Agenda

Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Date: September 25, 2026
Time: 10:30 AM - 3:15 PM
Location: Ebey's Landing Beach (see details below)
&
Pacific Rim Institute, Multi-Purpose Room
180 Parker Rd, Coupeville, WA 98239

We acknowledge the lands we're on today are the ancestral and current homelands of Indigenous Nations who have stewarded them since time immemorial. We respect their sovereignty, support their Treaty rights, their right to self-determination, and we honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. These Indigenous Nations include the Jamestown S'Klallam, Lower Elwha Klallam, Lummi, Makah, Nooksack, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Samish, Stillaguamish, Swinomish, and Tulalip Tribes.

Today we are in the homelands of the Lower Skagit and Snohomish tribes.

Documents for NW Straits Commission Review:

- **August Meeting Minutes**

10:30 AM	**Meet on Ebey's Landing Beach** Parking lot (Discover pass required), or along Hill Road (no Discover pass needed). Meet on the beach to begin the site visit.	
10:30 – 10:40 AM	**Welcome and introductions** Tribal acknowledgement	Jamie Stephens, Chair
10:40 – 11:10 AM	**Site Visit and Presentation: Bull Kelp Monitoring Program**	Carter Webb, Island MRC
11:10 – 11:25 AM	**Travel to Pacific Rim Institute** 180 Parker Rd, Coupeville, WA 98239	
11:25 – 11:30 AM	**Reconvene Meeting** Meeting minutes approval	Jamie Stephens, Chair

11:30 – 11:40 AM	**Remarks from Island County Commissioner Janet St. Clair**	Janet St. Clair
11:40 – 12:10 PM	**MRC Reports**	MRC Representatives
12:10 – 1:10 PM	**Working Lunch**	
1:10 – 1:50 PM	**Speed Date with a Scientist: Molt Search**	Lisa Watkins, Washington Sea Grant
1:50 – 2:20 PM	**Committee Updates** • Executive Committee • External Relations Committee • Science Advisory Committee	 Lynne Wenberg Lucas Hart Emily Grason
2:20 – 2:35 PM	**Business Items** • Meeting Highlights reminder • Conference registration closes 10/19 • December Commission Meeting reminder • Authorized public entities	 Katalin Chapman Lucas Hart and Dana Oster
2:35 – 2:50 PM	**Project Updates** • Communications Plan	 Jessica Owens
3:50 – 3:00 PM	**Commissioner Updates** • (NW Indian Fisheries Commission, Puget Sound Partnership)	
3:00 – 3:10 PM	**Public Comment**	
3:10 – 3:15 PM	**Meeting Highlights Collection**	Katalin Chapman

3:15 PM	**Adjourn**

The next regularly scheduled NW Straits Commission meeting will be December 11 on Zoom. Please see our Events Page for more information about our meetings.

Minutes

Northwest Straits Commission Meeting
August 28, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Attendees

Commission Members: Jamie Stephens (Chair), Lynne Wenberg (Vice-Chair, Skagit), Rick Beauregard (Whatcom), Alan Clark (Clallam), Ken Collins (Island), Emily Grason, Brenda Johnson (Jefferson), Jason Lim (Puget Sound Partnership-Alternate), Mike Ramsey (San Juan), Phil Salditt (Snohomish), Elsa Schwartz
Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Jessica Owens, Allie Simpson, Leah Skare, Jeff Whitty, Katalin Chapman, Suzanne Shull
Others in Attendance: Sunny L. Jardine, Darla Gay Smith (Skagit MRC member), Alex Stote (DNR)
Absent: Cecilia Gobin (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission), Mindy Roberts (Puget Sound Partnership)

Welcome and Tribal Acknowledgement

Jamie Stephens opened the meeting with the Tribal Acknowledgment and introductions.

The July 24, 2026, Northwest Straits Commission meeting minutes and 2027 NW Straits Commission Meeting Schedule were approved by consensus.

Speed Date with a Scientist: The Economics of Harmful Algal Blooms

Dr. Sunny L. Jardine, Assistant Professor at University of Washington's School of Marine & Environmental Affairs, presented on the economics of harmful algal blooms. Specifically, her presentation shared the economic impacts of Pseudo-nitzschia algal blooms on Dungeness crab fisheries. These algal blooms release domoic acid, a neurotoxin which concentrates up the food chain and can impact human health. Dr. Jardine's research investigates the effectiveness of evisceration orders and how fisheries of different sizes are affected. Please visit Speed Dating with Scientists to review past speakers and contact information.

Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Reports

Clallam MRC *– Alan Clark*

- The Clallam kelp team completed three kelp surveys on our monitored beds.
- Ed Bowlby, pigeon guillemot project lead, gave a field tour and presentation for Clallam County Commissioner Mark Ozias and the WA Association of Counties leadership team.
- Ann Soule gave an introduction at the Salish Sea Alliance workshop at the Dungeness River Nature Center on Clallam MRC.

DRAFT

- Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) trainings are fully booked with 30 participants and a waitlist.

Island MRC *– Ken Collins*

- The MRC has spent the last few months Strategic Planning for 2027-2030. They are planning to bring "lessons learned" and a framework to build a strategic plan to the November MRC Conference.
- Island MRC is partnering with Skagit MRC to host a legislative visit on September 18 to look at Bowman Bay and Cornet Bay.

Jefferson MRC *– Brenda Johnson*

- The No-Anchor Zone team met on August 8 and took a donated Taylor boat out to Mystery Bay and Port Hadlock and cleaned every buoy, 5 at Mystery Bay and 5 at Port Hadlock. A fair bit of epibiota was present, but all in all things seemed ok. One of the five buoys at Port Hadlock was very low in the water because the plastic on the buoy had imploded and wrinkled. Next visit they will install a new one in its place.
- Members are presenting at next month's Wooden Boat Festival outreach event for the second week of September.
- The Mystery Bay Management Plan headed by the State Department of Health is still being updated. Updates include dock infrastructure updates and harvesting guidelines.

San Juan MRC *– Mike Ramsey*

- The MRC represented at the San Juan County Fair with a booth in conjunction with the San Juan County Department of Environmental Stewardship. MRC members Dr. Olivia Graham and Flora Vaught presented about eelgrass and MRC outreach at the Green Village Speaker Series.
- MRC members finalized scoring as the citizens advisory group for Salmon Recovery ranking the socio-economic value of proposed salmon recovery projects. Two projects will move forward: one to remove key stressors located in eelgrass such as creosote pilings, derelict docks, floats, and boathouses; the second is to pursue a conservation easement at an undeveloped shoreline parcel.
- Plastic Free Salish Sea participated in the San Juan County Fair Trashion Fashion show by crafting outfits made from boat shrink wrap and plastic film recycling bin materials. The key messaging was that our society is so dependent on plastic that it is time to start new and work towards being plastic free! Fairgoers were hopefully inspired by this message to think before they shrink (wrap) their boats!

Skagit MRC *– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson*

- The primary Lone Tree kelp bed has increased dramatically in size and density since June, 2026! The kelp looks very healthy. In addition, there were two new beds and other areas of kelp spread throughout the shoreline segments growing in shallow areas with eelgrass.

DRAFT

- The MRC voted to establish new subcommittees to help implement the actions in the MRC's 5-Year Strategic Plan. Subcommittees include: Communications, Recruitment, Science, Project Leads, and Executive Subcommittees. The next step is to assign subcommittee leads.
- The MRC Recruitment Subcommittee identified gaps and created a list of places, people, organizations etc. to pursue for potential candidates. They created a new MRC Recruitment webpage, a link to which is also provided on the MRC homepage.

***Snohomish MRC** – Phil Salditt*

- August kelp monitoring was successful at Edmonds and Hat Island. The Hat Island bed had a Gray Whale feeding in it!
- The MRC and Washington State University Beach Watchers are hosting an Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol (ETAP) beach cleanup at Howarth Park on September 26.
- The MRC will be tabling at Sustainamania on September 26 from 10am-2pm.
- The MRC had a summer picnic instead of their typical monthly meeting.

***Whatcom MRC** – Rick Beauregard*

- The MRC and volunteers returned to North Chuckanut Bay on August 11 to establish 3 Olympia oyster restoration plots. In total, 24 people participated, representing the Whatcom MRC, City of Bellingham, Northwest Maritime Center, Bellingham Technical College, Western Washington University, Washington Conservation Corps, Lummi Natural Resources, the Nooksack tribe, the Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum, and the NWSC.
- The two MRC Wildcat Cove interns conclude their internship at the end of August. They provided a fantastic presentation to the full MRC during the August 6 meeting and will be meeting with State Parks staff to provide an overview of their findings and recommendations for future actions.
- The MRC has a few upcoming outreach events including a stream and beach walk during Whatcom Water Week on September 15, tabling at Bellingham SeaFeast on September 26, and is working on putting together an activity for Orca Recovery Day on October 17.

Committee Updates

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee did not meet this month, though they voted on the Environmental Leadership Award and have chosen their awardee. The awardee will be celebrated at the MRC Conference.

