find where it was located. In most cases, they simply were unaware of what data were "out there." As part of its responsibility to coordinate technical assistance for the MRCs, the Commission co-sponsored with the Puget Sound Ambient Monitoring Program (PSAMP) a workshop titled "Show Me the Data!!" This workshop brought together members of MRCs with scientists and resource managers from tribal, state and federal agencies and private institutions to advise the MRCs about existing maps, inventories, reports and other technical data. The result was considerable cooperation and interaction. Reports, CD ROMs, web sites and other important information, as well as phone numbers and email addresses were exchanged. A comprehensive notebook of compiled data and ways to access them was produced by PSAT following the workshop and provided to each MRC. (INVOLVEMENT/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

Commission members and staff organized and participated in meetings and workshops to help the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) better address marine waters issues in regards to salmon recovery. This resulted in the SRFB amending their project subjects to allow nearshore assessments and restoration projects. Several MRCs and their partners applied for and were awarded \$448,000 from the SRFB for forage fish and eelgrass inventories (Island, \$188,000;

Jefferson, \$90,000; San Juan, \$170,000) and other nearshore assessments. (HABITAT/KEY SPECIES/SCIENCE/EDUCATION)

Following presentations by Commission staff to the Marine Ecosystem Health Program (MEHP) about the importance of forage fish for salmon and other marine resources recovery, two MRCs applied for and received grants totaling \$65,000 (Island, \$17,000; San Juan, \$48,000) for forage fish inventories.

Both the Commission's Chair and Technical Committee Chair represented the Commission on the organizing committee for a Puget Sound Nearshore Habitat Assessment project co-sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This project will potentially spend millions of dollars to research and identify habitat throughout Puget Sound. Under the federal legislation, the Northwest Straits Commission must be consulted with regarding this project. (HABITAT/SCIENCE)

Recognizing that existing funding sources, primarily federal, will not be adequate to sustain the ambitious agenda for the Initiative, the Fundraising Committee began developing a strategy to secure private foundation funding. The first step was to begin organization of the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Foundation by submitting an application to Washington State as a non-profit corporation. Query letters were also written to several private foundations introducing the Initiative.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Year Two of the NW Straits Initiative saw real growth and progress in beginning to meet the ambitious Benchmarks for Performance. While the first year was largely devoted to start up and organizing at both the local and regional level, Year Two was characterized by aggressive pursuit of activities in all seven counties to improve protection for a variety of valuable marine resources.

State and federal agencies and environmental organizations in the NW Straits are increasingly aware of the actions and abilities of the MRCs and the Commission. This provides better opportunities to form partnerships for improvements and to leverage resources. Forming a 501(c)3 foundation opens up opportunities for funding activities from private corporations and foundations that do not fund government projects.

As one Commission member frequently reminds us, achieving significant progress for all eight Benchmarks for Performance in five years will take real money—way beyond our current level. We can't expect large increases to our base appropriation from Congress, so we have to aggressively seek private sources of money. The Commission has made it the highest priority in the next year to seek and secure additional funding for local MRC and regional projects. The Commission also provides support to MRCs seeking additional resources for direct local use. Additionally, the Commission is active in supporting federal, state and local legislation and budget requests to help other organizations and agencies fulfill common objectives.

Scientists and resource managers agree that it took many, many years of exploitation and neglect for the marine resources and habitat to sink to the current level of degradation and significant recovery won't be demonstrated in the short five years that the Initiative is authorized for. However, under this citizen-based model, measurable progress is and will continue to be achieved. Further, systems and structures designed by the MRCs and the Commission are being set in place to carry on progress in the long-term.

## References

To view references go to [www.nwstraits.org](http://www.nwstraits.org)

Click on “Reports & Publications”

Under “Commission Reports”, click on “Annual Report 2001 References” OR you can click on a link below.

A. Northwest Straits Area Map

B. Murray – Metcalf Northwest Straits Citizens Advisory Commission Report to the Convenors

C. Clallam County Action Grant Report

D. Clallam County Surf Smelt Spawn Report

E. Island County Eelgrass Report

F. Island County Bulkhead Map

G. Jefferson County Action Grant Report

H. Jefferson County Marine Protected Area Brochure

I. Jefferson County Bibliography

J. Jefferson County Newspaper Insert

K. San Juan County “Forage Fish Spawning Distribution”

L. San Juan County Protocols for Sampling

M. San Juan County Action Grant Report (Bottomfish) and Brochure

N. San Juan County Agreement with Islands Trust

O. Skagit County Action Grant Report and Brochure

P. Snohomish County Coastal Zone Management Report

Q. Snohomish County Brochure Insert, Dungeness Crab Fact Sheet, Forage Fish Fact Sheet, Eelgrass Fact Sheet)

R. Whatcom County Action Grant Report

S. Whatcom County Anchor Environmental Report

T. Marine Resource Committee Training Conference Agenda

U. Northwest Straits Brochure

V. Marine Resource Committee Fact Sheets