



ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Oct 2024 - Sept 2025



CLALLAM MRC MEMBERSHIP

About the Clallam MRC

The Clallam County Marine Resources Committee (Clallam MRC) was established in 1998 as part of the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative. It brings citizens together to protect and restore marine resources. The committee works on improving shellfish harvest areas, habitat protection, salmon recovery, and reducing impacts on marine resources. It also supports environmental monitoring, marine debris removal, oil spill response training, Olympia oyster restoration, community education, and student internships. The MRC is working toward benchmarks for marine habitats, marine life, water quality, community engagement, and climate change.

MEMBERS

LaTrisha Suggs — Port Angeles City Council, MRC Chair
Alan Clark — At Large, MRC Vice Chair, Northwest Straits Commission Representative
Ann Soule — District II, MRC Vice Chair
Ed Bowlby — Academic Community
Tim Cochnauer — At-Large
Nancy Stephanz — Conservation & Environmental Interests
Bob Vreeland — Conservation & Environmental Interests
Chris Rumble — Development Community
Jeff Ward — District I
Mike Doherty — District III
Chris Burns — Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
Allyce Miller — Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
Alicia Amerson — Marine-Related Recreation & Tourism
Jesse Waknitz — Port of Port Angeles
Meggan Uecker — Sequim City Council

ALTERNATES

Ioana Bociu — Academic Community
Mary Sue Brancato — At-Large
Ray Kirk — At-Large
Lance Vail — District I
Lyn Muench — District II
Dann May — District III
Robert Knapp — Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
Chelsea Korbolic — Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
Justin Stapleton — Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
Helle Andersen — Marine-Related Recreation & Tourism
Navarra Carr — Port Angeles City Council
Katharine Frazier — Port of Port Angeles
Kelly Burger — Sequim City Council
Harmony Rutter — Sequim City Council

STAFF

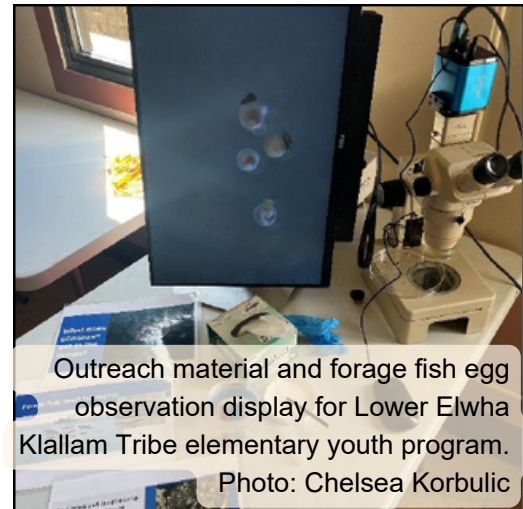
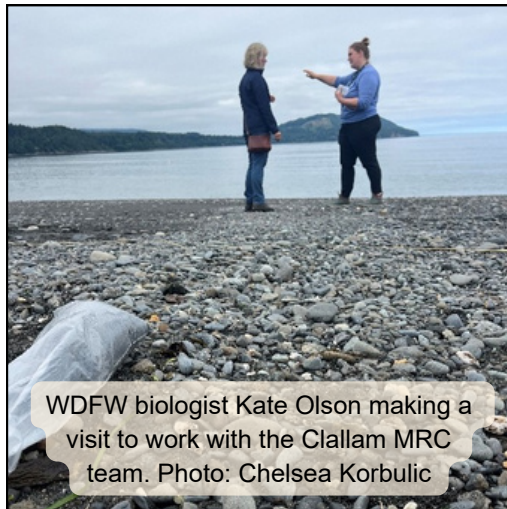
Rebecca Mahan — Habitat Team Manager / MRC Coordinator
Cathy Lear — Habitat Team Manager
Chase O'Neil — Habitat Biologist / MRC Project Coordinator
Amelia Kalagher — MRC Administrative Specialist

FORAGE FISH MONITORING

GOAL: To document forage fish spawning events and the beaches they spawn on.

HIGHLIGHTS: Volunteers found a total of 195 surf smelt eggs. Three new participants were trained. Clallam MRC received a voucher collection of preserved eggs from WDFW for educational outreach.

The MRC collects substrate samples from selected beaches to determine usage by shoreline forage fish species. These fish use beaches to spawn, and are crucial to the marine food web. The goal of this project is to document temporal and spatial trends in forage fish spawning at these beaches. The data is used to better understand forage fish population trends as part of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) long-term data set. The sampling protocol was developed by WDFW, which also provides training and analyzes the collected samples for forage fish egg presence.