External Relations Committee

The Committee met to discuss legislative site visits, including the combined Skagit and Island counties site visit. Snohomish is also planning a legislative visit.

DRAFT

Alan Clark discussed the state budget and proviso with State Senator Mike Chapman and encouraged MRC members to reach out to the Governor's office to share the importance of MRC work.

Science Advisory Committee (SAC)

Emily Grason emphasized the Science Advisory Committee's offer of a collaborative session with MRCs is still open. Please contact Dana Oster (oster@nwstraits.org) by September 18 if your MRC is interested.

The SAC will meet in-person in September to prepare for the SAC Pre-Conference Workshop, which already has a large number of registrations.

Business Items

Brainstorm on discussion topics for future Commission meetings

Commissioners suggested:

- A follow up on the "Reaching your MRC's Full Potential" session from the 2025 conference. A mini-forum on challenges and successes of each MRC, perhaps at a future retreat or portion of an in-person commission meeting.
- A presentation and discussion on how different organizations fit together. For example, the role of Puget Sound Partnership, Salish Sea Alliance, NW Straits Commission, MRCs, Local Integrating Organizations (LIOs), Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. Specifically, guidance on how to discuss these partnerships with the public, a visual aid, and a chronological map of when these different entities and their work started.

September Commission meeting reminder

The Commission will meet in-person in Island County on Friday September 25, from 10:30AM to 3:30PM at Ebey's Landing and Pacific Rim Institute. More information will be available on our events page.

Discussion: Proposed updates to mooring buoy statute

The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is proposing changes to the mooring buoy statute 79.105.430 during the 2027 legislative session to address the management issues surrounding recreational mooring buoys on state-owned aquatic lands. NW Straits Commission is submitting a letter of comment sharing support for the statute, while emphasizing the need to ensure a process is created to address existing buoys and the need to fund enforcement to ensure proper installation and maintenance along with removing those that are unpermitted and trespassing. The Commission approved the Executive Committee to finalize and submit a comment letter by consensus. Commissioners interested will provide thoughts on the letter to Dana by the end of next week. Dana will draft the letter for Executive Committee review.

DRAFT

Please see DNR's public comment page or reach out to Buoy-Comments@dnr.wa.gov to provide your thoughts by September 14, 2026.

Northwest Straits Commissioner Updates

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
There was no update this month.

Puget Sound Partnership
Jason shared the following updates:

- The NW Straits Marine Conservation Initiative reauthorization bill has passed the House and is expected to pass the Senate shortly. Follow progress of the NW Straits reauthorization bill through the House and Senate.
- The Floodplain Enhancement and Recovery Act has been introduced and successfully hotlined by the Senate, reducing barriers to ecosystem restoration work in floodplains.
- Rep. Strickland introduced the 6 PPD Task Force Act, which establishes a federal task force to research and develop replacements for toxic tire chemicals (6 PPD) threatening fish, particularly coho salmon.
- The biomass of spawning Pacific Herring indicator has been published with 2025 data, showing mixed results.
- The first comprehensive report on bioaccumulation of pollutants in nearshore caged mussels has been published.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:27 PM.

The next meeting of the Northwest Straits Commission will be on September 25 at Ebey's Landing and the Pacific Rim Institute at 180 Parker Rd, Coupeville, WA 98239
Information can be found on our events page.

DRAFT

Clallam MRC Monthly Report

Month/Year: September 2026

Key Items for Verbal Report-Out

- The pinto abalone team completed 4 dive days with Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF). Juvenile abalone continued to be raised and cared for at PSRF facilities.
- The Advisory subcommittee met and discussed previous MRC comments and their integration into the Clallam County Comprehensive Plan. A memo was prepared and presented to the MRC at their monthly meeting.
- The MRC ran a booth for two outreach events: StreamFest in Port Angeles, and the Dungeness River Festival in Sequim.

Project Updates

Project title	Update for current month
Forage fish	Volunteers collected monthly forage fish samples from 4 beaches in Clallam County.
Pigeon guillemot	The pigeon guillemot team finished their monitoring season.
Pinto abalone	The pinto abalone team completed 4 dive days with Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF). Juvenile abalone continued to be raised and cared for at PSRF facilities.
Education and Outreach	The MRC ran a booth for two outreach events: StreamFest in Port Angeles, WA, and the Dungeness River Festival in Sequim.
Advisory	The subcommittee met and discussed previous MRC comments and their integration into the Clallam County Comprehensive plan. A memo was prepared and presented to the MRC at their monthly meeting.

Membership & Leadership Updates (if changes occurred)

Status (new, departing, leadership change)	Name	Role	Appointment/ Departure Date
New	Laura Garrard	Alternate to Conservation and Environmental Interests	September 29th 2026

New contact info (if new)	Added to MRC website? Y/N	May we feature this person in our newsletter/social media? Y/N/Not yet
	Not yet	N – they are an alternate

Event & Meetings List

Name	Date(s)	Partner(s)	Link to event on MRC site	*Promote event Y/N
MRC monthly meeting	8/17/2026	NA	MRC website	N (already happened)
Highlight/description: MRC monthly meeting where Amy Olsen (Seattle Aquarium) spoke on Clallam Bay sea otter populations. Other items of note: tabling opportunity discussion, Department of Ecology comment opportunity, recap of outreach events, and advisory subcommittee work.				

Island MRC Monthly Report

Month/Year: September 2026

Key Items for Verbal Report-Out

- Island MRC is partnering with Skagit MRC to host a legislative visit on September 18th.
- The Island MRC abandoned and derelict vessel project has identified and posted an abandoned vessel near Whidbey Island's, Penn Cove.

Project Updates

Project title	Update for current month
Bull kelp monitoring	Island MRC finished their bull kelp monitoring with their September surveys!
Forage fish survey	The Island MRC forage fish survey team continued to survey their six sites in September.
Abandoned and derelict vessels	The ADV team has identified an abandoned vessel along Whidbey Island's, Penn Cove. In September, the project lead and MRC Coordinator hiked to where the vessel was last seen to post the vessel, beginning the 30-day waiting period.
Derelict crab pot removal	The derelict crab pot removal project has been busily working to remove derelict crab pots throughout the project sites.
MRC Policy & Strategic Planning Work	The MRC policy sub-committee has been assisting with the Island County Shoreline Master Program by assisting County Commissioners on Program components and participating in public comment about the recent edits. The Strategic Planning process has continued with the committee developing draft pillars for discussion. Lastly, in collaboration with Skagit MRC, Island MRC will conduct their Legislative Visit with District 10 Representative Clyde Shavers on Friday, September 18th.

Event & Meetings List

Name	Date(s)	Partner(s)	Link to event on MRC site	*Promote event Y/N
MRC October Meeting	10/6/26			N
Highlight/description: The MRC will host their hybrid monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 6 from 4:00-6:00p.				

Photos

Project name(s): Bull kelp monitoring
Photographer credit(s): Doug Palm
Approved for use in communications? **Y/**N

JEFFERSON MRC Monthly Report

Month/Year: September 2026

Key Items for Verbal Report-Out

1	The MRC attended the 3-day Wooden Boat Festival from September 11-13, 2026. Now in its third year, the Marine Science and Stewardship Stage had 1,430 visitors attend 19 presentations, with an average of 75 people per presentation. Some of our most popular talks included Tsunamis in Washington, by Dr. Carrie Garrison- Laney, Humpback Whales of the Salish Sea by Erin Gless, and Seabirds of Port Townsend by Dr. Steve Hampton. The MRC booth talked with 239 visitors, sharing information and resources on shoreline armoring, derelict crab pots, eelgrass beds and the No-Anchor Zone buoys. They also chatted up our younger visitors, keeping the cornhole bags, chalk, and octopus stamps flowing.
2	The JCMRC had two new members start at our September 1 meeting, Liz Cummings (District 1) and Rebecca Berger (District 2 Alt). As we bring on new members, we have been piloting an “MRC Meeting Guide” member role, where a new member is paired with a current MRC member who can act as a resource for all things MRC, and to be a designated point of contact for when questions arise. The goal is to help new members feel welcomed, supported, and integrated into the MRC early on in their tenure.

