



NORTHWEST STRAITS
marine conservation initiative

Northwest Straits Initiative



Annual Report | 2009

Table of contents

2009 Northwest Straits Commission Members	ii
Marine Resources Committee Representatives	ii
Governor's Appointees.	ii
Secretary of the Interior Appointee.	ii
Commission Staff/Support	ii
Northwest Straits Foundation	ii
About the Northwest Straits	1
People.	1
Geography	1
Financial Information	2
2009 Accomplishments	2
Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative 2009 Highlights ...	3
Letter from the Director	4
Letter from the Chair.	5
Introduction: The Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative. ..	7
Northwest Straits Initiative Goal	8
Performance Benchmarks	8
Making a Regional Impact	9
The Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Program	10
Derelict Fishing Gear Research.	11
Project Funding	11
Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area	11
Tribal Fund: Coast Salish Canoe Journey, and Samish Indian Nation Shoreline Restoration	12
Ecosystem Fund: Forage Fish Modeling, and <i>Spartina</i> Surveys.	13
Education and Outreach	14
Communications	14
Marine Resources Committees	15
Clallam	16
Island	18
Jefferson	20
San Juan	22
Skagit	24
Snohomish	26
Whatcom	28
Financial Summary	30



NORTHWEST STRAITS marine conservation initiative

Northwest Straits
Marine Conservation Initiative
10441 Bayview-Edison Road
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
360-428-1084
www.nwstraits.org

2009 Northwest Straits Commission Members

Marine Resources Committee Representatives

Jim McEntire - Clallam County
Rex Porter - Island County
Tony Petrillo - Jefferson County
Jonathan White (chair) - San Juan County
Charlie O'Hara - Skagit County
Tom Hoban - Snohomish County
Bob Cecile - Whatcom County

Governor's Appointees

David Dicks/Duane Fagergren - Puget Sound Partnership
Kathy Fletcher - People For Puget Sound
Joe Gaydos - SeaDoc Society
Terrie Klinger - University of Washington School of Marine Affairs
Scott McCreery - BP

Secretary of the Interior Appointee

Terry Williams (vice chair) - Tulalip Tribes

Commission Staff/Support

Ginny Broadhurst, Director
Sasha Horst, Project Specialist
Caroline Gibson, Marine Program Manager
Connie Price, Office Coordinator

Terry Stevens, Administrator, Director of Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Northwest Straits Foundation

Joan Drinkwin, Program Director

This report was prepared in January 2010 by Caroline Gibson, Ginny Broadhurst, Sasha Horst, and Joan Drinkwin; with input and editing assistance from Connie Price and each of the seven Marine Resources Committees.

Northwest Straits Initiative, 2010. Annual Report 2009.
Available at <http://tinyurl.com/2009NWSC-AnnualReport>

Cover photo: Mission Beach, Tulalip Indian Reservation; by Dick Ryan

About the Northwest Straits

The Northwest Straits are the marine waters, nearshore areas and shorelines of the San Juan Islands, the U.S. side of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and northern Puget Sound from the southern border of Snohomish County to the Canadian border. This area comprises 58% of Puget Sound's total shoreline. Seven counties, 15 tribes and dozens of other local governments have jurisdiction in the region.

Pacific salmon, Puget Sound southern resident orca whales, seabirds, rockfish and a wealth of other fishes, birds and marine mammals live, breed, or feed in the Northwest Straits. These animals depend on the region's open waters, rocky reefs, productive kelp forests, pocket estuaries and eelgrass beds. The beauty and ecological productivity of the region also contribute to a high quality of human life.

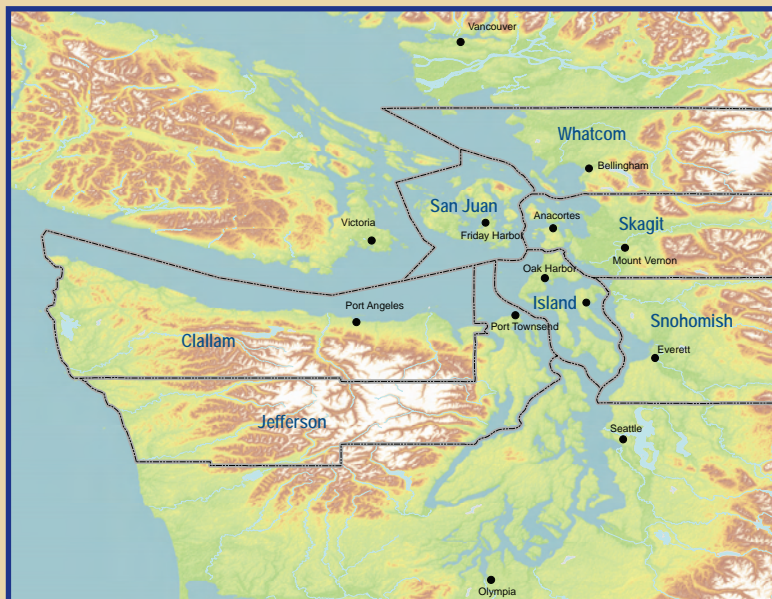
The Northwest Straits are the gateway to the region's many busy ports and urban areas. Thousands of cargo and tanker vessels call each year at Tacoma, Seattle and Vancouver BC, as well as many smaller ports and marinas throughout Puget Sound and Georgia Basin.

People

- Population of seven Northwest Straits counties: 1.16 million people
- Number of Marine Resources Committee members in all seven counties: 112
- Volunteer hours contributed from MRC members each year: thousands
- Northwest Straits Commissioners: 13
- Northwest Straits Commission Staff: 4

Geography

- Shoreline miles in the Northwest Straits Region: 1,460 or 58% of Puget Sound's 2,500 total shoreline miles



For further information on the Initiative and its projects, please visit our Web site at www.nwstraits.org. This site includes links to each Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Web site, where annual reports and project information can be downloaded.



Northwest Straits Marine Conservation

Financial Information

- Total 2009 federal appropriation: \$1.6 million
- \$840,000 supports Marine Resources Committees and their projects
- \$570,000 supports the Northwest Straits Commission operations, and Marine Resources Committee training
- \$190,000 supports tribal and regional ecosystem projects
- Total funds raised by the Northwest Straits Foundation in 2009: \$5.1 million

2009 Accomplishments

- Marine Resources Committees (MRC) carried out 53 different projects in 2009 including: education and outreach; restoration feasibility and drift cell studies at Kayak Point and Oak Bay County Parks, North Skagit Bay, Chuckanut Bay, March's Point, and Cornet Bay; eelgrass mapping, water quality monitoring, and shellfish surveys; and field research on pigeon guillemots, forage fish, bottomfish, and native oysters. All projects were guided by science, Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative (Initiative) benchmarks, and local priorities.
- The Northwest Straits Foundation (Foundation) was awarded \$4.6 million from NOAA to remove derelict fishing nets from Puget Sound. With these and other funds, 1,215 nets were removed in 2009, along with more than 300 derelict crab pots and other fishing gear. More than 167 acres of marine habitat was restored by removing this gear. This work will continue through 2010, until 90% of the derelict nets in Puget Sound are removed.
- The Northwest Straits Initiative was awarded the Warren G. Magnuson Puget Sound legacy award by People For Puget Sound.
- The Foundation raised more than \$665,000 for Initiative projects in 2009 (in addition to \$4.6 million for derelict net removal), in support for:
 - Skagit Restoration Initiative, to restore habitat in Fidalgo and Padilla Bays
 - Derelict fishing gear removal
 - Long-term Habitat Recovery Monitoring project
 - Derelict Crab Pot Mortality and Economic Impact Study
 - Expansion of the Shore Stewards Program throughout the Northwest Straits
- A bill to reauthorize the Northwest Straits Initiative, introduced in 2009 by Senator Murray and Representative Larsen, passed the House of Representatives and is expected to pass the Senate in 2010.
- The Snohomish MRC completed a comprehensive restoration feasibility assessment and design for backshore restoration at Kayak Point County Park.
- The Jefferson MRC completed a site assessment of, and conceptual design for, a drift cell restoration project at Oak Bay.

Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Initiative 2009 Highlights

- The Northwest Straits Commission (Commission) convened a scientific workshop on Pacific sand lance, bringing together invited experts from around the region to identify research needs and data gaps for this ecologically valuable forage fish species. Supporting literature was posted to the Commission's Web site in an online bibliography.
- MRC members, Commissioners and staff worked with the Puget Sound Partnership to implement the action agenda, and are helping to determine the most appropriate means for local integration in Northwest Straits' counties.
- The Commission assembled a six-member Science Team to provide additional independent scientific review and guidance for our projects.
- More than 130 MRC members, project partners, elected officials and speakers attended the 11th Annual MRC Conference in Bellingham. This year's theme was 'Building Resilience in the Salish Sea'.
- MRCs increased their capacity to protect local marine resources. For example, the Island MRC has successfully leveraged \$4,000 in Commission funding with combined grants totaling \$430,675, allocated to a suite of shoreline restoration projects.
- Media coverage of the Initiative increased significantly, with feature length stories on the derelict gear program by NBC, CNN and KIRO TV; in addition to the New York Times, Seattle Times, and newspapers throughout the region.
- The Commission distributed 12 issues of the monthly e-newsletter, sent to all MRC members, Commissioners and others at their request.
- Traffic increased by 55% on the Commission's Web site.
- A Facebook page was created for the Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Program, to share information about the program with a broader audience.



Derelict gear removal, Ginny Broadhurst



Letter from the Director

Every year we hold a training conference for our Marine Resources Committee (MRC) members. The goals of our annual conference are to provide training on important marine conservation topics and to encourage MRC members from different counties to share success stories and challenges with each other. We titled the 2009 conference "The Northwest Straits Initiative: Building resilience in the Salish Sea" because the work that we're doing is important not only to protect and restore these waters but to help create a healthier ecosystem that is able to fare better with emerging issues of concern, such as ocean acidification, invasive species and warming temperatures.

The conference was energizing and full of important information. We opened with a community showing of *A Sea Change*, a film about ocean acidification. The theater was full of interested community members; many had never heard about ocean acidification but wanted to learn. A lot of people learning and making small changes can result in big improvements to our marine environment.

Protection and restoration of the marine environment are fairly common terms. Resiliency is really a different frame of reference and forces us to recognize that we are working in a changing ocean system. I think it's an important distinction and it may change how we approach conservation. To me, it means we don't have time to get it perfect, but we do need to do it right. We may not be able to control global impacts, but we can and should do our best to take action locally to improve stormwater management, maintain healthy shorelines and educate people about the issues and what choices they can make to help.

The Northwest Straits Initiative is known as a "can-do" organization comprised of people willing to roll up their sleeves and get work done. I appreciate the attitude of our members and their accomplishments. Many of us have sat in planning meetings and other committees and discovered that a lot of time can easily be squandered. I enjoy seeing how MRCs find an area of focus and develop a set of projects to do. The Northwest Straits Commission provides a framework for them to act and provides modest funding for work to get done.

Our work is making a difference to improve the health of the Northwest Straits region and improve its resiliency. But there is more to do. We are committed to continuing our work, focusing our efforts and making improvements to see marine bird and fish populations and healthy habitats on the rise.

In 2010 I look forward to completing the derelict fishing net removal project, working with our Marine Resources Committees to tackle significant shoreline protection and restoration work and working with the Puget Sound Partnership and other organizations to accomplish projects that are greater than the sum of our parts.

I encourage you to learn more about the Northwest Straits – our waters are inextricably linked with our health.

Ginny Broadhurst
Director, Northwest Straits Commission



Letter from the Chair

In any given year, the Northwest Straits Initiative and its MRCs manage over 45 conservation and restoration projects. These range from seeding native oysters, removing creosoted logs and derelict fishing gear, and researching forage fish, to stormwater education and shoreline restoration.

If you count us all, including our project partners and volunteers, the network quickly grows into the thousands. We are fishermen, divers, economists, sailors, builders, politicians, marina owners, realtors, and tribal representatives. We are marine biologists, university professors, retired Coast Guard captains, oil industry representatives, surfers, computer consultants, engineers, pharmacists, and foresters. What we have in common is a fierce and unwavering passion for the inimitable natural beauty of the Salish Sea. Together we form a widespread, bottom-up network with immense capacity and talent.

A longtime member said recently: "What I love about the MRCs and the Initiative is that when we see something that needs to be done, we roll up our sleeves and do it. We're not inhibited by lots of bureaucracy – it's an honest, community-based effort. Being part of it is as important to me as breathing air or drinking water."

This year brought big news. In late June, we learned that our four-year flagship effort, the Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project, was awarded a \$4.6 million stimulus grant from NOAA. In less than a week, our annual budget tripled, our employment roster grew eight-fold, and we jumped from recovering gear with one boat 80 days a year, to four boats 360 days a year. This will result in the removal of 90% of the derelict nets in Puget Sound by the end of 2010.

The success of the Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project increased our national recognition and credibility, including media coverage by CNN and the New York Times. Indeed, in culmination of twelve years of successful marine conservation throughout the Northwest Straits, the NOAA grant catapulted us almost overnight into a new chapter of maturity and capacity. To thank for this are the MRCs and their project partners, our exceptionally competent director and staff, and the wise counsel of the Northwest Straits Commission.

The Initiative's challenge now is to build on the successes of 2009, to envision new projects with regional conservation significance, connection, and synergy. With congressional reauthorization imminent; with capacity, credibility, and endless human resources of talent and passion; we are in a great position moving ahead into 2010.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jonathan White".

Jonathan White
Chair, Northwest Straits Commission

Introduction: The Northwest

“When Congressman Metcalf and I first created the Northwest Straits Initiative, a lot of people were skeptical that a volunteer conservation effort could work... Now it is leading the nation in showing what an innovative, grassroots conservation effort can be.”

– US Senator Patty Murray



The Initiative was authorized by the United States Congress in 1998 to restore and protect marine resources of the Northwest Straits. Our projects and activities are driven by sound science, local priorities and community-based decisions.

We provide funding for citizens to engage in local conservation efforts. Successful projects can be selected for expansion to the regional level. Regional projects involve multiple public, private and nonprofit partners, and catalyze action by additional entities to address marine resource problems that may otherwise go unaddressed.

We are an exceptional collaborative of local individuals who volunteer their expertise, time and energy; integrated within a regional framework that combines strategic partnerships and federal support. We are widely recognized as a model of community action, collaboration, and participation.

