

COUNTY: Snohomish

Grant Number: SEANWS-2023-SnCoCN-00004

PROJECT TITLE: Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Operations and Projects

TASK NUMBER: 1.5 Annual Report

PERIOD COVERED: January 1- March 31, 2025

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Snohomish County
Marine Resources
Committee



SNOHOMISH COUNTY
Conservation & Natural Resources

Marine Resources Committee

2024 Annual Report

RESTORE, CONSERVE, EDUCATE

Message from 2024 Chair

As we reflect on 2024, the Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee has made significant strides in supporting marine conservation, thanks to the dedication of our volunteers and partners.

Over 1,400 volunteer hours were contributed by our members in a variety of projects, from kelp monitoring to forage fish surveys. Following the restoration efforts at Meadowdale Beach, our work continues to provide essential data and support for local marine health. Our community outreach events and clean-up efforts engaged many citizens to raise awareness and foster responsible stewardship of our shorelines. We worked hard to develop our strategic plan for the next five years, to continue to grow our work and collaborations with partners so we can best address pressing marine issues.

This report highlights our achievements, and I am proud to see the impact we've had in ensuring a healthier marine environment for future generations. Thank you to all who contributed to our success in 2024.



Natasha Coumou
MRC Chair
Tulalip Tribes
Representative

MRC Members



Sara
Maxwell



Julie Schlenger
Vice Co-Chair



Franchesca Perez,
Stillaguamish Tribe
Representative



Allan Hicks



Brie Townsend
Vice Co-Chair



Phil Salditt



Tim Ellis



Dawn
Presler



Andrew
Gobin



Richard
Strickland

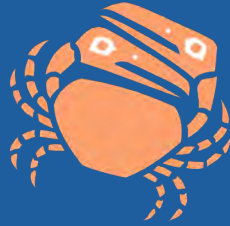


David Bain,
Ex-Officio

About the MRC

Established in 1999 and authorized by Chapter 2.800 of the Snohomish County Code, the Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee is a team of citizen volunteers appointed by Snohomish County Council to

advise them and represent diverse local interests. The members represent environmental, recreational, conservation, economic, and local and tribal government interests. By advocating in these areas, the MRC works towards the protection and restoration of Snohomish County's marine environment.



Snohomish County
Marine Resources
Committee

MRC Staff



Elisa Dawson
SWM Senior
Planner



Joycelyn Blue
SWM
Planner

Learn More

- Explore www.snocomrc.org
- Sign up for [MRC email distribution list](#) and [Northwest Straits Initiative newsletter](#)

Get Involved

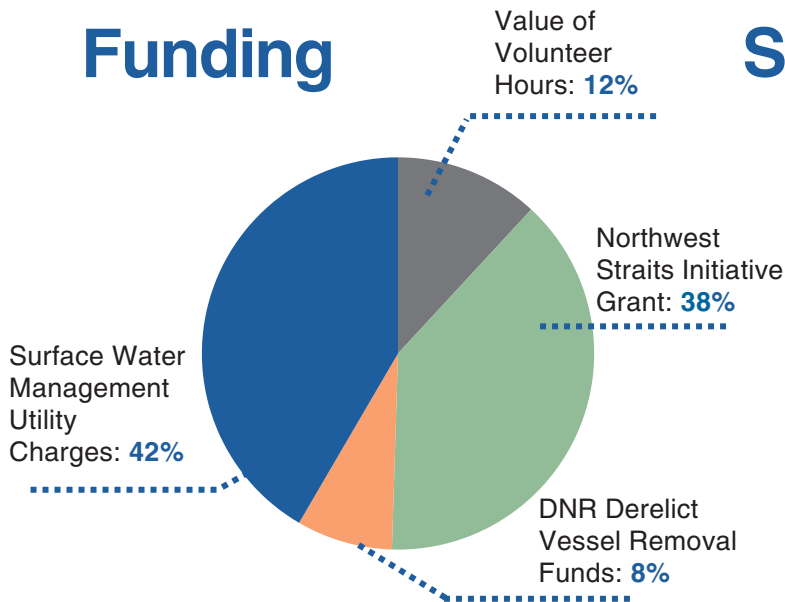
- Attend monthly MRC [meetings](#)
 - Contact Elisa.Dawson@snoco.org for more information
- Volunteer on local projects