Project Updates

Project title	**Update for current month**
Kelp kayak monitoring	The Kelp team expects to monitor on September 24th.
Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index)	Sarah Fisken sampled Sep 15.
Forage fish - Quilcene Marina	Sarah Fisken sampled Sep 15.
Olympia Oyster Restoration	• Neil gave a presentation at WBF titled "Bringing Back the "Oly": Collaboratively Restoring the Native Olympia Oyster." • Coordinator has submitted all needed permit applications for Discovery Bay, and is working on providing follow-up information/documentation as requested.
Voluntary No-Anchor Zones	• Gordon and Bryan gave a presentation at WBF titled "Protecting Vital Eelgrass Habitat Through No Anchor Zones." • The MRC collected additional data this year on NAZ boater compliance during WBF. Data is currently being processed.
Education & Outreach	• The MRC attended the 3-day Wooden Boat Festival from September 11-13, 2026. Now in its third year, the Marine Science and Stewardship Stage had 1,430 visitors attend 19 presentations, with an average of 75 people per presentation. Some of our most popular talks included Tsunamis in Washington, by Dr. Carrie Garrison- Laney, Humpback Whales of the Salish Sea by Erin Gless, and Seabirds of Port Townsend by Dr. Steve Hampton. The MRC booth talked with 239 visitors, sharing information and resources on shoreline armoring, derelict crab pots, eelgrass beds and the No-Anchor Zone buoys. They also chatted up our younger visitors, keeping the cornhole bags, chalk, and octopus stamps flowing. • The E+O subcommittee will meet next month to recap WBF and discuss plans for 2027.
Shoreline Landowner	• No update

Project title	**Update for current month**
Rain Gardens	• A contract with Jefferson County Master Gardeners is in progress to contract support for a fall RGWP and planting, and restoration at the Chetzemoka Park rain garden. • The MRC plans to hold at least one RGWP on October 7, at the Lincoln + Adams rain garden. A second RGWP is planned for later in October, date TBD, with Port Townsend High School's Students for Sustainability Club.

Membership & Leadership Updates (if changes occurred)

Status (new, departing, leadership change)	Name	Role	Appointment/ Departure Date
New	Rebecca Berger	District 2 Alt	8/24/2026
New	Liz Cummings	District 1	8/24/2026

New contact info (if new)	Added to MRC website? Y/N	May we feature this person in our newsletter/social media? Y/N/Not yet
	Y	Y
	Y	Y

Event & Meetings List –

Name	Date(s)	Partner(s)	Link to event on MRC site	*Promote event Y/N
Wooden Boat Festival – Marine Science and Stewardship Stage	Sep 11-13, 2026	• Port Townsend Marine Science Center • Maritime Center	https://www.jeffersonmrc.org/projects/education-outreach/	N
Highlight/description The MRC attended the 3-day Wooden Boat Festival from September 11-13, 2026. Now in its third year, the Marine Science and Stewardship Stage had 1,430 visitors attend 19 presentations, with an average of 75 people per presentation. Some of our most popular talks included Tsunamis in Washington, by Dr. Carrie Garrison- Laney, Humpback Whales of the Salish Sea by Erin Gless, and Seabirds of Port Townsend by Dr. Steve Hampton. The MRC booth talked with 239 visitors, sharing information and resources on shoreline armoring, derelict crab pots, eelgrass beds and the No-Anchor Zone buoys. They also chatted up our younger visitors, keeping the cornhole bags, chalk, and octopus stamps flowing.				
Name	**Date(s)**	**Partner(s)**	**Link to event on MRC site**	***Promote event Y/N**
Rain Garden Work Party	10/07/2026	Jefferson County Master Gardeners	Not ready yet	TBD
Highlight/description Weeding, mulching, and planting fun at the Lincolns + Adams rain garden.				

Other Notes

- MRC has been asked by DOH to support the update of the 2011 Mystery Bay Management Plan, several MRC members have attended meetings and provided input.
- MRC is working with NWSC and Port of PT to coordinate a Derelict Vessel V-tip event in Spring 2027.

Photos

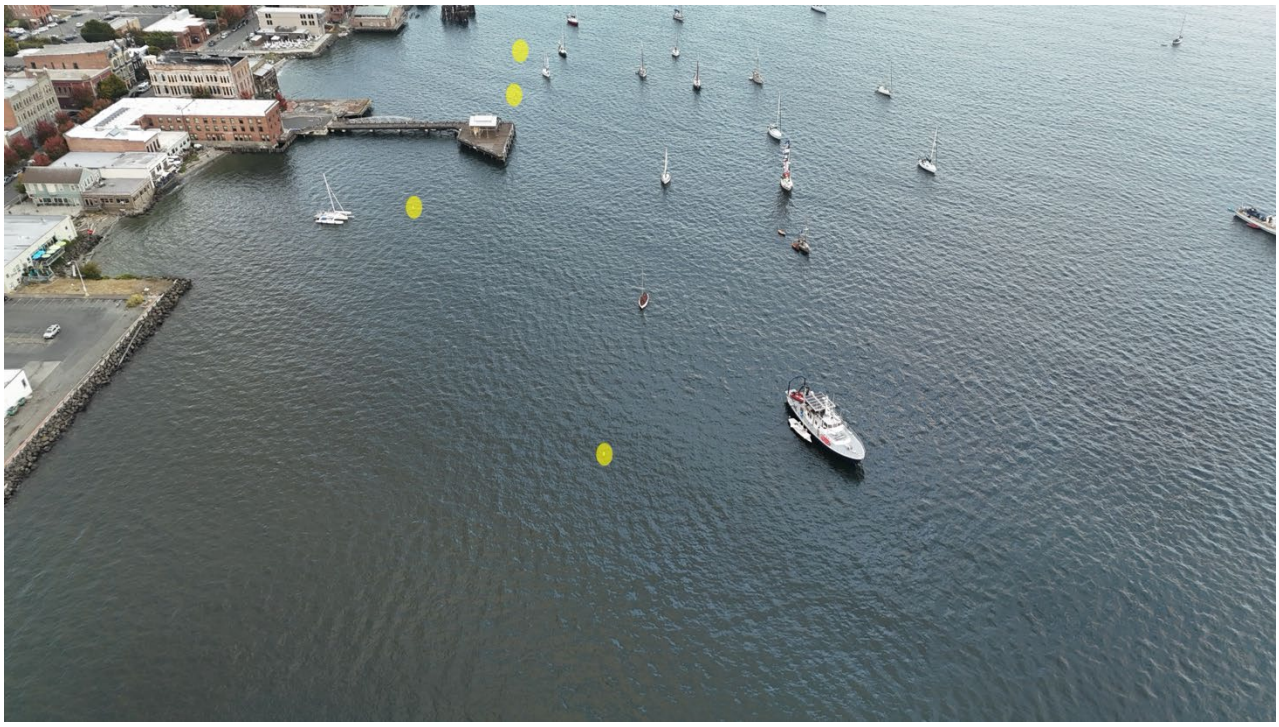
Project name(s): Education + Outreach
Photographer credit(s): Betsy Carlson
Approved for use in communications? Y/N

MARINE SCIENCE &
STEWARDSHIP STAGE

Jefferson County
Marine Resources Committee
EMBER
KAIO
6
7
5
6
4
2
3
1

MRC

Project name(s): No-Anchor Zone Buoys
Photographer credit(s): Bryan DeCaterina, drone
Approved for use in communications? Y/N



San Juan County MRC Monthly Report

Month/Year: September 2026

Key Items for Verbal Report-Out

Our Derelict Vessel Program has been busy with preparing boaters for windy weather events and responding to reports. We facilitated the local response and worked with state agency partners to get a 50' ghost net removed near Spieden Island and assisted with reports of an adrift ship post-Coast-Guard-rescue. The remains washed ashore on Lopez Island. Good Samaritans recovered and disposed of the diesel tank through the Dept. of Ecology.
Late August and early September saw the final wrap up for the boat shrink wrap recycling pilot. Working with individuals and local businesses, we recycled shrink wrap from 36 small vessels weighing in at .21 tons, nearly 500lbs or the equivalent of saving 74,000 plastic film bags! Several marine operators are willing to help facilitate this recycling on a greater scale next year, offering recycling options to boaters who chose to shrink wrap their vessel, helping divert plastic from the landfill.
The MRC is preparing for the Fall Great Islands Cleanup, our bi-annual event to clear litter and debris from roadways, beaches, and shorelines. Events will be happening on the four ferry served islands on September 26 and an outer island pickup will be on September 22.

Project Updates

Project title	Update for current month
Derelict Vessel Prevention	• With windy weather here for Fall, messages to boaters about checking their boats have begun. As the weather turns, we will continue to remind boaters to secure their vessel and check on its status before and after storms. • Reports came into local stranding network and SJC Derelict Vessel Program and on social media that a 50ft net with floating cork line and buoy was tangled near the shoreline of Spieden Island. DV Program staff quickly reported the derelict gear to the Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project, with WDFW and Salish Sea Alliance. Luckily, WDFW enforcement teams were in the area and were able to respond quickly to successfully remove the gear before any wildlife became entangled. • Several Derelict Vessels have appeared lately, including one sinking vessel off the coast of Cypress Island. The Coast Guard responded to rescue humans, but the vessel was left causing it to drift and eventually smash ashore on Lopez Island. Local response included volunteers, IOSA, SJC Emergency Management, DV program, and good Samaritans who recovered the diesel tank and disposed of it through Dept. of Ecology. The

Project title	Update for current month
	owner was notified and paid for the costs of removal and disposal. • Thanks to additionally funding through the NWSC, the priority vessel, Uwila is in process of custody change and removal. Build here in Friday Harbor by Albert Jensen, this long loved boat will be put to rest responsibly.
Marine Stewardship Area	• Last dock talk was September 5 at Roche Harbor, wrapping up for another successful season of engaging with boaters. • MRC members will participate in an upcoming LIO Action Plan Workshop in early October focused on Vessel Impacts, which applies to the MSA through oil spill prevention, boater engagement and derelict vessels.
Seagrass Protection	• Olivia Graham, MRC staff and WDFW Social Scientist David Trimbach met to discuss a potential kelp workshop on the islands. The workshop will focus on gaining a better understanding of human interactions with Kelp. Several workshops are being held on the mainland this fall, but hosting one with the MRC on the island will help gather input from locals. Stay tuned for more details! • Only a few more aerial flights scheduled before the end of the boating season. Early projections for this year are fewer
Plastic Free Salish Sea	• Save the Date for the Fall Great Islands Cleanup on September 26. This year's theme is about showing pride in where you live by taking care of the environment. The islands have a history of stewardship, and we want that legacy to continue. Events are scheduled on all four ferry served islands and outer island collections happening in conjunction with the humpback hauler on September 22. • Final numbers are in for the boat shrink wrap recycling pilot.