The MRC currently surveys four sites monthly: Cline Spit, Ediz Hook, and both east and west sites at Elwha Beach. The site selection is made in partnership with WDFW. In 2026, the MRC will continue surveying these four sites and working to train new volunteers for the effort.

CLINE SPIT

194

surf smelt eggs

Since 2018, Cline Spit has been surveyed monthly as a "reference site". Survey efforts reliably find surf smelt eggs here, particularly during summer. In 2025, eggs were found in October, November, December, and April.

EDIZ HOOK

1

surf smelt egg

In April 2017, the MRC began sampling for forage fish eggs at two restored sites on Ediz Hook, in partnership with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. The sampling is now focused on Tesoro Beach. Only one egg was found this year, in February.

ELWHA BEACH

0

eggs found

The MRC first sampled east of the Elwha River's mouth, and later expanded to a site west of the river's mouth. Previous years found small numbers of eggs on the west side of the river's mouth, but no eggs were found in 2024-2025.

Forage fish data are both processed by and shared with WDFW, as part of a [regional long-term dataset](#).

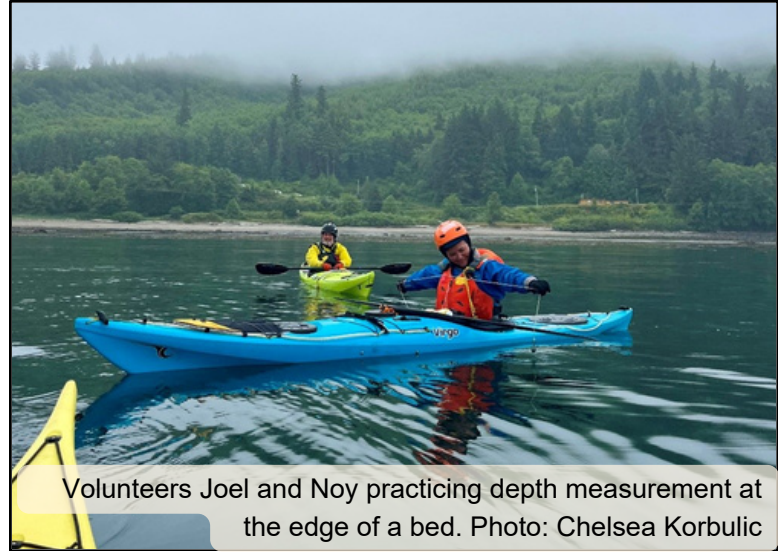
KELP MONITORING

GOAL: To monitor the size and density of kelp canopies during summer low-tide events, and develop a georeferenced database of kelp abundance and distribution for the SoundIQ database & WA Department of Natural Resources.

HIGHLIGHTS: Three kelp surveys were conducted of Freshwater Bay and Clallam Bay. All three beds appeared to be in good health in 2025. The team spotted a group of sea otters in Clallam Bay!