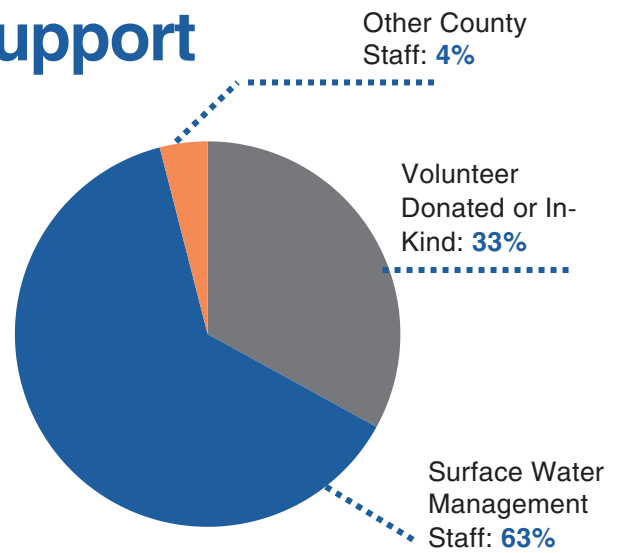
The MRC is guided by the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative (NWSI) Strategic Plan. Together these entities comprise a nonpartisan regional effort to protect and restore marine resources in the northern Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Finance

Funding



Support



The Northwest Straits Commission provides funding, training and support to seven county-based MRCs. It facilitates regional coordination among the MRCs and connects the MRC work to regional planning efforts.

LEVERAGING VOLUNTEERS AND GRANTS TO STRETCH LOCAL DOLLARS

There were 1,425 volunteer hours donated by 11 Members and 1 Ex-Officio Member in 2024 to implement the MRC's annual work plan and related activities which:

- Provided a forum to mobilize citizen support of marine conservation.
- Generated and implemented practical, on-the-ground projects that benefit the ecosystem and the economy of our region.

By leveraging county funds with grants and volunteer time, the MRC implemented cost-effective projects across Snohomish County's marine shoreline.



\$40.28

Washington State's estimated value of a volunteer hour



1,425

Volunteer hours donated in 2024.

\$57,399

Total value to Snohomish County

Strategic Plan

In the spring and summer of 2024, the Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) staff and members created a comprehensive strategic plan for the years 2025-2030. Strategic planning helps the MRC prioritize efforts, effectively allocate resources, align MRC Members and MRC Staff on the organization's goals, and ensure those goals are backed by sound reasoning.

The last Strategic Plan was completed for years 2011-2016, and with significant MRC member and staff turnover, an update was long overdue. The 2025-2030 Strategic Plan allows the group to move into the next five years with a focused vision and a framework for prioritizing work on an annual basis. This critical project was made possible because of funding from the Northwest Straits Commission and was supported by a team of consultants.

Project Highlights



14 member and staff interviews



4 strategic plan drafts reviewed



17- page final Strategic Plan



2 in-person retreats



1 stakeholder survey



2- page Executive Summary



Kelp Monitoring

Protecting vulnerable habitat begins with gathering information. The MRC assists state and federal agencies by helping collect baseline and monitoring data for species or habitats of concern, including bull kelp. The MRC kayak surveys cover the Snohomish County nearshore between Everett and Edmonds and around Hat Island. Watch the [Kelp Monitoring Video](#) on the MRC website to learn more.