Event & Meetings List

Name	Date(s)	Partner(s)	Link to event on MRC site	*Promote event Y/N
Fall Great Islands Cleanup	September 26		https://plasticfreesalishsea.org/events/	Y
Highlight/description Biannual community event to clean beaches, roadways and trails from litter and debris				
Name	Date(s)	Partner(s)	Link to event on MRC site	*Promote event Y/N
Kelp Workshop	November 14, 2026	WDFW		Not yet
Highlight/description People interact with Kelp in many ways. Through an interactive workshop we hope to gain understanding into how people see, use, and enjoy kelp which can help us better protect this resource				
Name	Date(s)	Partner(s)	Link to event on MRC site	*Promote event Y/N
MRC Meeting	October 1		https://sjcmrc.org/meetings-events/	Y
Highlight/description Monthly MRC meeting in conjunction with CAG and LIO				

Photos

Please embed photos in the Word Doc, ***also attach your best photos full resolution in the email when you submit your report.***

Project name(s): Derelict Vessel Prevention – The Uwila, beloved vessel built in FH, retiring.
Photographer credit(s): Kari Koski
Approved for use in communications? Y/N

Project name(s): Derelict Vessels Prevention – Ghost net at Spieden Island
Photographer credit(s): Ashleigh Barnes, WDFW
Approved for use in communications? Y/N

Project name(s): Derelict Vessel Prevention – Smashed up boat on Lopez
Photographer credit(s): SJC Sheriff's Department
Approved for use in communications? Y/N

Project name(s): Derelict Vessel Prevention – removal and towing of smashed vessel
Photographer credit(s): TowBoat USA
Approved for use in communications? Y/N

Project name(s): Derelict Vessel Prevention – Towing out vessel remains
Photographer credit(s): TowBoat USA
Approved for use in communications? Y/N

Project name(s): Plastic Free Salish Sea – Weighing in boat wrap – all 500lbs from 36 small vessels
Photographer credit(s): Lautenbach Recycling
Approved for use in communications? Y/N

SKAGIT MRC Monthly Report

Month/Year: September/2026

Key Items for Verbal Report-Out

*Skagit MRC is excited to welcome two new MRC members, Lisa Miller and Jess Pyle!
Skagit MRC, Island MRC, NWSC, and State Parks co-hosted a site visit with Representative Clyde Shavers from the 10th Legislative District. The event was held at Bowman Bay and Cornet Bay Deception Pass State Park, Friday September 18th.
The fall Kids on the Beach program with Conway Middle School has been set. The field day is scheduled for October 21 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort from 9:00am to noon and will include beach seining and forage fish surveys. A call for volunteers will go out soon

Project Updates

Project title	Update for current month
Crabber Outreach	▪ No new updates this month ▪ Working with the Salish Sea Alliance and Island MRC on a crabber outreach strategy in 2027
Skagit Bay Derelict Crab Pot Removal	▪ Jason Morgan from the Salish Sea Alliance hosted a zoom meeting with Skagit and Island MRCs on September 17th and presented an update on the project and shared excellent video footage of the ROV in action! ▪ Investigated a total of 92 out of 397 derelict pot targets in shared waters of Island and Skagit Counties ▪ 71 total pots removed ▪ 13 targets not found ▪ 3 targets were buried, disabled and left in place ▪ 2 targets were tires and were removed ▪ 2 targets were conglomerates of anemones on pot-sized rocks ▪ All dive ops were conducted in Similk Bay ▪ Dive ops focused on Skagit County pots. ROV ops mostly focused on NW Camano deep water targets ▪ Total of 60 derelict pots removed in Skagit County (49 commercial vs 11 recreational) ▪ Anticipated to remove most if not all the shallow water targets before October

Project title	Update for current month
Kayak Bull Kelp Surveys	• 2026 kelp season is now complete! We have eleven active kayak volunteers this year plus one additional new kayaker that paddled this week with plans to join again next year. • July - September Survey Summaries: ○ Shannon Point West/East (8/13): Lynne, Elizabeth, Kay. (West) Sparse kelp bulbs observed outside of bed. Kelp bed expanded into two larger beds with distance greater than 30' between beds. Kelp very healthy but many blades appeared tattered. Kelp beds in general not very dense. (East) Two small beds discovered. Bulbs and blades healthy, but sparse. Sargassum has all but disappeared. ○ Shannon Point West / East (9/8): Lynne, Marlene. (West) Kelp bulbs and blades very healthy but showing signs of storm damage. The 2 beds observed last month are now one very large bed, but not dense. Many single bulbs observed outside of protocol. ○ Biz Point (7/25): Denby, Elizabeth. Kelp appeared healthy and vibrant. ○ Biz Point (8/26): Denby, Elizabeth, Marlene. High density of bulbs, healthy condition with minor epiphyte growth. ○ Lone Tree (8/27) – Steven, Elizabeth, Jill. Shortened the track due to windy conditions. Kelp bed overall very healthy with portions very dense. Much more kelp observed north of shoreline segment. Clusters and/or additional kelp beds observed to south and southwest of primary bed but not way-pointed due to increasing winds and chop. ○ Coffin Rocks (8/26) – Steven, Peggy, Kay. Kelp bed appeared very healthy and dense with blades and bulbs beginning to show senescence (aging/fall). No invasive sargassum weed observed. A large kelp bed was observed east of Coffin Rocks south of Gull Rock that has not been observed before, located approximately 100-200 meters east of Coffin.
Bowman Bay Boat Ramp Removal	▪ State Parks has placed an order for native plantings based on the plan developed by MRC, State Parks and NWSF (now SSA) to support both the boat ramp removal area as well as the pier demolition.

Project title	Update for current month
	▪ State Parks began work on the pier demolition on August 5 and the pier and pilings are mostly removed. The hard armoring is now fully removed. ▪ The remaining work is scheduled for November – December to include: Final shoreline armoring and debris removal during in water work window, apply beach nourishment, install native plants and mulch, and Final report (December). ▪ Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance: MRC continues to support stewardship days with the Salish Sea Alliance. ○ Bowman Bay Stewardship Day was held 9/8/26 with 4 volunteers and 2 SSA staff to trim back native plants from trail and remove invasives. Overall native plantings are doing fantastic and are very healthy, including many of the conifers planted several years ago. ○ New native plantings are planned for the Boat Ramp and Pier Demo restoration areas in early December. Many volunteers will be needed – stay tuned! ○ New plants will need continued stewardship support in 2027 and beyond.
La Conner School Rain Garden	▪ The irrigation system was removed as promised before the start of school on 8-30-26. The native plants are doing well! The rain garden kit was returned to Skagit County storage for use in future.
Salish Sea Stewards	▪ Salish Sea Stewards volunteers have been busy volunteering. ▪ Slow time of year for the SSS Advisory Committee. We haven't had much luck appointing any new members. ▪ Lots of behind-the-scenes work has been happening in preparation for planning the 2027 SSS training program. Looking at potential ways to improve the program in 2027 compared to other similar programs like Sound Water Stewards in Island County. ▪ The next meeting of the Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee Working Group will be held in person at Padilla Bay on October 1st from 10:00am to noon where we will start to set the schedule for Publicity and Speakers/Topics for the 2026/2027 SSS Training Year.