Marine Resources Committees –

Seven MRCs around the Northwest Straits form the core of the Initiative; in Clallam, Island, Jefferson, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties. They provide a mechanism for citizens with various interests and perspectives to address marine resource issues. Each MRC is created by county ordinance, and members are volunteers appointed by their county commission or council.

One noteworthy attribute of MRCs is the diversity of interests and cultural values that is represented in each county, under a common structure. Given the ecological and social complexity of the Northwest Straits region, each MRC has established

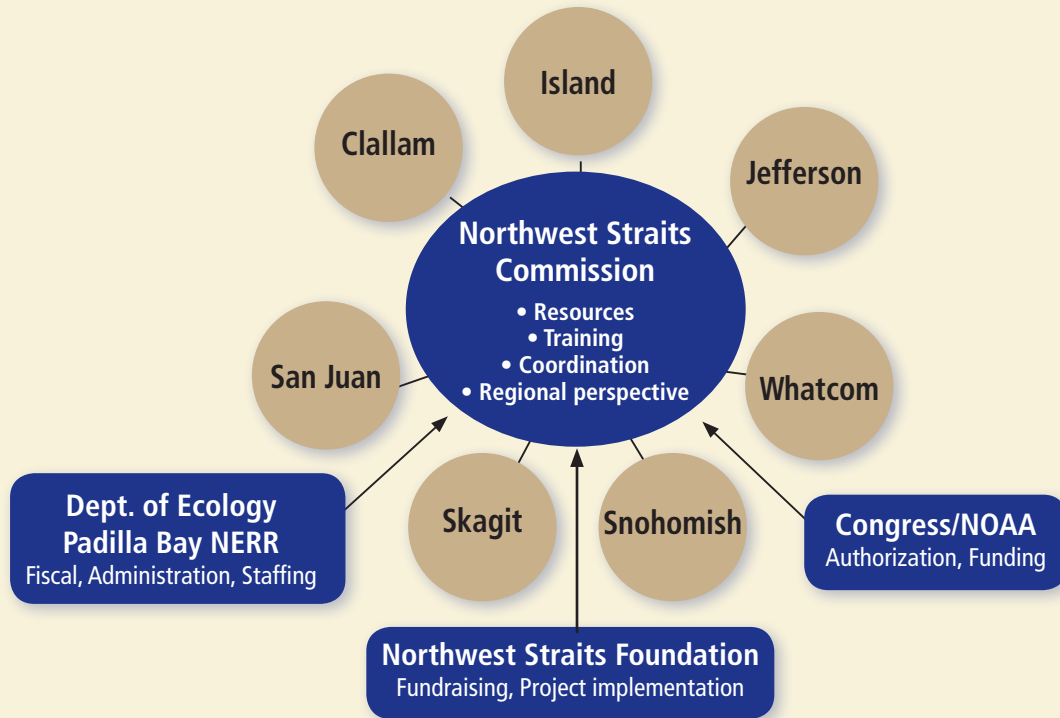
itself a unique role as advisor, advocate and/or educator in its affiliated jurisdiction. MRCs involve scientists, local and tribal governments, and economic, recreational and conservation interests. Members set priorities, design and carry out marine restoration and conservation projects, provide stewardship information to local residents, and work in coordination with their local elected officials.

The Commission provides funding and technical support to the MRCs for projects that are grounded in science and which meet the Initiative's benchmarks. MRCs may receive support from their county government in the form of additional funding or in-kind staff services. They may also receive funding through competitive grant opportunities offered by state and federal agencies, and other entities. MRCs are a model of efficiency; on a shoe-string budget, they carried out more than 50 projects in 2009.

The Northwest Straits Commission –

In addition to supporting MRCs, the Commission manages marine conservation projects on the regional scale, and carries out projects in partnership with tribal governments. The Commission consists of five gubernatorial representatives, one tribal representative appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, and one representative from each MRC. Commissioners meet monthly and serve as a board of directors for the Initiative. They provide vision and guidance, and ensure progress toward our goals and benchmarks. With diverse professional backgrounds and multiple perspectives,

Straits Marine Conservation Initiative



Commissioners work through consensus to address marine conservation in the Northwest Straits.

The Northwest Straits

Foundation—The Foundation is a non-profit organization, established to leverage additional funding for our scientific, restoration, and education projects. 2009 was an extraordinary year, with funding expenditures and income topping \$1.8 million.

The Foundation was awarded \$4.6 million from NOAA to remove derelict fishing nets from Puget Sound (see Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Program). In addition, it was the recipient of a \$125,000 community service payment this year, through the U.S. Department of Justice as part of a settlement for a private company's violation of environmental regulations off the coast of Washington. The

Foundation also received funding for projects from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Russell Family Foundation, the SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund, the Department of Ecology Coastal Protection Fund, the Puget Sound Restoration Fund, Shell Oil

Co., Lucky Seven Foundation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Foundation continues to strengthen support to MRCs by providing assistance with grant proposals, financial management, and contract management services.



Jonathan White, Tom Cowan and Jeff June receive Magnuson Legacy Award, Sasha Horst

Northwest Straits Initiative Goal

Protect and restore the marine waters, habitats and species of the Northwest Straits region to achieve ecosystem health and sustainable resource use.

Performance Benchmarks

Marine Habitats

Protect and restore marine, coastal and nearshore habitats, prevent loss and achieve a net gain of healthy habitat areas

Marine Life

Protect and restore marine populations to healthy, sustainable levels

Marine Water Quality

Protect marine water quality of the Northwest Straits region, and restore the health of marine waters

Sound Science

Collect high quality data and promote its use and dissemination

Education and Outreach

Promote stewardship and understanding of Northwest Straits marine resources through education and outreach

Making a Regional Impact

2009 Northwest Straits Initiative Regional Projects For more information: www.nwstraits.org	NWSI Benchmarks				
	Marine Habitats	Marine Life	Marine Water Quality	Science	Education and Outreach
Derelict Fishing Gear Removal	■	■			
Derelict Fishing Gear Research				■	
Forage Fish Habitat Suitability - Modeling/ GIS maps	●	●		■	●
Marine Stewardship Planning in Port Susan Bay	●	●	●	●	■
Tribal Canoe Journey Water Quality Monitoring			■	■	●
Expansion of Shore Stewards Program					■
<i>Spartina</i> Surveys - Training kayak and foot volunteers	●			●	■
Education and Outreach - Fall conference, monthly newsletter, Web site					■
■ = Primary Benchmark ● = Secondary Benchmark					

“The Commission works collaboratively with local elected officials, tribes, citizens and agencies. The environmental results are measurable, but no less importantly, the sense of community and stewardship is strengthened through the process.”

Kevin Ranker, Washington State Senate, 40th District

We carry out regional marine conservation and restoration projects that address performance benchmarks in multiple Northwest Straits counties. In some cases projects are developed by one MRC and expanded to a larger geographic scale; others are initiated at the regional level by the Commission and Foundation. The Commission also has specific funds available on an annual basis for projects that meet the priorities of tribes in the Northwest Straits, as well as projects to advance understanding and restoration of the Northwest Straits ecosystem.

“The Northwest Straits Initiative is a leader in the removal of derelict fishing gear from our state’s waters. Their work in Puget Sound is making a real difference - saving fish and wildlife; restoring underwater habitat; and cleaning up the sound. They literally wrote the rules on how to get the job done.”