The 2025 kayak monitoring team. Photo: Chelsea Korbolic

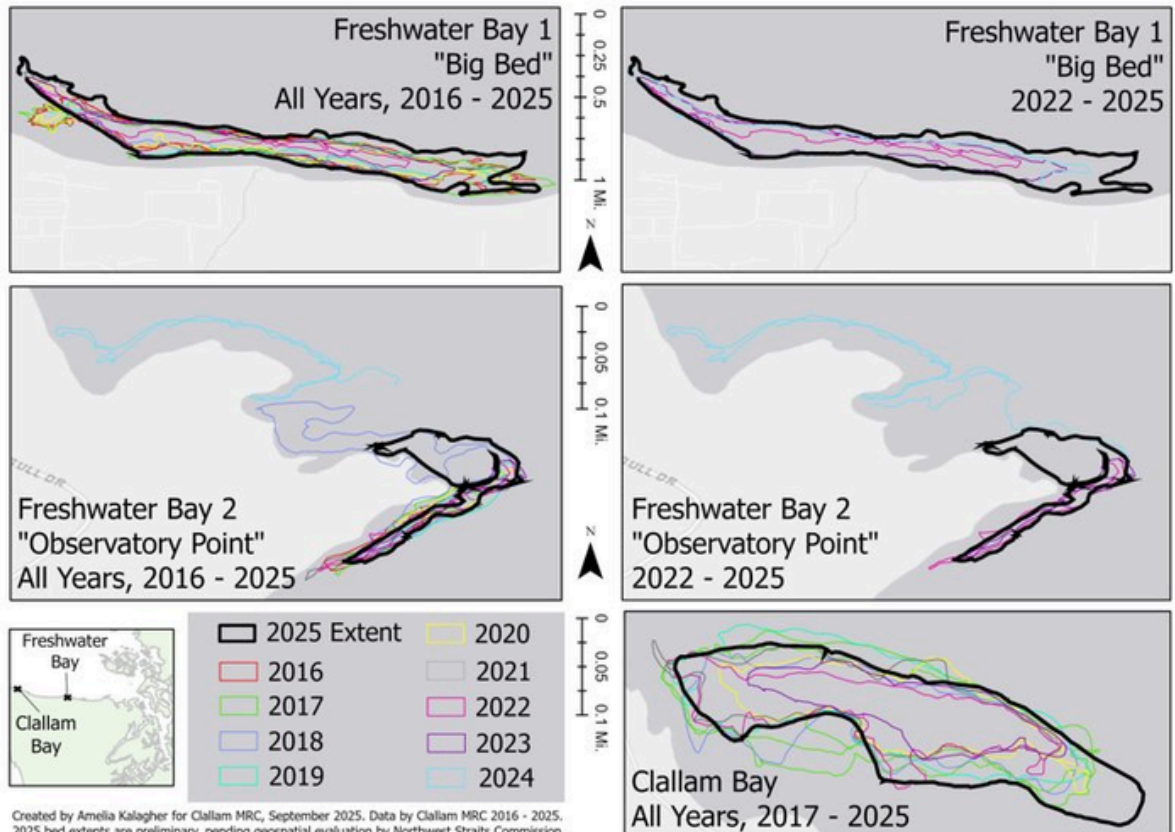


Volunteers Joel and Noy practicing depth measurement at the edge of a bed. Photo: Chelsea Korbolic

MRC members and volunteers conducted three kelp surveys at Freshwater Bay and Clallam Bay in July and August 2025. The beds were dominated by bull kelp (*Nereocystis leutkeana*), while giant kelp was noted in two very concentrated areas and there was a large variety of other macroalgae observed. A highlight this year was observing a group of sea otters at Clallam Bay!

Kelp Beds in Clallam County, 2016 - 2025 Comparison

The survey data is incorporated into the Northwest Straits Commission's SoundIQ database and used to track the size and extent of the kelp beds in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The information is also shared with WDNR.

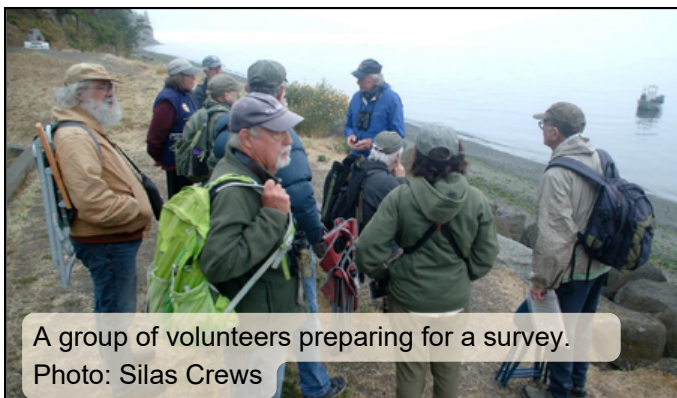


PIGEON GUILLEMOT MONITORING

GOAL: Document pigeon guillemot breeding colonies on Clallam County beaches using established protocols, involving citizen scientist volunteers to expand the monitoring area in the Salish Sea for this indicator species.

HIGHLIGHTS: A total of eight pigeon guillemot colonies were monitored by 36 volunteers. An estimated 252 guillemots called these colonies home for the 2025 nesting season.

The pigeon guillemot is considered an indicator species of nearshore health, since it feeds primarily on forage fish such as gunnels and sculpins, and other small marine creatures which it catches by diving beneath the surface. Pigeon guillemots lay eggs in early summer, and the burrows are monitored from June to approximately September as the adults forage for food and the chicks mature. 2025 was the effort's 10th year; Clallam MRC initiated pigeon guillemot breeding surveys in the county in 2016, in collaboration with Island MRC and Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society. The protocol and long-term data set are managed by the Salish Sea Guillemot Network.



A group of volunteers preparing for a survey.