Project title	Update for current month
Pinto Abalone Restoration	▪ Eileen Bates (Puget Sound Restoration Fund) and the Shannon Point Marine Center (SPMC) staff and students completed a third outplanting of abalone. ▪ Continue to work on increasing the capacity of the SPMC abalone hatchery. Some of the abalone in the laboratory will be used for student research projects. ▪ One of the students, and manager for the hatchery, will be working on cryopreservation. ▪ PSRF Chew Center hatchery work continues with new broods for the 2027 outplantings.
Olympia Oyster Restoration	▪ This is a slow time of year. No new updates this month.
Intertidal Monitoring	▪ No new updates this month. ▪ The Salish Sea School is working on entering and analyzing the data collected in June that will be included in the final report and will make recommendations for the next steps. ▪ There are currently no plans for the MRC to continue this project in the future.
Forage Fish Monitoring	▪ Forge fish survey team demonstrated a forage fish survey and the outreach kiosk during the legislative site visit with Representative Clyde Shavers at Bowman Bay on September 18th. ▪ Forge fish survey team will demonstrate a forage fish survey on the beach at the Fidalgo Bay Day event at the Fidalgo Bay Resort on September 26th at 12:30. ▪ Monthly monitoring at 7 restoration sites and index sites continues with lots of volunteer help. ▪ Monthly forage fish surveys continue at Bowman Bay even though the beach seining monitoring ended per the recommendation of the Salish Sea Alliance. Survey protocols at Bowman Bay have been slightly modified to make things a little easier for the volunteers. Eggs are sparse at that location ▪ WDFW processes samples to verify if eggs are present and the different stages at all the sites. The work is typically about six months behind because WDFW gets a lot of samples and they are short staffed ▪ Fidalgo Bay and Similk Bay continue to be the only sites where surf smelt eggs are visible on the beach without microscopes. ▪ Samples from all sites are processed at Fidalgo Bay.

Project title	Update for current month

Kids on the Beach	▪ The 2026 fall KOTB program with Conway Middle School has been set for October 21 at the Fidalgo Bay Resort from 9am to noon. Will be sending out a call for volunteers soon to help with field activities (i.e. fish seining and forage fish surveys).
	▪ The 2027 spring KOTB is being planned for Sedro Woolley, Burlington, and Concrete at Bay View State Park for intertidal biodiversity surveys and bird surveys.
	▪ Meeting with PBNERR education staff to discuss success and value of the program, future of the program, potential improvements, funding needs, and alternative funding resources.
	  ○ Received positive and inspiring feedback from teachers. Mostly anecdotal positive feedback from students. Working on improving methods for getting feedback to help measure success and adjust if needed.
	  ○ Cannot expand program without additional funding.
	▪ The KOTB Year 1 project report will be finalized in September and will cover the 2025 fall and 2026 spring KOTB programs.

Membership & Leadership Updates (if changes occurred)

Status (new, departing, leadership change)	Name	Role	Appointment/ Departure Date
New	Lisa Miller	MRC Member	9/10/2026
New	Jessica Pyle	MRC Member	9/10/2026

New contact info (if new)	Added to MRC website? Y/N	May we feature this person in our newsletter/social media? Y/N/Not yet
	N	Not yet
	N	Not yet

Event & Meetings List

Name	Date(s)	Partner(s)	Link to event on MRC site	*Promote event Y/N
Skagit MRC Monthly Meeting	10/08		Meetings & Events	
Highlight/description				
Name	Date(s)	Partner(s)	Link to event on MRC site	*Promote event Y/N
Fidalgo Bay Day	9/26	The Salish Sea School	https://www.thesalishseaschool.org/event-details/fidalgo-bay-day	Y
Highlight/description Fidalgo Bay Day is a FREE educational community event that fosters public awareness and stewardship of the marine environment and presents a wonderful opportunity to strengthen partnerships with the local conservation community. There will be educational displays from marine conservation groups across the region and activities such as a beach seining demonstration, Forage Fish egg survey, Shannon Point Marine Center portable touch tanks, and FREE samples of local seafood.				

Photos

Project name(s): Lone Tree Bull Kelp Survey (August 27)

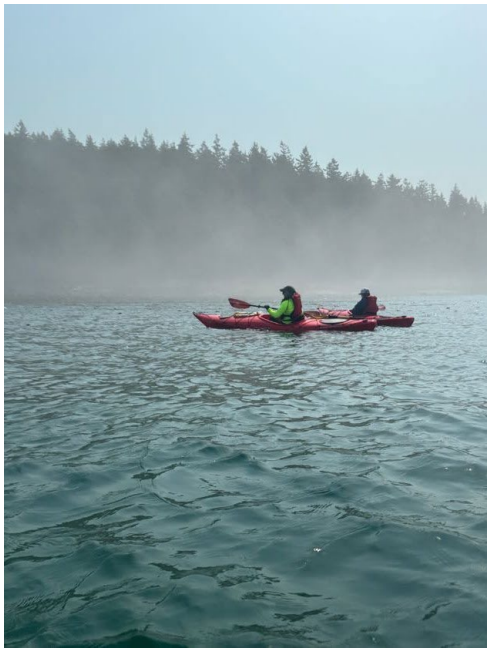
Tree volunteers Steven Olsen and Jill Connell

Photographer credit(s): Elizabeth Drozda

Approved for use in communications? Y

Project name(s): Shannon Point Kelp Survey (August 13)
Elizabeth Drozda and kelp crabs
Photographer credit(s): Lynne Wenberg-Davidson)
Approved for use in communications? Y

Project name(s): Shannon Point Kelp Survey (August 13)
Photographer credit(s): Elizabeth Drozda
Approved for use in communications? Y



Project name(s): Shannon Point West Kelp Survey (Sept 8)
Photographer credit(s): Lynne Wenberg-Davidson
Approved for use in communications? Y

Project name(s): Shannon Point Kelp Survey Volunteers (Sept 8)
Photographer credit(s): Lynne Wenberg-Davidson
Approved for use in communications? Y

Project name(s): Bowman Bay Stewardship Day (Sept 4)
Photographer credit(s): Ellen Goudie
Approved for use in communications? Y

Project name(s): Bowman Bay Pier and Hard Armoring Removal (Sept 4)
Photographer credit(s): Lynne Wenberg-Davidson
Approved for use in communications? Y

MRC Monthly Report

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: September 2026

2. Key Items for Verbal Report-Out

1	Kelp monitoring is complete!
2	The MRC and WSU Beach watchers are hosting an ETAP beach cleanup at Howarth Park and the MRC is tabling at Sustainamania on 9/26.*
3	The Derelict Vessel subcommittee is finalizing their year 1 report.

3. Project Updates

Project title	Update for current month
Grant Funded Projects	
Derelict Vessel (MRC Grant 2025-2027)	The subcommittee is finalizing their year one report and database/dossiers.
Marine Vegetation Outreach (MRC OTGP Grant 2026-2027)	The subcommittee is finalizing a draft presentation to give to the Hat Island boating community.
SWM Fee Funded Projects	
Forage Fish Monitoring	Picnic Point and Meadowdale – 9/28 Howarth Park – 9/19
Marine Vegetation Monitoring	Kayak Monitoring is complete for the season. Hat Island was done on 9/8.
Outreach	The group is gearing up for the Sustainamania event and the ETAP beach cleanup on 9/26.
Crabber Outreach	None
Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention	The subcommittee is working on making a letter for the first response of oil spills in the Kelp Protection Zone.
Shoreline Armoring/Nearshore	None
Marine Water Quality	None

5. Event & Meetings List

Name	Date(s)	Partner(s)	Link to event on MRC site	Highlight or description	*Promote this event Y/N
MRC Meeting	10/7 4:30-7:30		**Closed to the public for planning retreat.**	3000 Rockefeller Ave, Everett	N
MRC ETAP Beach Cleanup	9/26 10am-1pm	WSU Beach Watchers	Meetings and Events | Snohomish MRC	Escaped Trash Assessment protocol for International Costal Cleanup Day	Y
Sustainamania	9/26 10 am - 2 pm		Meetings and Events | Snohomish MRC Sustainamania 2026 | Bothell WA	Education and outreach tabling event.	Y

6. Other Notes

Joycelyn is working to get legislators out to do a tour of Hat Island near the end of this month however it is possible the legislation passes before it would happen.

7. Photos

Project name(s): Kelp Monitoring
Photographer credit(s): Brett Gaddis
Approved for use in communications? ☐ Yes

Whatcom County MRC Monthly Report

Month/Year: September 2026

Key Items for Verbal Report-Out

- The MRC gained two new committee members including Julie Eastlund (representing recreational interest) and Audrey Taylor (representing Citizens-at-Large). Colin Wahl resigned from the committee, leaving a vacant scientific interest seat.
- The MRC will be tabling at Bellingham SeaFeast on Saturday, September 26th from 10am-5pm. The booth theme will be "salmon connect our homes to our orcas", helping folks better understand the connections between salmon and southern resident killer whales and how everyday actions can support these species.
- The MRC will be presenting at the International Conference on Shellfish Restoration in Shelton, WA on October 7th. Jackie Dexter (the project lead) will be providing a 15-minute oral presentation about the MRC's Olympia oyster restoration efforts.