Christine Rolfes, Washington State House of Representatives, 23rd District

The Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Program

Every hour of every day, hundreds of marine animals are killed in Puget Sound derelict fishing gear. Harbor seals, porpoises, river otters, grebes, cormorants, pigeon guillemots, salmon, rockfish, and Dungeness crabs have all perished. This is only a snapshot of the full story. Carcasses linger for only a few days in derelict gear, attracting predators that may also become victims.

Important marine habitats are damaged, too. Rocky reefs and boulders are wiped clean of sponges, plants, and chitons that normally cling to them. Eelgrass is smothered by sediment accumulating around a sedentary abandoned crab pot or scoured away as tides rip around pots, eroding the sea floor.

We identified derelict fishing gear as a priority problem in Puget Sound in 2001. Since then, it has worked cooperatively with fishermen, tribes, and agencies to develop a comprehensive derelict fishing gear program that combines an aggressive removal program with focused research and prevention.

In July of 2009, we embarked on an historic effort to remove 90% of derelict fishing nets from Puget Sound in just eighteen months. This project was made possible with an award of \$4.6 million through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

With this influx of funds, we ramped up the Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project from one vessel working part time to four vessels working full time. The project currently employs 30 people, including divers, boat pilots, biologists and information technology specialists.

In just six months, with ARRA funding, we removed 890 derelict nets and restored over 95 acres of marine habitat. In these nets were more than 53,000 animals, representing 139 marine species; including five marine mammals and many drowned marine birds.



Gear removal teams are concentrating on high priority areas throughout Puget Sound. Entire areas are being cleared of derelict nets, including popular dive sites such as Blakely Rocks in Kitsap County, and Sares Head in Skagit County.

Unfortunately, research results show that the long-term impacts of derelict fishing gear on marine species far exceed those recorded during removal operations. It is estimated that the 1215 gillnets that we removed in 2009 were killing thousands of marine birds and fish, and over half a million invertebrates every year. More than 300 derelict crab pots were also removed.

The ARRA-funded project is ahead of schedule, having accomplished more than 36% of the planned removal days between July and December 2009. The goals of this project are:

- Remove 90% of derelict nets from high priority areas of Puget Sound
- Protect more than a million marine animals from entanglement, annually
- Restore hundreds of acres of marine habitat
- Refine statewide derelict gear reporting system and database
- Complete project by December 31, 2010

Derelict Fishing Gear Research

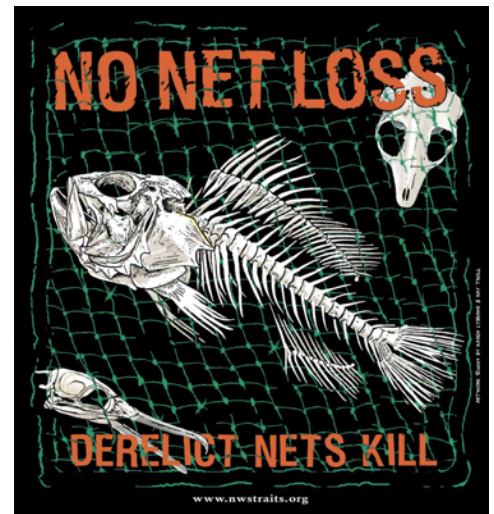
In addition to gear removal operations, we completed two important derelict gear research projects this year. The first focused on the recovery of marine habitat after the removal of derelict nets; the second on the economic and ecological impacts of derelict crab pots.

A study was conducted to determine how quickly natural ocean processes restore marine habitat that is damaged by derelict fishing nets. The final report, *Marine Habitat Recovery of Five Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Sites in Puget Sound, Washington*, is available at www.nwstraits.org. It was determined that in areas dominated by kelp, the habitat service functions of kelp beds are restored within a single growing season after derelict fishing nets were removed. Eelgrass beds take longer to recover, but can improve by 30% in less than a year.

We also completed research demonstrating that as many as 12,000 crab pots are lost in Puget Sound each year. Each can catch and kill 22 crabs annually, costing the Puget Sound crab fishery approximately \$820,000 annually in lost revenue.

Project Funding

- NOAA Marine Debris Program
- US Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal and Recovery Programs
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Salmon Recovery Funding Board
- ConocoPhillips Migratory Bird Fund
- Department of Ecology Coastal Protection Fund
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Lucky Seven Foundation
- Horizons Foundation
- The Russell Family Foundation
- Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund
- SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund



“Funding from the Northwest Straits Commission was critical in providing the Tribal Canoe Journey water quality mapping project with the resources to move forward with the initial planning, coordination and implementation phases. Without the Commission funding, I don’t think the project would have been as successful as it was in providing valuable information for the greater Coast Salish Community and other residents of the Salish Sea.”

Charles O’Hara, Planning Director for the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and Skagit MRC member

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area

Port Susan is a biologically productive estuary, bounded by Camano Island on the west and Snohomish County to the east. It transitions from the estuarine waters of the Stillaguamish River mouth at the north end, to marine waters in Port Gardner and Saratoga Passage to the south.

Local tribes continue to harvest fish and shellfish in Port Susan as they have for thousands of years. Commercial and recreational salmon, crab and shrimp fisheries take place throughout the area; clam digging is currently closed or limited due to water quality concerns. Northern Port Susan is an important waterfowl hunting area.

Numerous entities hold regulatory authority over natural resources, and private land owners play a major role. The Nature Conservancy owns several thousand acres of prime fish and waterfowl habitat at the head of the bay; Whidbey Camano Land Trust holds approximately 3,300 acres of Livingston Bay tidelands; Washington State Parks and Snohomish and Island counties own and manage several shoreline parks. In addition, there are a number of upland watershed plans relating to Camano Island, the Stillaguamish River and salmon recovery; and plans for sustainably harvesting fish and wildlife resources.

The variety and segregation of authority can result in a confusion of regulations and management strategies. As such, there is growing interest in designating Port Susan as a Marine Stewardship Area (MSA). This process could enhance



communication, establish consistency and provide a framework to measure progress and adjust management strategies.

The Port Susan MSA project is roughly patterned after a similar effort in San Juan County. A workgroup that includes staff with the Commission, Tulalip and Stillaguamish Tribes, members of the Snohomish and Island County MRCs and The Nature Conservancy has initiated a Conservation Action Planning process to establish the MSA. Following the lead of Island County in designating its half of Port Susan as an MSA, a resolution was unanimously passed by the Snohomish County MRC in late 2009, and is pending approval by the County Council.

Tribal Fund: Coast Salish Canoe Journey, and Samish Indian Nation Shoreline Restoration

The Commission's Tribal Committee is a forum to discuss policy, projects, and priorities of tribal governments within the Northwest Straits region. The Committee also recommends projects for funding that benefit the Northwest Straits' ecosystem and tribal capacity to protect marine resources.

In 2009, the Committee allocated funds totaling \$45,000 to: 1) provide equipment and training for participating families to conduct water sampling during the Coast Salish Canoe Journey; and 2) support the Samish Tribe in a project to stabilize eroding shoreline at Weaverling Spit in Anacortes.

Each summer, more than 70 First Nations and tribes travel by canoe to a landing destination in the Salish Sea. This year, the journey was hosted by the Suquamish Tribe; it was the second year that Coast Salish People and the U.S. Geological Survey partnered in a study of ancestral waters and the response of coastal environments to climate change and land use impacts.