Photo: Silas Crews

MRC members and a large crew of volunteers continued their efforts to survey pigeon guillemot populations in 2025. Monitoring began in June, and continued until nesting was over at each site in late August or September. This year saw slightly fewer volunteers than 2024, but more volunteer hours - meaning each of the monitoring volunteers contributed even more of their time to surveys on average. All data are provided to the regional Salish Sea Guillemot Network.



Pigeon guillemot taking flight at Port Williams Beach.

Photo: Bob Phreaner

252

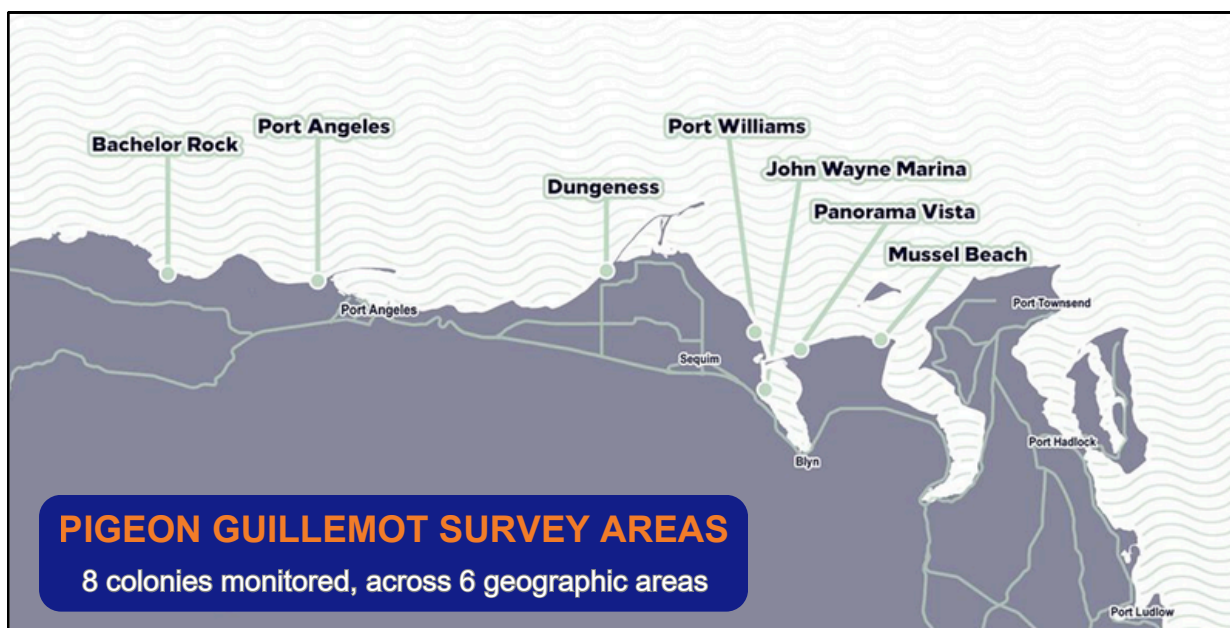
total estimated guillemot population across 8 colonies

36

number of volunteers for guillemot surveys in 2025

703

volunteer hours contributed in 2025 - across 88 surveys

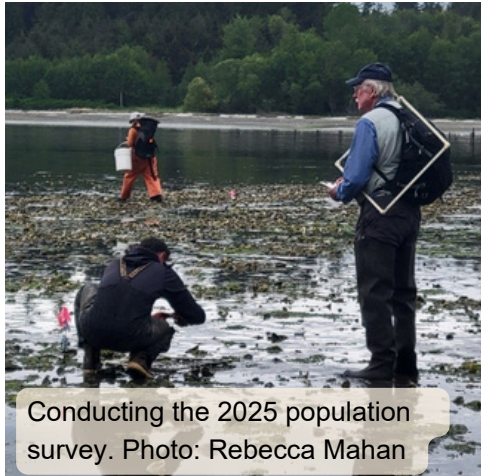


OLYMPIA OYSTER RESTORATION

GOAL: Expand the Olympia oyster population in Sequim Bay to self-sustaining populations.

HIGHLIGHTS: Higher Olympia oyster population than in prior years of this restoration project - thanks to seeding and habitat enhancement in 2025 and prior.

The Clallam MRC is part of a regional effort to restore the native Olympia oyster, in partnership with the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe. Over the years, this has included the placement of blank Pacific oyster shell, and seeding with Olympia oyster spat. The population is monitored each spring to assess the restoration progress.