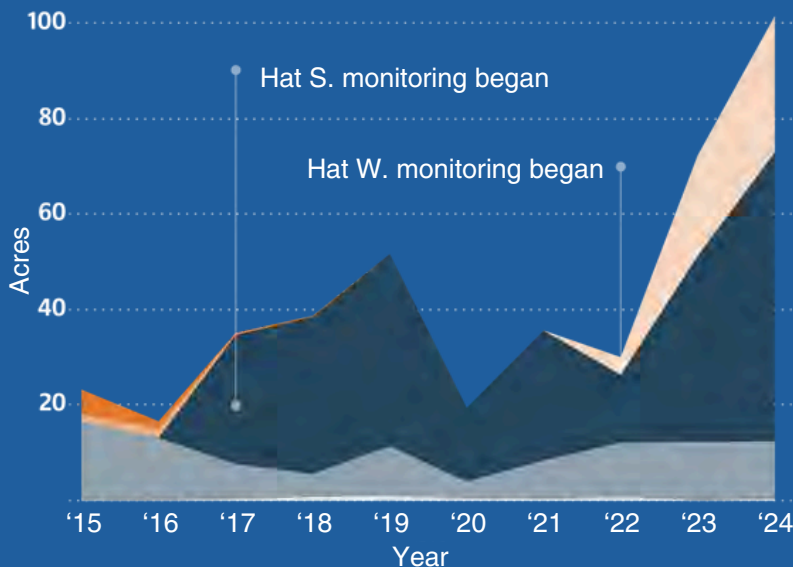
10 Years Tracking our Kelp Beds!

Bull kelp forests provide food and shelter to dozens of species in our marine ecosystem, including rockfish. **In the 10 years the MRC has been monitoring Snohomish County kelp beds, the Mukilteo and Meadowdale beds have disappeared**, while the Edmonds beds have fluctuated. The MRC began monitoring Hat Island beds more recently, adding to the total kelp acreage.

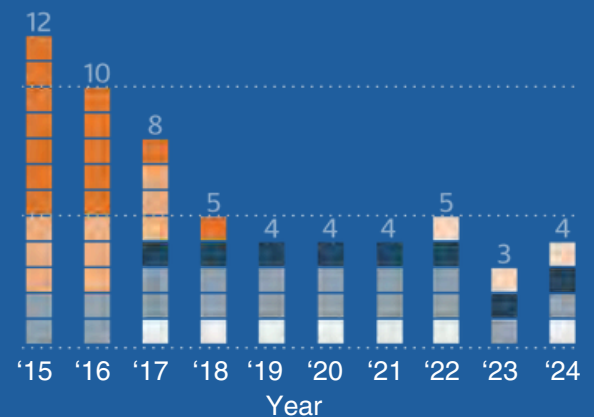
The MRC's kelp monitoring data lead to science-based decisions on how to manage this resource, and have been used to inform regional kelp planning and conservation efforts.



Acres of Beds



Number of Beds



Kelp Bed Locations



Marine Vegetation Outreach



“Dive into Kelp” Event

In October 2024, the Snohomish County MRC, in collaboration with the Northwest Straits Commission and Puget Sound Restoration Fund, hosted a free, family-friendly event at the Edmonds Public Library titled “Dive into Kelp.” Funded by a NOAA grant, the event educated attendees of all ages about the importance of kelp ecosystems. It featured a speaker panel for adults, and activities for children, including storybooks, crafts, and a marine food web exercise. Pre- and post-event surveys showed increased knowledge of the event topics.

 **1.5** hour event  **40** attendees
 **3** presentations  **2** story books

Outreach Materials

To help guests take their learning home, Dive into Kelp provided two take-home resources: an **info sheet on kelp** for the general audience and a factsheet for policymakers. Additionally, bookmarks for adults and kids were created to support the MRC’s collaboration with the Edmonds Library.



Forage Fish Monitoring Spawning Surveys

Forage fish species play a vital role in the marine food web by providing food for salmon as well as other birds, mammals, and fish. They utilize sand and gravel beaches to lay their eggs and their presence is a good indicator of a healthy marine ecosystem.