This project brings tradition and science together to gather data that are collected by canoe, eliminating the impacts of boat engine and exhaust disturbance. Funding from the Commission provided support

and equipment for sampling of surface temperature, dissolved oxygen (concentration and percent saturation), salinity, pH, turbidity, chlorophyll and other data.

Support was also provided for a shoreline stabilization and beach nourishment project with the Samish Indian Nation, restoring an eroding 550' stretch of Weaverling Spit with engineered soft shore stabilization. This protects an archeological site that is in danger of eroding onto the beach, provides habitat for spawning forage fish and vegetation for shade and restores the banks of the Tommy Thompson Trail. Planting of native vegetation along the shoreline is pending.

Ecosystem Fund: Forage Fish Modeling, and *Spartina* Surveys

The Northwest Straits Technical Committee provides technical and scientific review for MRC and Commission project proposals. It also recommends funding for ecosystem scale projects that contribute to our understanding, protection and restoration of the Puget Sound ecosystem.

In 2009, the Committee allocated funds totaling \$137,000 to: 1) increase scientific

knowledge about forage fish; and 2) conduct kayak-based surveys of *Spartina*, an invasive beach grass.

We have played an important role collecting information on surf smelt and Pacific sand lance in the Northwest Straits. These forage fishes, along with Pacific herring, are demonstrated drivers of the marine food web. Yet surprisingly little is known, particularly about Pacific sand lance. In 2009, recognizing the need for basic life history information, the Commission convened a workshop of the region's sand lance experts. The group identified major data gaps and effective ways to fill them, toward which we are planning new research and analyses in 2010.

The Commission also continues to support the monitoring and control of *Spartina*, through a program led by People For Puget Sound. In 2009, funds were used to recruit and train 36 new volunteer kayakers, who surveyed over 103 miles of shoreline and located almost 200 square meters of *Spartina* in four North Puget Sound counties. Volunteers have demonstrated that the sea kayaking community can play a valuable role in citizen science efforts in Puget Sound.



Jennifer LaVista



Rachel Benbrook, People For Puget Sound.



Sasha Horst

Education and Outreach

Providing funding and staff support for MRC training and outreach is a key role of the Commission. We work with knowledgeable professionals at every opportunity to boost directed outreach efforts, and increase media coverage of the local volunteer efforts around the Straits.

Fall Conference – The Commission hosts an annual conference for MRC members and partners, to provide regional context for their hard work, present supporting science and provide tools to support MRC activities. This year's event was hosted by Whatcom County MRC and held in Bellingham during two days of gale-force winds.

Nearly 130 people attended, with a terrific turnout from all seven MRCs. Other individuals represented the Puget Sound Partnership; Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Washington state Departments

of Ecology and Natural Resources; NOAA; Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission; Tulalip and Swinomish Tribes; Lummi and Samish Indian Nations, academic institutions; and non-profit groups. A plenary session on climate change set the stage for those on rockfish conservation, native oyster research and restoration, tribal projects and a change analysis of Puget Sound shorelines. This year's communications training, on getting a conservation story into the news and telling a story that resonates with decision-makers and the public, proved especially popular.

Communications

Newsletter – The Commission produces a monthly electronic newsletter, distributed to 240 MRC members, Commissioners, partners and other interested individuals. In 2009, twelve issues were sent out, highlighting projects and publications of the MRCs and Commission, MRC members, events and other news.

Web site – The Commission's Web site at www.nwstraits.org is a useful resource for MRC members and volunteers, project partners, funders, the media and other interested parties. In 2009:

- Visitors from 47 states explored the site, as well as visitors from more than 70 countries
- The average visitor spent more than three minutes on the site.
- More than 42% of traffic came from internet searches, 25% from referrals

Marine Resources Committees

"I have huge respect for the accomplishments of the Northwest Straits Initiative. With over 45 marine conservation projects underway - all driven by countless professionals and volunteers - this is truly a roll-up-the-sleeves, can-do organization."

Jonathan White, Builder, San Juan MRC member and Northwest Straits Commission Chair



Clallam



“The intent of the MRC was to provide local, grassroots input into the proposed federal process of protecting and restoring our marine waters. I think we have done very well in that regard. Strong support from our County Commissioners has been helpful.”



Lyn Muench,
Clallam MRC
member and
former Natural
Resources Planner
for the Jamestown
S’Klallam Tribe

Clallam County’s 254 miles of shoreline stretch from the northern third of Washington’s rugged outer coast and the length of the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the middle of Discovery Bay. Its rich nearshore and marine waters are entry to the Northwest Straits; transited more than 5,000 times each year by container ships, tankers and barges bound for Puget Sound ports. This geography fuels marine economic activity – commercial and sport fishing, marine transportation services, ship building, tourism and a strong Coast Guard presence.

Clallam County is mostly rural, with its westernmost marine waters bounded by Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, and southern border cutting across Olympic National Park. Home to 71,000 people – nearly 20,000 of whom are in the county seat of Port Angeles – the county boasts a mild marine climate and unique blend of native and non-native cultures.

Clallam County MRC consists of 15 citizens representing the fishing industry, local government, Makah Tribal Council, Lower Elwha Klallam and Jamestown S’Klallam Tribes, builders, science and conservation interests, the National Marine Sanctuary and residents of the county’s different geographic areas.

The MRC has strength in its scientific and technical capacity. Monitoring and data collection in the nearshore, particularly in the Elwha River area, have long been a priority. The MRC is a partner in the Elwha Nearshore Consortium, formed to understand and promote the nearshore restoration associated with the upcoming Elwha dam removal. In 2009, Clallam MRC volunteers continued sampling for paralytic shellfish poisoning; eelgrass mapping was conducted in Port Angeles harbor and surrounding bays; and the MRC collected groundwater data from 21 wells around Sequim to determine



Dungeness Beach, Caroline Gibson

the relationship between stormwater and marine water quality. A nearshore inventory was conducted on physical features and fish use, for consideration during a pending update to the Shoreline Master Program (SMP).

The MRC also led the removal of 3,400 pounds of debris from three county beaches, and worked with the local Feiro Marine Life Center to train volunteers for a Marine Ecosystem Exploration Program. Outreach was conducted at numerous public events during the year.

The MRC's stated purpose is "to discover collaborative ways to improve shellfish harvest areas, protect marine habitat, support salmon and bottomfish recovery and examine resource management alternatives. Ultimately, we will recommend remedial actions to local authorities. In meeting these goals, we hope to address and rectify the many serious threats to the Northwest Straits, its natural resources and human residents."



2009 Clallam County MRC Projects For more information: clallammrc.org	NWSI Benchmarks				
	Marine Habitats	Marine Life	Marine Water Quality	Science	Education and Outreach
Education and Public Outreach – three events held including ocean acidification film shown to 200 people, 638 elementary students attended field trips to marine life center, quarterly newsletter on Elwha nearshore issues					■
Beach Clean Up – over 3,400 lbs of trash removed by volunteers	■				●
Marine Ecosystem Analysis Field Assessment (MESA)		●		■	
Elwha Nearshore Beach Seine Surveys – east and west sides of the Elwha river mouth, Dudley Pond, Salt Creek and Crescent Bay sampled		●		■	●
HAZWOPER (hazardous waste operations emergency response) & Oiled Wildlife Training/Certification – Trained 70 participants in HAZWOPER and 40 participants in oiled wildlife class					■
Monitoring – Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) – volunteer monitoring allows 30 miles of shellfish beaches to remain open for harvest			●	■	●
Student Intern Program				■	●
Groundwater Contamination Monitoring – Quality assurance/quality control plan completed			■		
■ = Primary Benchmark ● = Secondary Benchmark					

Island



“The types of activities that we engage in continue to draw new members with extraordinary credentials and a high level of energy. The MRC does great work; everyone has something valuable to contribute.”