Conducting the 2025 population survey. Photo: Rebecca Mahan



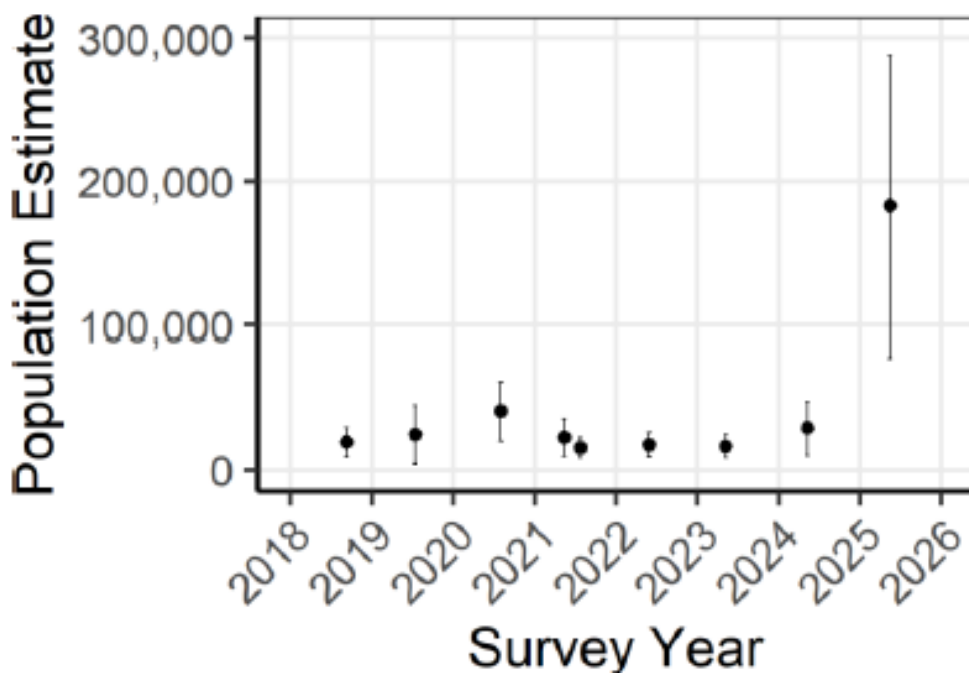
Measuring an Olympia oyster from a survey quadrat. Photo: Rebecca Mahan



Young Olympia oysters on oyster shell. Photo: Rebecca Mahan

This is a wonderful excuse to be out on the mudflats doing something useful.
-MRC volunteer

Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe biologists analyze this data to determine population and recruitment trends. The estimated population of oysters in the 1.5 acre Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe restoration site increased to ~182,881 in 2025, representing a recently seeded beach. In general, the population estimate and recruitment trends are indicative of a stable population with some years of heightened recruitment. Long-term, these monitoring efforts will help inform future actions on habitat enhancement and planting of new seed.



110

sample plots (quadrats) surveyed

182,881

+/- 105,086

estimated Olympia oyster population at the 1.5 acre restoration site

640%

estimated increase in Olympia oyster population at the 1.5 acre restoration site from 2024 to 2025

ELWHA BEACH STEWARDSHIP

GOAL: To protect and improve water quality, contribute to nearshore habitat and species protection, and encourage community stewardship.

HIGHLIGHTS: 5,400 dog waste bags were distributed to beach users between October 2024 - September 2025.

The West Elwha Beach Stewardship project started in 2016-18, where usage surveys conducted as an intern project observed excessive dog and human waste entering the nearshore at this popular local beach. This waste carries a risk for fecal coliform bacteria and nutrient overload – much more so than waste from wildlife, because of the supplemented diet of domestic dogs.

Due to these water quality concerns, the Clallam MRC now sponsors an additional SaniKan, dog waste bag dispenser and dog waste trash container, along with documenting the usage of these facilities and the beach. The goal of the effort is to protect and improve water quality, contribute to nearshore habitat and species protection, and encourage community stewardship. The CCMRC has conducted surveys on foot as well as continuing a QR code survey option this year.