Project Updates

Project title	Update for current month
Beach Seine with Schools	No project activities were completed in September.
Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring	The HABs team will continue weekly sampling until October. Drayton Harbor and Birch Bay remain open for recreational shellfish collection. Samples were collected on September 1st, 8th, 15th and will be collected on the 22nd and 29th. The HABs team also provided an on-site project overview to the Whatcom County Public Works Natural Resources Division on September 1st (see photo).
Olympia Oyster Restoration	The MRC will be presenting at the International Conference on Shellfish Restoration in Shelton, WA on October 7th. Olympia oyster project lead, Jackie Dexter, will be providing a 15-minute oral presentation about the MRC's Olympia oyster restoration efforts. MRC staff worked with NWSC staff on an informational social media post about their Olympia oyster project. IG Northwest Straits Commission (@nwstraits) • Instagram photos and videos FB NW Straits Facebook (@NWStraits)
Forage Fish Surveys	The MRC will conduct forage fish surveys at Clayton Beach on September 22nd and at Little Squalicum Beach on September 24th.

Project title	Update for current month
Kelp Monitoring	The MRC has completed kelp monitoring surveys at Aiston Preserve, Cherry Point / Gulf Road, and SW Lummi Island. The final survey at Point Whitehorn was cancelled due to poor weather conditions.
Education and Outreach Toolkit	The MRC conducted an outreach event as part of Whatcom Water Week on September 15th, piloting recently developed outreach toolkit materials. The event was called "Stream to Sea: An Interactive Walk Connecting our Home to Salmon and Orcas". The walk showcased the connections between salmon, southern resident killer whales, and humans, emphasizing actions that can be taken to protect these organisms. 10 community members attended. The MRC will also be tabling at Bellingham SeaFeast on September 26th, utilizing the same educational toolkit. See event list for more details.
Wildcat Cove Eelgrass Protection	The two MRC interns concluded their eelgrass protection work at the end of August. The interns and project team met with State Parks staff to provide an overview of their findings and recommendations for future actions. State Parks is interested in continuing to collaborate with the MRC to protect eelgrass beds in Wildcat Cove.

Please note with an asterisk above any items that you do not want shared more broadly at this time.

Membership & Leadership Updates (if changes occurred)

Status (new, departing, leadership change)	Name	Role	Appointment/ Departure Date
new	Julie Eastlund	MRC member: Recreational Interest	9/15/26
		Added to MRC website? Y/N In progress, but not yet!	May we feature this person in our newsletter/social media? Y/N/Not yet
New	Audrey Taylor	MRC member: Citizen-at-Large	9/15/26
		Added to MRC website? Y/N In progress, but not yet!	May we feature this person in our newsletter/social media? Y/N/Not yet
Departing	Colin Wahl	MRC Member: Scientific Interest	9/3/26

Event & Meetings List

Name	Date(s)	Partner(s)	Link to event on MRC site	*Promote event Y/N
Bellingham SeaFeast	9/26/26		https://www.bellinghamseafeast.org/ or https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/	Y
Highlight/description: The MRC will be tabling at Bellingham SeaFeast on Saturday, September 26th from 10am-5pm. The booth theme will be "salmon connect our homes to our orcas", helping folks better understand the connections between salmon and southern resident killer whales and how everyday actions can support these iconic species.				
October MRC Meeting	10/1/26		https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/meetings-events/	N
In-person meeting, closed to the public for MRC planning activities.				

Other Notes

- The MRC advisory subcommittee is working on a letter to provide feedback to County Council on a newly proposed firework ordinance.
- At the September MRC meeting, the MRC voted to approve a new logo (see photos section) and branding guidelines. These changes will be rolled out over the next few months.
- The October MRC meeting will be closed to the public as it will serve as an internal planning meeting for the MRC.

Photos

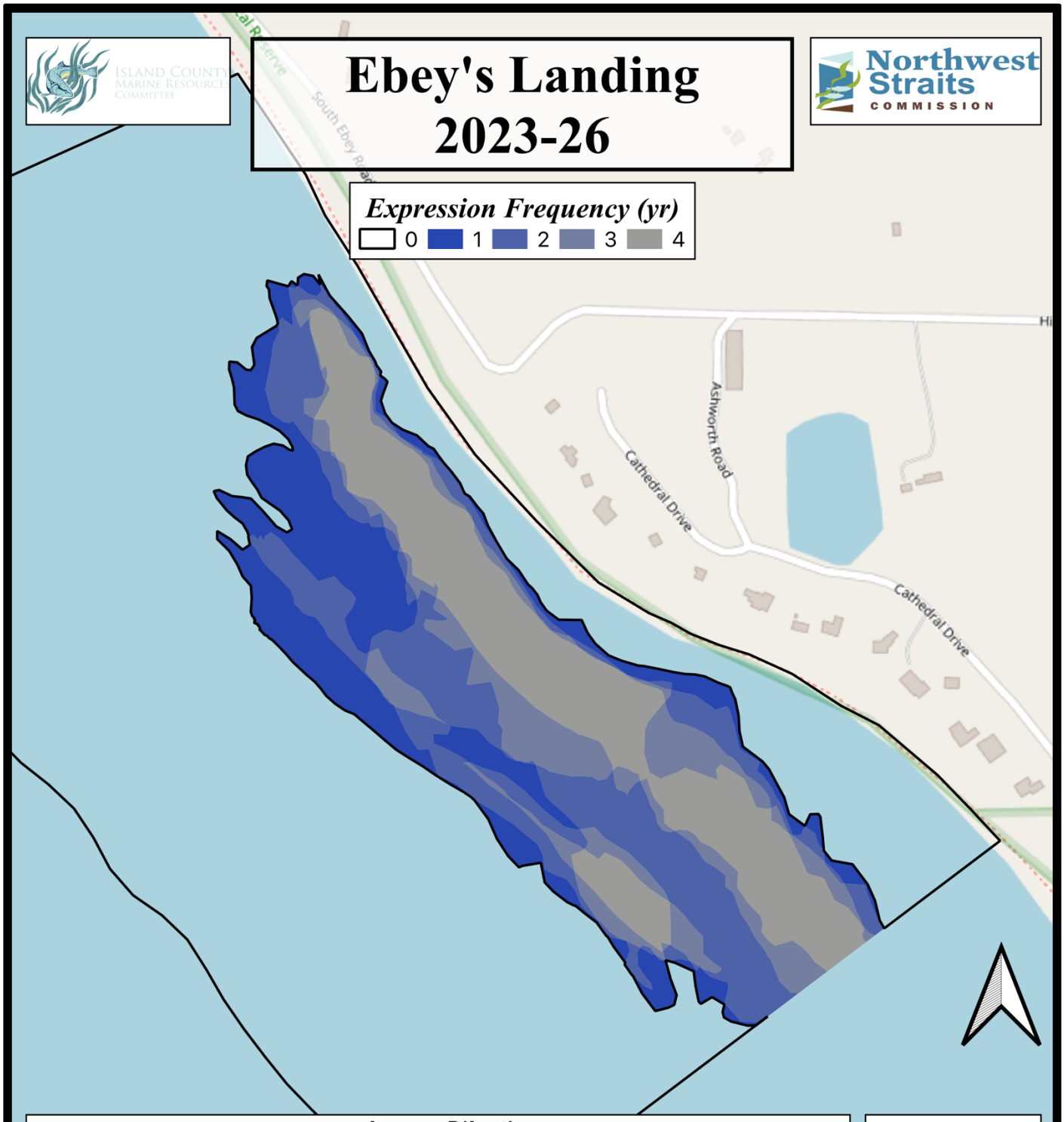
Project name: Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring
Photographer credit(s): Dana Daniels
Approved for use in communications? Y/N

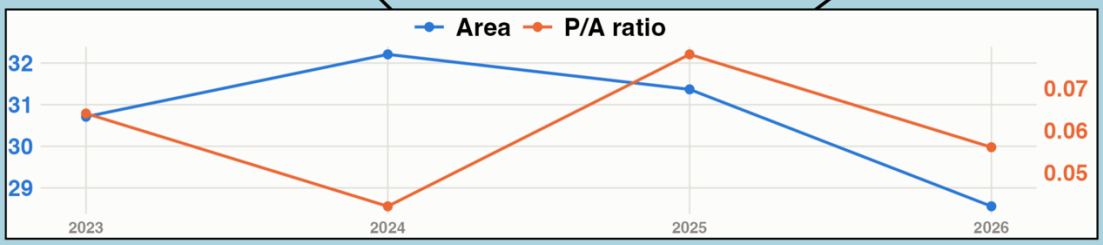
Project name: Education and outreach toolkit
Design credit: Alexi Guddal
Approved for use in communications? Y/N

Whatcom
Marine Resources Committee

Island County Floating Kelp Locations
2026
Hoypus
Ben Ure
Smith & Minor
Joseph Whidbey
Polnell
Hastie Lake
Partridge
Ebey's North
Onamac
Ebey's Landing
Camano City
Ebey's South
Lowell
Camano Head
Double Bluff
Bay West
Possession
Floating Kelp Localtions
DNR Locations
Visited Locations
Monitored Locations