Dick Toft, *Island MRC member*

Island County encompasses over 212 miles of shoreline along Whidbey and Camano islands. More than 81,000 people call the county home, with Oak Harbor the largest city at just over 20,000 residents. Military history runs deep on Whidbey Island, where the Naval Air Station contributes strongly to the Oak Harbor area culture and economy. Island County maintains a strong rural/agricultural base, and holds miles of pastoral scenery. The marine environment includes rich eelgrass beds that support juvenile salmon, Dungeness crab, seabirds and other creatures; local waters boast healthy mussel populations. Many Treaty Tribes have Usual and Accustomed fishing areas in the county. Admiralty Inlet, on Whidbey’s west side, is the entrance to central Puget Sound, a bottleneck for ship traffic, and the location of a pending tidal energy pilot project.

Island MRC has a strong focus on science, education and stewardship; and is the birthplace of the Washington State University Beach Watchers and Shore Stewards programs. These programs lend critical support to conservation efforts around Puget Sound: Beach Watchers are university-trained volunteers involved in research, education and restoration; Shore Stewards are shoreline residents and businesses who make informed decisions about their properties with Puget Sound in mind.

In recent years the MRC has positioned itself as a model for successful collaboration, as evidenced by the ongoing joint effort to protect and restore Cornet Bay in partnership with the county and Washington State Parks, natural resource agencies, non-profit organizations and several local groups. In 2009, MRC



Clinton Beach, Dan Pedersen

members engaged in a number of hands-on research and conservation efforts: conducting breeding surveys of pigeon guillemots on active colonies for the sixth season; estuary seine surveys – with Beach Watchers volunteers - for juvenile salmon; and underwater video mapping of eelgrass for use by the MRC and Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

They also participated in a Low Impact Development feasibility assessment, and engaged in the University of Washington's Keystone Project to support local community understanding of marine water quality issues. Toward addressing water quality concerns, the MRC initiated major discussion in the community around a pilot project aimed at reclaiming water and improving surface water quality. The town of Coupeville is currently exploring phytoremediation – in this case using willow plantings – as a means of removing contaminants from stormwater before it reaches the nearshore environment.

The MRC's stated purpose is to: "contribute to the protection of the local and Northwest Straits marine environments through education, research and voluntary action. In so doing the MRC recommends remedial actions to local authorities and builds community awareness of the issues and support for the remedies."



Cornet Bay, Caroline Gibson

2009 Island County MRC Projects For more information: www.islandcountymrc.org	NWSI Benchmarks				
	Marine Habitats	Marine Life	Marine Water Quality	Science	Education and Outreach
Low Impact Development Feasibility Assessment – led 82 people in community tour of low impact development sites			■		●
Estuary Seining – salmon use of estuaries documented		●		■	●
Pigeon Guillemot Breeding Survey		●		■	●
Shore Stewards Support – 138 new Shore Stewards enrolled, monthly newsletters sent to over 650 recipients					■
Interpretive Signage – two new signs ready for installation					■
Penn Cove Water Quality Monitoring – study group assembled for spring 2010 work			■		
Cornet Bay Nearshore Restoration Project – \$4,000 in MRC budget leveraged in successful grant applications for \$430,000	■	●			
Eelgrass Monitoring/ Mapping					■
Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area					■
■ = Primary Benchmark ● = Secondary Benchmark					

Jefferson



"The Jefferson County MRC has been a great way for me to connect with local shoreline restoration and preservation initiatives. It serves as an effective conduit, through public outreach, for educating coastal residents on how to preserve the marine environment for future generations."

*Tony Petrillo, President,
Blue Water Engineering;
Jefferson MRC member*

Jefferson County's 254 marine shoreline miles include a rocky stretch on the northern outer coast, bounded by Clallam County to the north and Grays Harbor County to the south; the easternmost extent of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Admiralty Inlet and northern Hood Canal. The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe holds reservation lands here. Most of Jefferson County's 30,000 people live in its eastern edge, with Port Townsend the county seat and largest city at nearly 9,000 residents. Port Townsend has a vibrant marine trades' economy, with nationally-renowned shipwrights, sail makers and riggers, systems/fabrication experts and marine industrial firms. The annual Wooden Boat Festival drew a record 23,000 visitors in 2009. The city is home to nationally-recognized marine science and maritime education programs, and the new Northwest Maritime Center.

The Jefferson MRC serves as an advisory group to the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners. Its 17 members

have backgrounds in recreation, industry, environment, military, education and marine science as well as state, county and local government. MRC members work closely with homeowners, business owners, outdoor enthusiasts and commercial and sport fishermen to reduce impacts to marine habitat in an ecologically-rich area. Jefferson MRC has shaped effective stewardship messages targeting Port Townsend's local and visiting boating communities.

A distinguishing feature of this MRC is its ability to focus on a handful of projects, ensuring success over the long-term for challenging efforts that may not command adequate attention by other marine resource entities. For example, the Jefferson MRC expanded its successful Voluntary No-Anchor Zone Project to Marrowstone Island's Mystery Bay, where boating and commercial shellfish harvest interests were at odds. In 2008, a large portion of the bay was closed to harvest due to the risk of boat-related pollution to



Sasha Horst

shellfish beds. With a shellfish industry that represents a significant portion of Washington's coastal economy, this was a serious issue in Jefferson County, and one which struck a chord with the MRC. Their work to protect eelgrass beds through voluntary vessel compliance helped form the basis for a developing management plan to keep shellfish beds open, while addressing the concerns of several user groups.

The MRC prepared Quality Assurance/Quality Control procedures for monitoring water quality around remnant native oyster populations, and volunteers monitored pH, salinity, and oyster growth in Discovery Bay. Members also provided critical input and perspective during the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) update process. The resulting revised SMP was approved by the County Commission, and submitted to the state for review in December.



Gabrielle LaRoche

2009 Jefferson County MRC Projects For more information: www.jcmrc.org	NWSI Benchmarks				
	Marine Habitats	Marine Life	Marine Water Quality	Science	Education and Outreach
Drift Cell Restoration Project – site assessment completed at Oak Bay, beach profile monitoring at Fort Flagler following derelict pier removal	■	●		●	●
Voluntary Eelgrass Protection Zone – 100% compliance in eelgrass protection zones, 6th season of marking area with buoys, expanding project into 2 additional bays	■	●			●
Olympia Oyster Monitoring – low mortality observed in seeded areas, water quality monitoring on-going, site surveys for oysters at three locations		■		●	●
Marine Stewardship Program – three workshops held for community members to learn about stewardship					■
Education and Outreach – signage completed for installation at Northwest Maritime Center					■
Oak Bay – Cultural Survey & Shoreline Design	■				
Shore Stewards Support – 150 newly enrolled					■
Shoreline Master Program – provided comments on county's SMP update					
Mystery Bay – three stakeholder meetings held and a draft Harbor Management Plan completed					
■ = Primary Benchmark ● = Secondary Benchmark					

San Juan



"I feel fortunate to have the chance to work on this new assignment. Though our local waters are beautiful, there are a few serious problems... Fixing them will require the active participation of government agencies, academic institutions, businesses, non-profits, and ordinary citizens like me."