31

Total online questionnaire responses from beach users October 2024 - September 2025

5,400

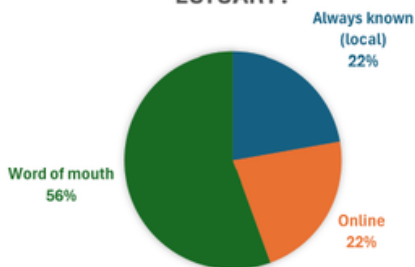
Dog waste bags distributed October 2024 - September 2025

96%

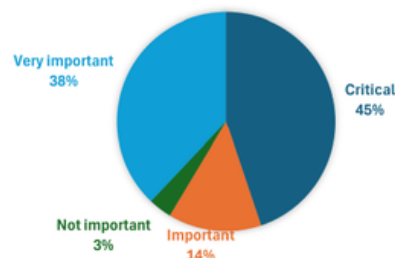
Survey respondents that marked the importance of the facilities as "important" or higher

The surveys administered on the beach and through the QR code showed, unsurprisingly, that the beach remains popular with both locals and visitors for a variety of activities.

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT ELWHA ESTUARY?



HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE SANIKAN AND DOG WASTE STATION ON THE DIKE?



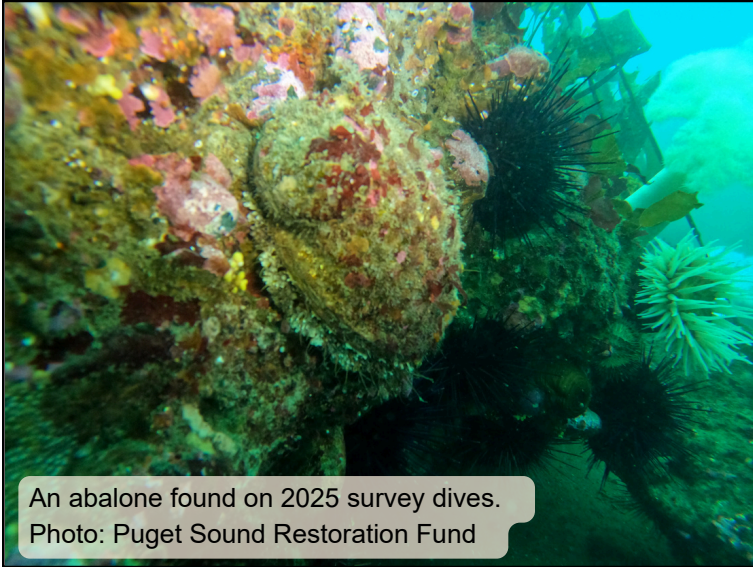
What do you usually do at the estuary?

Walking — 24 responses
Birdwatching — 15 responses
Walking the dog — 14 responses
Picnicking — 6 responses
Surfing — 5 responses

PINTO ABALONE

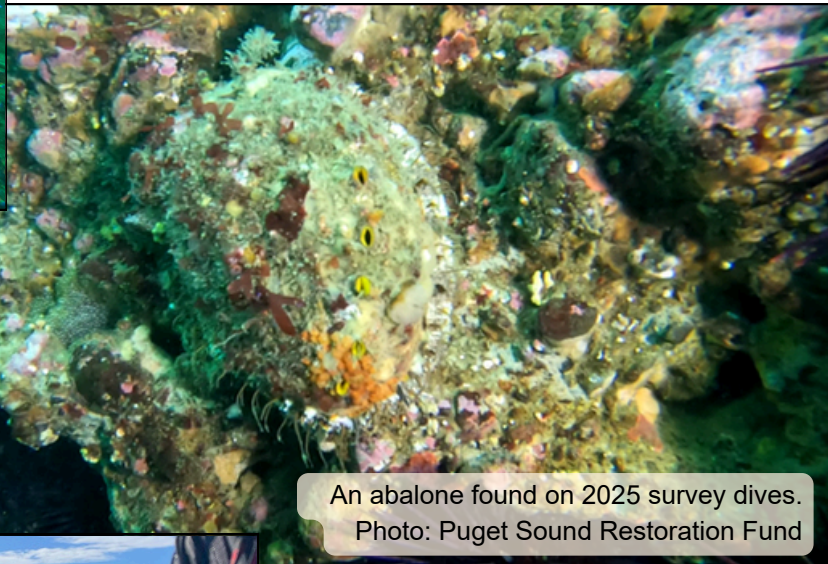
GOAL: Conduct presence/absence surveys for highly endangered Pinto abalone in Clallam County waters, with the possible future intent to participate in restoration outplanting.

HIGHLIGHTS: Pinto abalone were found in the Port Angeles subregion. Identified two possible outplanting sites and a potential index site.