The MRC continues to monitor beaches at Meadowdale, Picnic Point, and Howarth Park for surf smelt and Pacific sand lance eggs. This data is shared with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and helps to determine if our marine areas are doing well and to evaluate the effectiveness of restoration projects.



In 2024, forage fish eggs were observed in several samples, and the MRC achieved:



40+ contacts with the public about forage fish



66 sediment samples taken



2 volunteers trained in sampling



Meadowdale Beach Restoration Project

2024 was Year 2 of the Meadowdale Beach and Estuary Restoration Monitoring Effectiveness work. The planning and implementation of the monitoring program is a highly collaborative effort among many organizations, and the MRC participates by taking forage fish samples to understand how the restoration is impacting the quality of the beach habitat. For more information on this project, visit the [**Meadowdale Monitoring Project webpage.**](#)

Marine Water Quality

ORCA

The **Ocean Research College Academy (ORCA)** is an early college program for high school juniors and seniors at Everett Community College and is located at the Port of Everett. Student learning is centered on studying water quality metrics gathered in Possession Sound. ORCA maintains two long-term in-water deployments along with conducting spot profiling. These instruments collect a variety of data, including salinity/conductivity, temperature, pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, and relative chlorophyll concentration. The Snohomish County MRC has partnered with ORCA to gather and analyze local water quality information. So far, data from 2020 - 2024 has been processed with the goal to eventually create a Possession Sound Marine Water Monitoring Annual Report.



Photo by
Ardi Kveven



Marine Ecology Summer Intern

2024 was the second year the Snohomish MRC hosted a Marine Ecology summer intern. Cassie Laney is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Oceanography at the University of Washington. Having attended ORCA in high school, she was already familiar with Snohomish County shorelines. During her time with the MRC, Cassie reviewed the ORCA water quality data and helped create a draft shoreline assessment framework for the MRC to build off of.

Derelict Vessels

Surface Water Management (SWM) and the Snohomish County MRC have worked with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) since 2018 to support the removal of derelict boats from the Snohomish River estuary and nearshore. Funding for this effort is provided by WA DNR and Snohomish County SWM.

In 2024, two owner-abandoned derelict vessels were identified and removed.



From 2018-2024, this partnership removed



29 vessels,

weighing an
estimated



260,000 pounds!

Take Action!

You can report a derelict vessel using the MyCoast App: www.mycoast.org/wa



All derelict vessels are recycled or destroyed following a process to identify and work with the last known owners. Upon removal of each vessel, SWM coordinates with DNR to recoup 90+% of the project costs through **DNR's Derelict Vessels Removal Program.**

Derelict vessels impact aquatic habitat and threaten human safety by:



