

# Skagit County Marine Resources Committee

## 2004 Action Grant- *Spartina* Survey and Removal Final Report

Contractor: People For Puget Sound  
Project Coordinator: Keeley O'Connell  
Report Author: Keeley O'Connell



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**Project Narrative**

*Spartina anglica*, an invasive, salt-tolerant weed, continues to threaten the natural shoreline ecosystems of Washington. 2004 represents the eighth year of coordinated treatment efforts by several state agencies and organizations in Puget Sound. Washington State continues to use a large-scale integrated pest management (IPM) approach to combat *Spartina* in the North Puget Sound area. This means utilizing several control methods (both chemical and non-chemical) in order to maximize the area of the infestation being treated and the effectiveness of treatment. Accomplishing this goal will involve cooperative working between several organizations with interests in maintaining the integrity of Puget Sound's estuaries.

People For Puget Sound continues its involvement in the control effort by dedicating its resources to outreach and education of the public through community dig events. This work is only possible through partnerships with local groups, such as the Skagit County Marine Resources Committee, dedicated to protecting the marine environment.

**Progress and Results**

*Dig Event:* The funding provided to People For Puget Sound by the Skagit County MRC resulted in another very successful large-scale community dig event. We partnered with the Swinomish Tribal Community for the fourth year in a row to promote public education and encourage alternatives to chemical control in the tribal reservation.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Skagit Dig Days community dig, held on June 19<sup>th</sup> 2004, was co-sponsored by Skagit County Marine Resources Committee, People For Puget Sound, the Swinomish Tribal Community, Skagit County Noxious Weed Board, Island County Noxious Weed Board and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Skagit Conservation District, and Skagit Conservation Education Alliance.

The event was held at the Swinomish Casino, on the Swinomish Reservation. This site was chosen based on surveys with the Swinomish Planning Department and Skagit County Noxious Weeds Control Board, and was approved by Kyle Murphy at Washington Department of Agriculture and lead entity for the North Sound *Spartina* Task Force. Permission was acquired through the Swinomish Tribal Community; no other permissions or permits were required.

Partners recruited 40 volunteers, who spent two to four hours working (see attached sign-in sheets). The good volunteer turnout and effort resulted in 100% of the visible *Spartina* (approximately 0.3 acres) being manually removed from the site. The site itself extended from the RR trestle at the Swinomish channel, along the causeway, and along the east side of the lagoon, which is approximately 1km of shoreline.

Media for the event included an interview with Keeley O'Connell by The Skagit Valley Herald. This article ran on the front page prior to the dig event, and generated some volunteer recruitment (see article in attachment). Media Alerts were sent to The Skagit valley Herald, Skagit Argus, Channel Town Press, Swinomish Kee-yooks, Shelter Bay newsletter, the Skagit Valley College, Skagit Valley Co-op, Skagit Watershed Council e-mail list, and the DOVIA e-mail list. We also recruited a volunteer to post flyers and posters throughout Whatcom and Skagit counties (see attached flyer and flyer placement list).

*Surveying and Removal:* People For Puget Sound conducted surveys in early to mid-May with Susan Moreno of the Swinomish Tribe Planning Department and Bill Rogers of the Skagit County Noxious Weeds Control Board following recommendations from the 2003 Action Grant *Spartina* Survey and Removal Final Report to the Skagit County Marine Resources Committee.

McGlinn Island causeway was surveyed for quality control follow-up from the 2003 Skagit Dig Day. Several *Spartina* seedlings and a small number of larger plants were found, indicating seed set from another site. We determined that the McGlinn site was not appropriate for another large dig event, as there was not enough *Spartina* to host 30+ volunteers for several hours. Sue Moreno determined that the Swinomish crew could remove the remaining plants during the control season. Moreno reported that work completed in mid-May 2004.

We surveyed the Kwan-ee-sum site along the Swinomish channel, which has been receiving chemical treatment since 2003. Bill Rogers recommended continuing with spray for an additional year before attempting manual control of the area. This site is approximately 2 acres with mixed habitat types including mudflat, sand, and a native marsh. *Spartina* has heavily infested the native marsh with plants ranging from seedlings to 1.5-meter diameter clones. We therefore determined that Kwan-ee-sum was not appropriate for a dig event this year, but a likely candidate for future manual efforts.

The Swinomish Casino site was surveyed as per the 2003 recommendations. The area from the Swinomish channel around the lagoon had several *Spartina* plants. Although manual and chemical control occurred at this site in 2003, the majority of the plants appeared to be under two year old. This indicates that new yearly seed set is high at this site. We determined that the casino site was appropriate for the 2004 dig event given the size of the site and amount and size of the *Spartina* plants. Manual removal was the preferred control method for the causeway and east side of the lagoon, however, Bill Rogers determined the west lagoon would require chemical control.

**Follow up and Recommendations**

The People For Puget Sound project coordinator has worked closely with the Swinomish Tribe and the Skagit County Noxious Weeds Control Board to build recommendations for site maintenance and surveys in 2005. Turner's Bay, Kwan-ee-sum and west Casino lagoon are all potential sites for dig days next year. These sites have been treated chemically for the past two+ years. It is a priority of People For Puget Sound's *Spartina* program to assist in the phase out of potentially harmful chemicals used in the treatment of the invasive grass. It is highly recommended that sites receiving spray are surveyed each year and a concise assessment for the continued need of chemical control be made. The combined efforts of the Skagit County MRC, People For Puget Sound, the Swinomish Tribe, and other partners continue to educate and involve the public in *Spartina* awareness and nearshore stewardship.

**Attachments:**

1. Volunteer sign-in sheets for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Skagit Dig Days
2. Skagit Valley Herald article dated June 16<sup>th</sup>
3. 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Skagit Dig Days flyer
4. List of dig day flyer placement

**Enclosed:**

Compact disc of 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Skagit Dig Days event photos