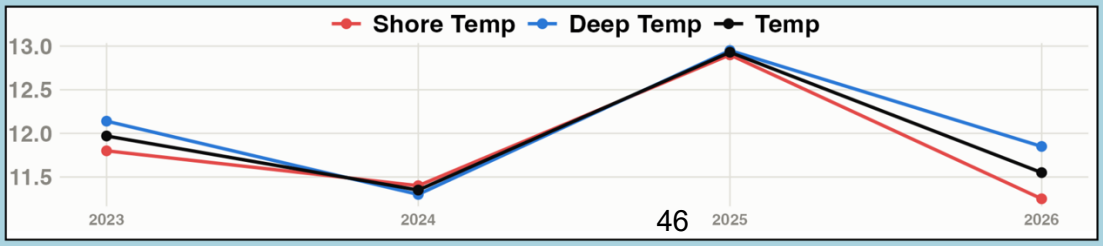
Ebey's Landing
2023-26





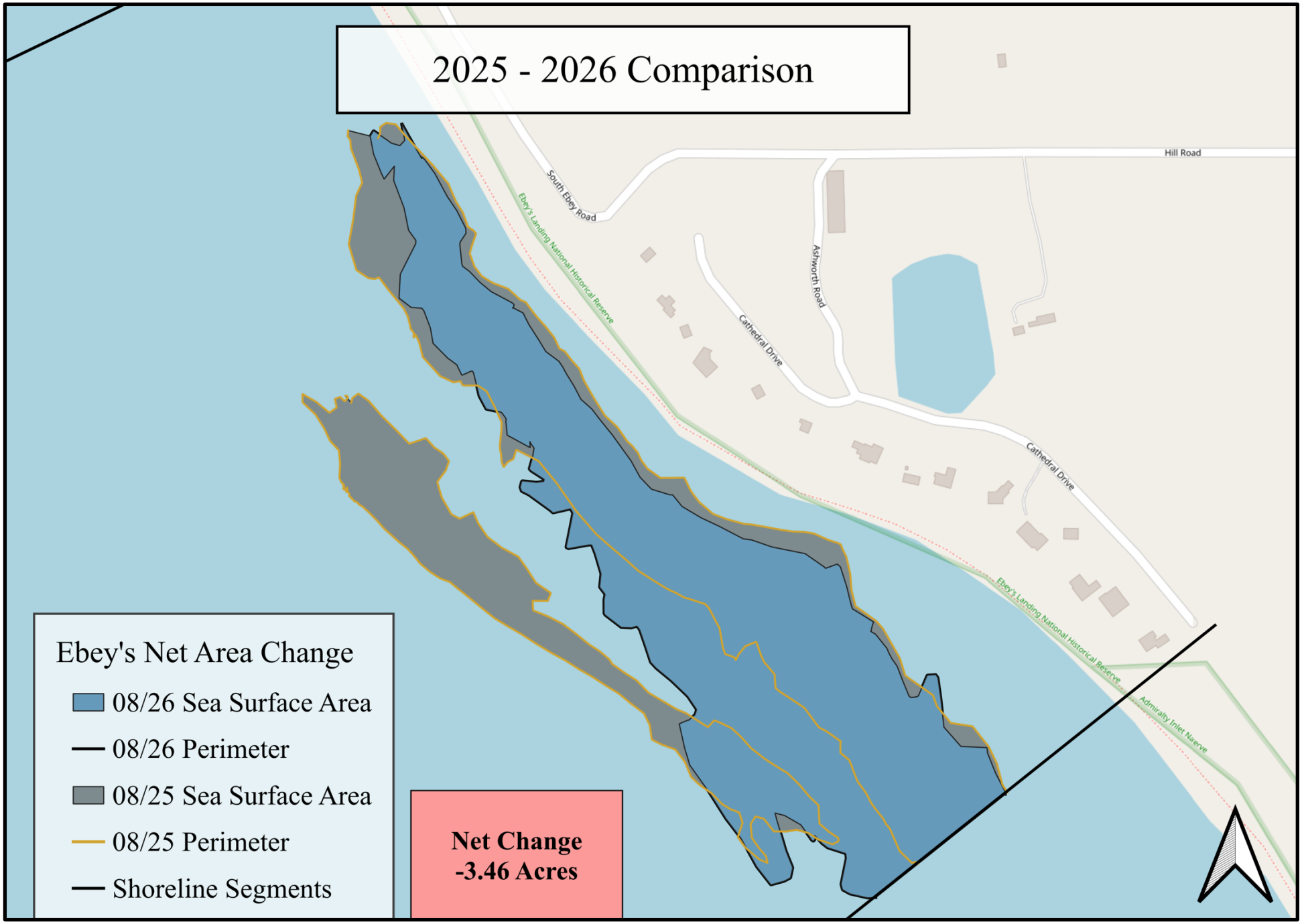
Average Temp 23-26

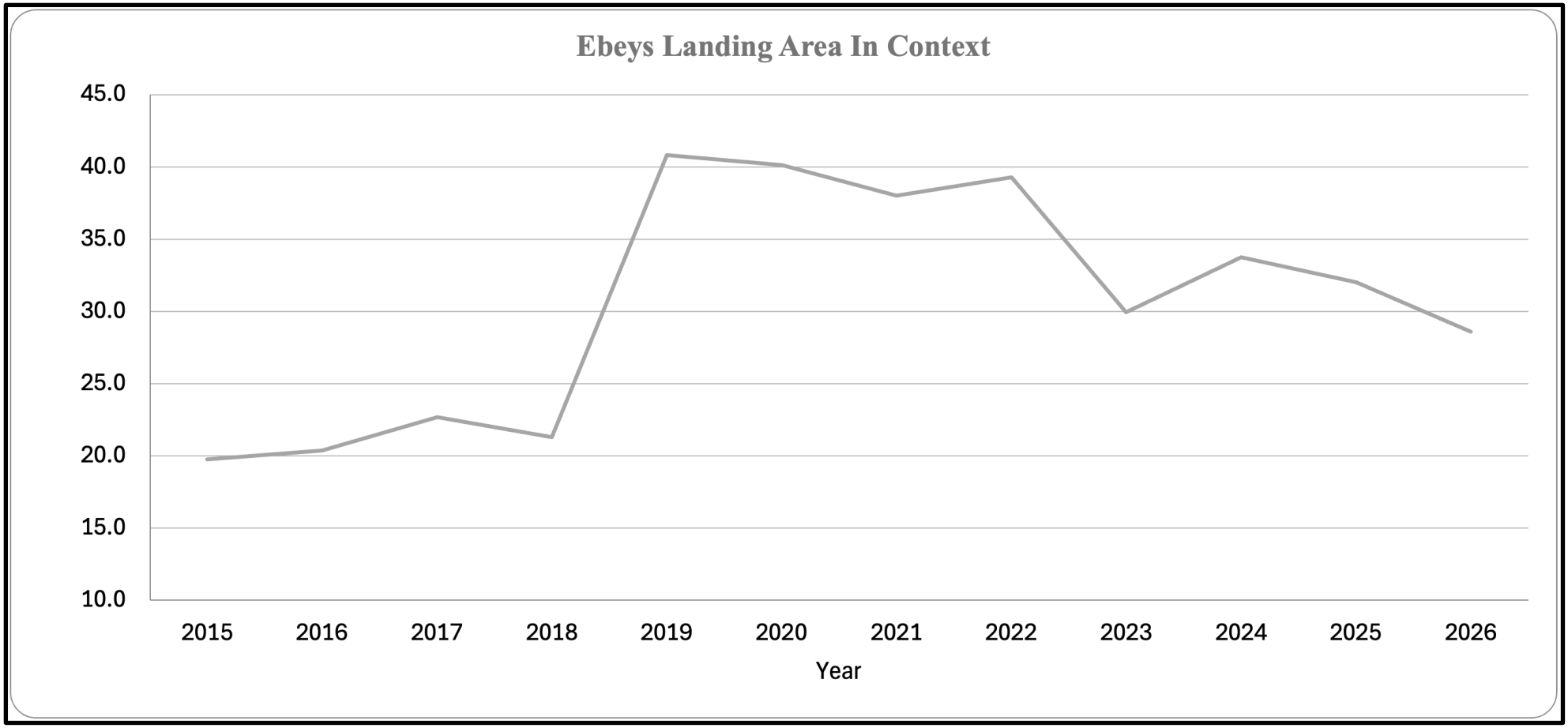
11.95 C



Surveys > 16 C

0


2025 - 2026 Comparison
Hill Road
South Ebey Road
Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve
Ashworth Road
Cathedral Drive
Cathedral Drive
Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve
Admiralty Inlet Naerve
Ebey's Net Area Change
08/26 Sea Surface Area
08/26 Perimeter
08/25 Sea Surface Area
08/25 Perimeter
Shoreline Segments
Net Change
-3.46 Acres



Quick Facts

- Monitored Yearly
- Average Area: 30.5 Acres
- Island County's Longest Monitored Site
- Location of Tidal Index Survey Work

Commission Staff Highlights – September 26, 2026

Marine Resources Committees (MRCs) Support

MRC Grants: Commission and Ecology staff have been finalizing quarterly payment requests and closing out the year one state funding in MRC grants. An amendment was processed for Jefferson MRC and a revision to the Snohomish MRC NOAA-funded grant.