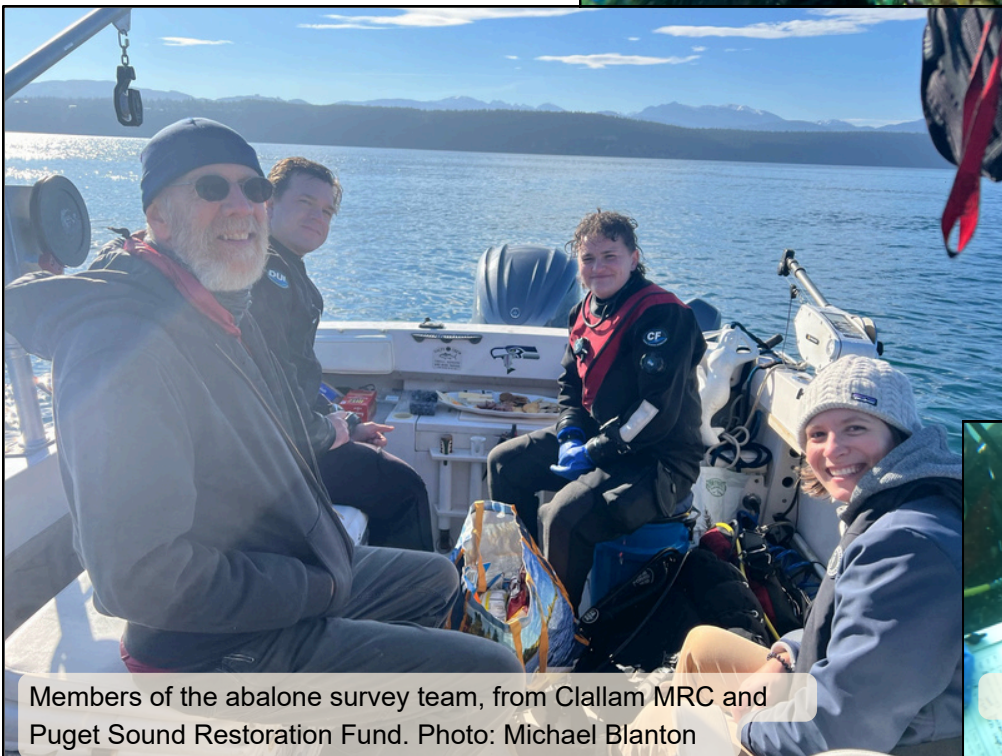
An abalone found on 2025 survey dives.
Photo: Puget Sound Restoration Fund

The pinto (northern) abalone, *Haliotis kamtschatkana*, is the only abalone species indigenous to Washington waters. This large gastropod plays a vital ecological role as an herbivorous grazer that maintains rocky reef habitat for settlement of other invertebrates and canopy kelp. Populations are severely depleted throughout their range in this state and considered functionally extinct. This is largely due to anthropogenic factors, including overharvesting during the legal recreational fishery and poaching during the 1980-90s.



An abalone found on 2025 survey dives.
Photo: Puget Sound Restoration Fund

The MRC, in collaboration with Puget Sound Restoration Fund, has begun a comprehensive survey initiative to assess the population status of pinto abalone in Clallam County waters. This effort started with survey dives in 2024, and continued in the Port Angeles subregion in 2025.



Members of the abalone survey team, from Clallam MRC and Puget Sound Restoration Fund. Photo: Michael Blanton

2025 surveys found pinto abalone in the Port Angeles subregion! The team also identified possible future outplanting or index monitoring sites. Three new divers were trained during these surveys. This work emphasizes the importance of partnerships both locally and regionally. Surveys will continue in 2026 and beyond.



A surprise sea lion visitor during survey dives!
Photo: Puget Sound Restoration Fund

EDIZ HOOK REVEGETATION

GOAL: Support the restoration effort on Ediz Hook conducted by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe through the addition of native beach plants for natural resilience and wildlife habitat.

HIGHLIGHTS: In Spring 2025, 108 volunteers planted 4,003 plants and sowed 4.9 lbs of seed. 68 of those volunteers were students from Dry Creek Elementary and Queen of Angels School.



The southern shoreline of Ediz Hook has recently been restored to a more natural landform by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, which entailed placing sand and wood from Elwha River back into the backshore area. This revegetation enhancement project was critical to cover newly deposited sand with native vegetation in order to offer ecosystem services to the birds, wildlife, people and other species that inhabit Ediz Hook. This is in collaboration with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Clallam Conservation District.