John Aschoff, Retired Technology Professional; Incoming San Juan MRC member

With more than 170 named islands and countless rocky reefs and outcrops, San Juan County's 408 miles of shoreline are the most of any county in the nation. Cold, nutrient-rich waters from the Pacific Ocean and strong tidal currents create ideal conditions for incredible diversity of marine life. Because of this, San Juan County is home to one of the nation's premier marine research centers at Friday Harbor Laboratories. Nearly 16,000 full time or seasonal residents live in the islands. Tourists and locals alike are drawn to their tremendous natural beauty and iconic wildlife. Many of the Treaty Tribes have Usual and Accustomed fishing areas in the San Juans.

The San Juan MRC's 16 individuals represent local government, the Tulalip Tribes, Friday Harbor Laboratories, builders, local fishermen, boaters, and economic, recreational and conservation interests. San

Juan County's was the first of the seven MRCs, and serves as the citizen advisory group for salmon recovery work. The MRC holds an admirable track record for effectively engaging in important local and regional policy efforts.

Major emphasis in 2009 was placed on the monitoring and outreach aspects of the County Marine Stewardship Area (MSA), with electronic and printed informational materials distributed to visitors and residents at public events, and by mail to island households. The MRC developed recommendations for the proposed NOAA vessel rule for orca protection, submitted comments on the state rockfish management plan, and has a representative on the state's new rockfish advisory committee.

Meetings and workshops sponsored by the MRC were held on a variety of topics in support for marine resource protection



Yellow Island, Jeff Hanson

and sustainable living in the islands. In addition, the MRC continued its longtime efforts to protect and restore local rockfish populations, producing a report on the efficacy of eight voluntary bottomfish recovery zones in the area. Funding was provided by the Commission to complete the mapping of feeder bluffs around the county - an important element of the MSA plan - to inform local conservation efforts including the ongoing update to the Critical Areas Ordinance.

The MRC significantly strengthened volunteer capacity in the islands this year, providing support to Soundwatch – a boater education program of The Whale Museum; Beach Watchers; a sampling program on toxins for high school and college students; and a program to monitor surfactant levels in Friday Harbor stormwater discharge.



2009 San Juan County MRC Projects For more information: www.sjcmrc.org	NWSI Benchmarks				
	Marine Habitats	Marine Life	Marine Water Quality	Science	Education and Outreach
Marine Stewardship Area Monitoring – 2,200 volunteer hours provided for monitoring	●	●	●	■	●
Marine Stewardship Area Outreach – 7,000 copies of stewardship guide distributed, lead sponsor of Sustainable San Juans three-day event					■
Rockfish Conservation and Outreach – representative on State Rockfish Advisory Committee, efficacy research done on rockfish reserves		■			●
Feeder Bluff Mapping Project – completed field mapping in preparation for data analysis	■				
Marine Policies & Programs – developed recommendations on proposed NOAA vessel rules adopted by NWS Commission and SJ County Council					■
■ = Primary Benchmark ● = Secondary Benchmark					

Skagit



"We are innovative and motivated. The Skagit MRC is frugal, efficient, and no one waits around for someone else to make a decision. We just do it."

Polly Fischer, *President, Puget Sound Anglers; Skagit MRC member*

Skagit County's 189 miles of shoreline include rocky islands, the productive Skagit River delta, countless sloughs, bays and pocket estuaries. The Sauk, Skagit and Samish rivers flow from the Cascade Mountains through fertile agricultural land, providing water needed to grow crops and support salmon and waterfowl populations. The county's marine waters are plied by pleasure craft bound for the San Juan Islands, as well as large oil tankers calling at two refineries at March Point near Anacortes. Over 118,000 people live in Skagit County, with Mount Vernon and Anacortes being the county's two largest cities. The Sauk-Suiattle Tribe, Swinomish Tribe, and Upper Skagit Tribe hold reservation lands, and the Samish Indian Nation has federal trust lands within Skagit County. Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is also located in Skagit County.

Skagit County MRC's 18 members represent a broad spectrum of interests that includes four tribes, Shannon Point Marine Center, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, People For Puget Sound, marine scientists, recreational divers and fishermen, local government, the oil refineries at March Point, Skagit Land Trust and concerned citizens. MRC members actively engage in all stages of restoration and other projects, from design through completion.

Educational outreach is a strong focus for Skagit MRC. Among this year's products were the Smart Sponge storm drain filter; and a Car Wash Kit demonstration video on 'green' cleaning your automobile, distributed at local car washing events throughout the summer and posted to YouTube. Building on investigations of point source control methods and other accomplishments in 2009, the MRC



Fidalgo Bay Day, Michelle Pope

carried out several projects that address water quality. Members partnered with the Port of Anacortes to minimize the effects of stormwater runoff on the marine environment, by installing a demonstration that includes a rain garden and interpretive signage.

The MRC co-sponsored Fidalgo Bay Day, an event which drew an estimated 280 participants and included 50 volunteers and 26 organizations. They continue to work on the Shore Stewards program, which currently has 155 participants in Skagit County. And together with project partners, the MRC has been highly successful at *Spartina* removal, to the point of its near-eradication countywide.

The Skagit MRC's stated purpose is to "act as a catalyst for protection and restoration of the marine waters, habitats and species of Skagit County to achieve ecosystem health and sustainable resource use." Key to the committee is involving and educating the public about relevant issues.



2009 Skagit County MRC Projects For more information: www.skagitcounty.net/MRC	NWSI Benchmarks				
	Marine Habitats	Marine Life	Marine Water Quality	Science	Education and Outreach
<i>Spartina</i> Survey and Removal – 25 miles surveyed, dig day held with volunteers to remove <i>Spartina</i>	■				●
Cannery Pond Study – graduate student selected and historical research underway in preparation for spring 2010 sampling	■				
Low Impact Development Demonstration Project – Rain Garden installed at the Port of Anacortes, car wash kits designed	●		■		
Fidalgo Bay Contaminant Assessment – partnered with Samish Nation to collect samples at 16 outfalls in Fidalgo Bay, analysis and report completed			●	■	
Olympia Oyster Restoration – Monitoring observed slightly higher mortality		●		■	
Fidalgo Bay Day – 280 participants					■
Beach Watchers Support – Beach Watchers contributed 2170 hours of volunteer hours to projects and youth Beach Watchers program started for 9th graders					■
Shore Stewards Support – 39 new enrollees					■
Skagit Restoration Initiative – workplan created for 2010	■				
North Skagit Bay Drift Cell Analysis – data acquisition and geo-referencing complete	■				
■ = Primary Benchmark ● = Secondary Benchmark					

Snohomish



"Perhaps the best kept secret in this part of the Pacific Northwest may be the hard work and impressive success of the Initiative. When it comes to passion and actually doing something positive, these citizen scientists and marine resource activists just can't be beat. I thought I knew a lot about the place I have lived in most of my life, but my awareness has greatly expanded as a part of these groups, and I feel rewarded that I can do so much more to pass on good stewardship practices to those who will come after us."