*Creating
navigational
hazards*

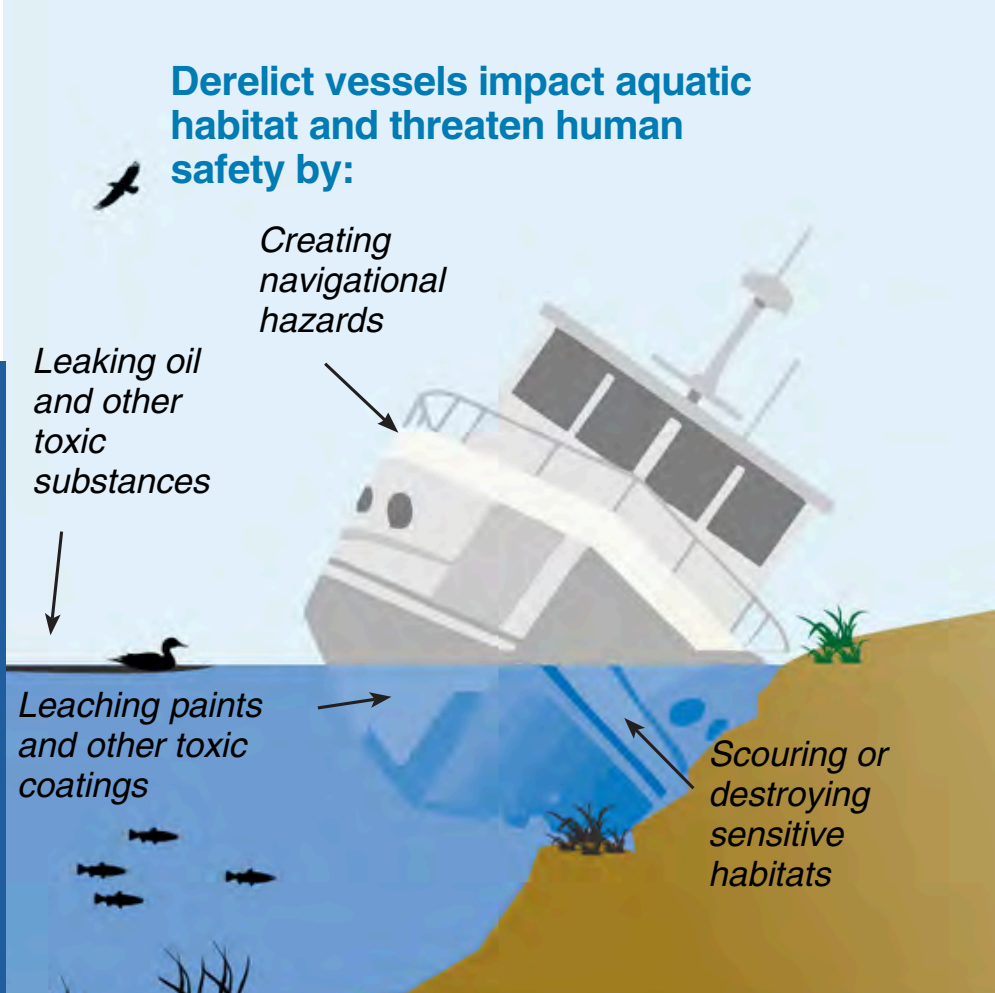
*Leaking oil
and other
toxic
substances*



*Leaching paints
and other toxic
coatings*



*Scouring or
destroying
sensitive
habitats*



Education and Outreach

Plastic Free Salish Sea

The **Plastic Free Salish Sea** campaign brings organizations, business, and individuals together to change the culture of plastic use across the Puget Sound area. They provide educational and practical resources through their website, Plastic Free Living toolkits, and community events.



Every year,
8 million
metric tons
of plastic enters
our oceans.

The Snohomish County MRC recognizes this as a major issue of concern and is taking steps to address this problem within our county. One way is through our quarterly beach cleanups. In total, these quarterly clean ups in 2024 collected 271 lbs. of trash.



In Our Community

The Snohomish County MRC provides education on key issues relating to our 123 miles of shoreline, including best management practices for shoreline landowners, recreational fishermen, and other interested citizens. In 2024, the MRC connected with the public at



10 events!

For more information, visit the **MRC outreach and education webpage.**

Education and Outreach

Crabber Outreach

Beginning on opening crabbing weekend, the Snohomish County MRC worked with WSU Beach Watchers staff and volunteers to connect with approximately 350 crabbers. Volunteers conducted outreach at the 10th Street boat launch in Everett on four July mornings. They provided crabbers with information and products to support sustainable fishing and crabbing practices in an effort to reduce both marine debris and wildlife loss. In addition to in-person outreach, the MRC posted information on social media and issued a press release in coordination with the Northwest Straits Foundation. Videos from the campaign can be viewed on the [MRC Recreational Crabber Education webpage](#).



Lost Crab Pots

Researchers estimate that each year in Puget Sound

12,000 crab pots are lost,
which catch and kill an estimated **180,000 crabs** annually.



Oil Spill Prevention

For the second year in a row, the Snohomish County MRC has distributed small oil spill kits to boaters to prevent oil from entering Puget Sound. Oil spill kits include information on how to report spills, and materials to prevent and manage small spills on private vessels. 200+ kits were handed out between 2023 and 2024.