MRC Staff meeting: A meeting of MRC staff is scheduled for September 23. A summary of discussion and action items will be shared after the meeting.

MRC Meetings:

- Skagit MRC (9/10) – Dana
- Whatcom MRC (9/3) – Jeff (presented on kelp)
- Snohomish (9/16) – Jeff, Sasha
- Clallam (9/21) - Sasha
- San Juan (9/3) – Suzanne, Sasha, Lucas, Leah

Other MRC support:

- Whatcom MRC strategic planning meeting (9/2) – Lucas, Jeff
- Island/Skagit MRC site visit planning meeting (9/15) – Lucas
- Island/Skagit MRC site visit with Rep. Shavers (9/18) – Lucas

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: Staff worked with partners to complete the first draft of the Living Kelp Plan (a tool to help people find, explore, and follow Kelp Plan goals and actions) and to update the Kelp Project Inventory (a tool to share who is doing what with kelp in WA), which both will be shared for public comment in October.

Kelp Monitoring: MRC paddling teams wrapped up their monitoring for the season and submitted their data to NWSC for processing. Congrats and a big THANK YOU to all involved! NWSC staff gave a presentation on kelp conservation to Whatcom MRC and joined Snohomish MRC on their kelp survey near Hat Island.

Forage Fish: No updates this month.

European Green Crab: Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew wrapped up their green crab trapping season. In Samish Bay, WCC helped set over 2,000 traps and capture 368 green crabs. The WCC crew participated in outreach efforts by writing a

blog post on green crabs in Puget Sound. Staff collaborated with WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) to trap Samish Bay by airboat to reach difficult-to-access sites. WDFW continues trapping efforts in Drayton Harbor setting over 2500 traps and capturing over 1,000 green crabs.

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: Staff continue to coordinate with partners to create site feature blog posts in partnership with Waggoners Cruise Guide. The September article featured Port Townsend and the Jefferson MRC: Protecting Eelgrass Meadows at Port Townsend | Waggoner

Derelict Vessels: Staff are coordinating with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Makah staff for the planned vessel turn-in event starting in September. Staff also are coordinating with DNR and workgroup members to remove the selected derelict vessels.

SoundIQ: Staff provided in-person presentation of SoundIQ Experience Builder App at San Juan MRC meeting with focus on San Juan data (early kelp surveys, eelgrass, shoreline modifications, and forage fish). Requested metadata on the 2009 shoreline modification data that is posted to SoundIQ.

Operations

Staff: No updates on staff this month.

Budget: Year one of the two-year agreement with the Puget Sound Partnership for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding ends as of September 30. Commission staff will be working with Ecology staff to complete billing on that award over the next few months. Fiscal Year 26 federal funds in the amount of $1 million was added to the existing FY24 funding agreement with NOAA. The MRC grant portion of the FY26 funding will be included in the next grant cycle, to be spent in 2028.

Communications: The 2026–2030 communications plan is ready to go; staff will focus on raising awareness and supporting the launch. Staff are actively working to clarify and align messaging around the Commission's brand for partners and MRCs and coordinating upcoming regional and local news releases with partners and MRCs.

Contracts and grants: The interagency agreement with WA Department of Natural Resources is in the process of being amended to use remaining funds from our FY23 NOAA award expiring at the end of this year.

Broad Community Engagement: Staff continue to coordinate on how best to integrate community engagement efforts at the Commission and MRC levels.

Other Meetings Attended

- Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program (PSEMP) Salmonid (9/3) – Jeff
- Impact of oxygen and temperature on Puget Sound marine life (9/10) – Dana
- WDFW Human-Kelp Interactions Workshop at Padilla Bay (9/16)
- Community Engagement Community of Practice (9/2) – Allie
- Ecology SEA Program Management Team (8/31, 9/14, 9/21) – Lucas
- NWSC 101 presentation to Sen. Murray staff (9/8) – Lucas
- Puget Sound Partnership Ecosystem Coordination Board (9/10) – Lucas
- EPA/Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) Statement of Cooperation Working Group meeting (9/22) – Lucas

September 14, 2026

Subject: Increasing the effectiveness of mooring buoy management

Dear Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Aquatic Resources Division,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the mooring buoy statute 79.105.430 to address the management issues surrounding recreational mooring buoys on state-owned aquatic lands. The Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) and our seven county-based Marine Resources Committees (MRC) work to protect and restore marine resources of the Northwest Straits region of Puget Sound. NWSC was authorized by Congress in 1998 and supports a citizen-based approach to marine conservation that engages diverse members of our local communities.

Under the current mooring buoy statute there is no mechanism for any agency to accurately maintain and actively manage and enforce private mooring buoys across state waters. Multiple MRCs and NWSC actively work to protect vital eelgrass habitat from vessel anchoring, remove and prevent derelict vessels and associated impacts, and support Tribal treaty access, all of which can be negatively impacted by private buoys that are unpermitted, improperly installed, and/or not maintained. Of particular note, San Juan Marine Resources Committee has led a multiyear study to inventory mooring buoys across the county and conducted vessel counts to assess the strain on marine resources. This work is intended to inform the county on marine infrastructure while balancing access with habitat conservation.

NWSC supports the proposed updates to the mooring buoy statute to clarify definitions and give statutory permission to DNR to actively track, manage and enforce private buoys that are unpermitted and/or trespassing. NWSC also supports the additional diversion of the WET tax to fund enforcement capacity at DNR.

In addition to the general support of these changes, NWSC would like to emphasize a few additional items related to implementation of these proposed statutory changes along with related observations and comments, outlined below.

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. **Funding**: The current 25% diversion of WET tax contributes to the Derelict Vessel Removal Program (DVRP). This program is vital to helping protect our marine environment from pollution and marine debris. We want to emphasize the importance of funding capacity to actively enforce and manage private mooring buoys by diverting additional funds from the WET tax without impacting current DVRP funds.
2. **Existing buoys**: The vastness of the issue related to managing private mooring buoys is estimated but not fully understood, hindering understanding of impacts to treaty rights and

the marine environment. We would like to emphasize our priority to apply the proposed statute updates and management authority for DNR on *existing buoys*. The items below all relate to what we view as critical elements to effectively manage existing mooring buoys:

a. Ensure the language added to RCW 79.105.430 clearly notes the changes apply to all private mooring buoys currently installed and planned for installation. Buoys will not be eligible for grandfathered status. Everything in the water will need to be permitted and registered to remain.
b. In outward communications related to this statue change, emphasize that all existing mooring buoys will be subject to this registration process without grandfathered eligibility in order to discourage an increase in installations before statute change takes effect.
c. Consider targeted communications to buoy owners and contractors outlining the repercussions of lack of compliance with permitting, design, maintenance, and installation registration requirements. There is a similar precedent being set for contractors and property owners regarding shoreline armoring.
d. We ask that DNR prioritize inventorying what is currently in the water and develop a strategic approach to enforcing and removing buoys not permitted and/or causing damage to the marine environment. NWSC would like to emphasize how critical it is for DNR to create a management prioritization process to enforce and remove unauthorized buoys with environmental impacts and treaty rights as prioritization criteria.

3. **Management, community engagement, and incentives**: We ask that DNR develop strategies to incentivize private mooring buoy applicants and those with existing buoys to utilize models that support shared use or community systems similar to joint-use docks rather than overwater structures for individual parcels. Similarly, we want to emphasize the importance of collaborative spatial planning with community groups and ask that DNR make an effort to lead the development of more *Managed Field* models where possible. This spatial planning strategy has the benefit of designating space for buoys relative to navigation and critical habitat while engaging community voices in local planning.
4. **Enforcement**: In addition to enforcement actions related to removing unpermitted or trespassing buoys, we would like to emphasize the importance of enforcing compliance with environmentally friendly mooring buoy design, installation, and maintenance. We ask DNR to consider a strategy to confirm compliance with permitted designs and installation for new and existing buoys while requiring proof of maintenance as part of ongoing registration to ensure the buoys are installed to minimize environmental impact. Additionally, we ask that DNR consider and clarify the mechanisms of enforcement for buoys out of compliance/unpermitted/trespassing. Removal where possible is preferred rather than fines.
5. **Anchoring on SOAL**: Although not related to the private mooring buoy statute in RCW 79.105.430, we would like to acknowledge a connected concern related to anchoring on SOAL beyond the 30 days allowable in WAC 332-52-155. Many community members note that derelict vessels are anchoring beyond what is allowed on SOAL. The ability to enforce

these rules would be a complementary benefit to managing unpermitted mooring buoys. We believe additional funding is necessary for more consistent tracking and enforcement of anchoring law violations to assist with managing vessels of concern. This would help prevent further environmental impact from abandoned and derelict vessels. This is another opportunity where community partnerships and Managed Fields models could support DNRs enforcement role.

We support these important improvements to mooring buoy statute 79.105.430 and look forward to continuing to work alongside DNR's mooring buoy program to protect marine habitats.

Sincerely,

Jamie Stephens

Chair, Northwest Straits Commission