Tom Hoban,
Snohomish
MRC member

Snohomish County is the most populous and urban of the seven Northwest Straits counties. With a population of over 683,000 people, more people live in Snohomish County than the other six MRC counties combined. Its 130 miles of shoreline are largely developed, with the Port of Everett a major industrial presence, naval base and marine transportation hub. The Edmonds Underwater Park, located next to the Edmonds-Kingston ferry terminal, is an artificial reef created in 1970 which draws 25,000 scuba divers a year. Snohomish County waters support economically and ecologically valuable Dungeness crab, salmon populations, and productive estuarine habitat. The Tulalip and Stillaguamish Tribes have Usual and Accustomed fishing grounds within county waters.

Since its inception in 1999, the Snohomish MRC has received staff support from their Surface Water Management Department. The MRC's 11 members represent a balance from local and tribal governments, resource management, economic and real estate interests, recreational divers, scientists and environmental interests. Their mission, guided by sound science and the needs of the marine ecosystem, is to "address local marine issues, recommend remedial actions to local authorities and build local awareness of the issues and support for remedies."

In 2009, Snohomish MRC completed a comprehensive restoration feasibility assessment for Kayak Point County Park, a beloved regional destination that draws 190,000 visitors a year. Winter storms



Kayak Point, Caroline Gibson

have eroded a shoreside loop road now slated for relocation. The MRC, along with County Parks, People For Puget Sound, Beach Watchers, the Commission, and other project partners, is helping to inform major restoration efforts that include bulkhead removal and planting of native vegetation. They expanded mussel sampling and the volunteer base for NOAA's Mussel Watch Program, catalyzing efforts in other coastal counties to monitor contaminants in local waters. The MRC also continues its studies on habitat associations of gravid female Dungeness crabs, and ways in which to minimize the threat of pharmaceuticals into the natural environment.



2009 Snohomish County MRC Projects For more information: www.mrc.surfacewater.info/	NWSI Benchmarks				
	Marine Habitats	Marine Life	Marine Water Quality	Science	Education and Outreach
Kayak Point County Park – Backshore restoration design completed and pre-restoration monitoring completed by volunteers	■			●	●
Jetty Island – Beach profile surveys conducted at 2 sites by volunteers	■				
Recreational crabber education project – message development and testing for 2010 crabbing season					●
Mussel Watch Program – 8 sites sampled, training manual developed for project coordinators			■	●	
Beach Watchers Support – 15 new Beach Watchers trained					■
Shore Stewards Support – 86 new enrollees					■
Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area					■
■ = Primary Benchmark ● = Secondary Benchmark					

Whatcom



"We are truly a grassroots environmental effort. What makes our work unique, in my opinion, is that we are represented by scientists, recreational enthusiasts, normal citizens, politicians, and commercial interests. This blend of viewpoints allows us to see and consider most all angles of an issue."



Ron Akeson,
Owner/Instructor,
Adventures Down
Under; Whatcom
MRC member

The northernmost county in the Northwest Straits, Whatcom County has 118 miles of shoreline that includes shellfish beaches in Birch Bay, Drayton Harbor and Chuckanut Bay; Bellingham's bustling urban waterfront; and Lummi Island, just west of Bellingham. A population of 196,000 people includes the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe. Timber, fishing and agriculture remain important to the county's economy. Lummi Island maintains an important salmon reef net fishery and

Bellingham is a hub for maritime industrial activity and transportation.

Whatcom MRC's 17 members include scientists, commercial fishermen, recreational divers and clam harvesters, conservationists, natural resource managers, elected officials and local government staff and the Nooksack Tribe and Lummi Nation. Together they hold a strong interest in maintaining healthy shellfish populations for harvest, and



Larrabee State Park, Ginny Broadhurst

in restoring local beaches by removing creosoted debris. The MRC has an admirable track record of collaboration with the City of Bellingham, Whatcom County, Washington Department of Ecology and Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

In 2009, the MRC expanded its water quality sampling efforts, and partnered in public outreach activities around drainage-related issues with Beach Watchers and RE Sources Beach Naturalists. A terrific turnout of 34 volunteers participated in a clam survey at Lily Point, a new county park in Point Roberts. Research and planning for the restoration of native clams at various sites around Whatcom County is ongoing.



Whatcom MRC

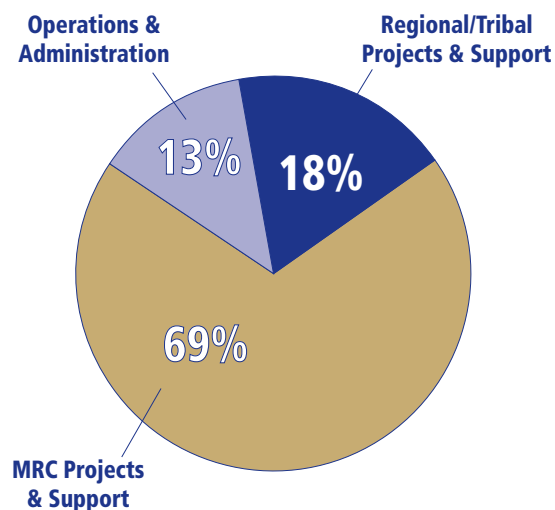
2009 Whatcom County MRC Projects For more information: www.whatcom-mrc.whatcomcounty.org	NWSI Benchmarks				
	Marine Habitats	Marine Life	Marine Water Quality	Science	Education and Outreach
Cliffside Beach Restoration – led a baseline biological and physical monitoring project prior to small woody debris removal	■				
Chuckanut Marsh Restoration – final design and permit applications completed	■				
Clam Surveys – conducted by volunteers in March, May and June covering 44 transects, data uploaded to website		●		■	
Shellfish Water Quality Monitoring Program – 27 sites monitored on three dates			■	●	●
Rockfish Surveys – completed in three locations using remotely operated vehicle in partnership with Western Washington University		●		■	●
Creosote Log Removal	■				
Terrell Creek Re-vegetation – riparian vegetation plan completed for spring 2010 planting	■				
■ = Primary Benchmark ● = Secondary Benchmark					

Financial Summary

Since its initiation in 1998, funding for the Northwest Straits Initiative has been provided through an annual federal appropriations bill. These funds are directed through NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management to the Northwest Straits Commission. From these funds, the Commission allocates each Marine Resources Committee a yearly grant to carry out their activities, pay for the operation and administration of the Commission, fund regional ecosystem projects and support a tribal project.

Federal Funding History	
Fiscal Year 1999	\$350,000
Fiscal Year 2000	\$652,000
Fiscal Year 2001	\$750,000
Fiscal Year 2002	\$950,000
Fiscal Year 2003	\$795,000
Fiscal Year 2004	\$750,000
Fiscal Year 2005	\$1,250,000
Fiscal Year 2006	\$1,400,000
Fiscal Year 2007	\$1,004,984
Fiscal Year 2008	\$1,483,128
Fiscal Year 2009	\$1,598,400

Northwest Straits Initiative
typical funding breakdown



We also leverage funds through the Foundation, with the majority of these funds supporting regional projects and approximately 10% allocated to MRC projects.



NORTHWEST STRAITS
marine conservation initiative

Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative
10441 Bayview-Edison Road
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
360-428-1084
www.nwstraits.org