In March 2025, 108 volunteers worked together with staff to add 4,003 native nearshore plants and sow 4.9 pounds of seed. The fourteen species of plants used included sea thrift, American dunegrass, coastal lupin, coastal gumweed, and many more.

1.23
acres replanted

4,003
bareroot plants planted

108
total volunteers

203
hours volunteered



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

GOAL: Successful engagement of the public, students, and citizen scientists in emerging issues including climate change, toxins including marine debris, fossil fuel transportation, and shoreline development within Clallam County.

HIGHLIGHTS: The MRC continued to distribute educational materials, attend local events, train the community for oil spill response, and support projects conducted in the community by partners and others.

OUTREACH CARDS



For the third year, MRC members distributed custom outreach cards to local eateries and community establishments. These can function as coasters, and include photos and critter information written collaboratively by MRC members, [linking users to the MRC website](#). Over 5,000 cards have been distributed to date in 11 designs. The MRC plans to continue distributing these to local establishments and at the outreach events it attends.

EVENTS



The Clallam MRC engages in community outreach events and festivals, promoting marine stewardship and sharing information about the MRC itself. Outreach events in 2023-2024 included Forever Streamfest and Dungeness River Festival (pictured), which is attended by all 3rd-5th graders from the City of Sequim. The MRC also presented a lecture for Peninsula College's "Studium Generale" course, sharing the MRC and its work with the students and public.

OIL SPILL RESPONSE TRAINING



The Clallam MRC, in collaboration with the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, organized an 8-hour HAZWOPER refresher / oiled wildlife response training event in April 2025. HAZWOPER is a nationally recognized certification program designed to give participants the skills to respond to hazardous waste crises, including oil spills. This training allowed participants to stay updated on their certification, helping to maintain community preparation in the event of an oil spill.



MRC OPERATIONS

GOAL: To carry out administrative functions in support of the mission, including work plan preparation, developing and preparing grant proposals, programmatic staff support, project monitoring and performance tracking, coordinating education and internship programs, planning, and participating in training opportunities.

Clallam MRC Meetings and Communication -The Clallam MRC met monthly to discuss project items and listen to informative presentations from various invited guests. Meetings were held in a hybrid format, with the opportunity to attend either in-person or via Zoom. Clallam MRC staff prepared and distributed meeting agendas and minutes. One special meeting was held in February - an MRC retreat focused on planning projects for the 2025-2027 biennium.

Grant Administration - Clallam MRC staff wrote regular progress reports, tracked and administered the budget, and ensured projects were supported and reaching their stated goals.

Website Maintenance -The Clallam MRC maintained its [website](#) with information on past and upcoming meetings, and current and completed projects. In February of 2020, Clallam MRC initiated their [Facebook page](#), which was maintained throughout this year.

Annual Workplan Development - The Clallam MRC developed a [work plan](#) to guide its work and priorities for the 2025-2026 grant period.

Strategic Plan - The Clallam MRC finalized its [2025-2029 strategic plan](#).

Training - Clallam MRC members and staff were encouraged to participate in trainings relevant to the Clallam MRC's goals and projects.

The MRC hosted an 8-hour HAZWOPER refresher and oiled wildlife response training, which was open to the public.

Three new participants were trained for forage fish monitoring.

Rebecca Mahan participated in a one-week leadership training workshop within Clallam County.

Representation at NWSC Meetings - Alan Clark served as the Clallam MRC representative to the Northwest Straits Commission. The Representative attended the monthly meetings, which were both online and in-person at various times.

Advisory Role to Local Government Officials - In March 2025, the MRC submitted a letter to County Commissioners regarding the Three Crabs Road area.

Participation in Local Integrating Organization Meetings - As a member of the steering group Rebecca Mahan attended the quarterly steering group meetings and the ERN/LIO quarterly meetings.

FUNDING AND SUPPORT

The Clallam MRC depends on its members and community volunteers. During the 2024-2025 grant year, Clallam County MRC members and community volunteers contributed 1,173.5 hours for a total value of \$47,268.58 (@40.28/hr). The MRC also received 311 hours of in-kind contributions from community and project partners, totaling \$12,527.08. Thank you volunteers!!

In the 2024-2025 grant year, the Clallam MRC received funding from Washington State, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) through grants administered by the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC). Thank you to our funders!



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

THANK YOU to all the following organizations, who have collaborated on the MRC's projects through funding, staff and volunteer support, project development, and logistical assistance.

