



MRC Awards – 2016 Conference

San Juan – Celebrating 20 years



- 2016 marks a major milestone for the San Juan MRC, as they celebrate a 20-year anniversary. San Juan was the first Marine Resources Committee in the state, and was considered a "compelling model" by the Murray Metcalf Commission to increase the focus on marine issues and help promote local solutions. The San Juan MRC demonstrated the success of working locally and became the model for other MRCs. Many residents stepped up to participate on the MRC, and their work led to the establishment of the entire county as a Marine Stewardship Area (with an associated management plan). They helped re-establish the derelict vessel removal program in the county, made significant contributions to the

state's Rockfish Conservation Plan, and since 2003 they have hosted agencies and organizations that manage marine waters in the county. At marine managers' workshops, participants identify ways to improve the management of the waters, sometimes including managers from across the border in the Gulf Islands.

- As the San Juan MRC proved that the grassroots approach that was envisioned could be successful, they paved the way for the establishment of the Northwest Straits Commission and the other MRCs, and they continue to do locally important work today.
- Thank you San Juan MRC!

Island – Cornet Bay Restoration & Monitoring



- Island MRC has an impressive number of well-trained and dedicated teams of volunteer citizen scientists, who annually contribute thousands of hours to gather data that help us to better understand the health of the local marine

environment. They built partnerships with state and federal agencies to ensure their data is put to use, and pioneered the SoundIQ online data sharing that we now use throughout the Northwest Straits region. This year, their work on Pigeon Guillemot surveys will be published in a peer reviewed publication, the winter edition of Northwestern Naturalist.

- At the same time, the MRC embarked on a long-term plan to restore beaches at Cornet Bay. Since our last conference, another phase of construction was completed, removing fill along 240 feet of shoreline, adding beach nourishment and expanding a salt marsh area, followed by native vegetation planting in the spring. Working in partnership with the Northwest Straits Foundation and Washington State Parks, their work in the area has already shown restoration results, as evidence of forage fish spawning was found in the area for the first time ever this past September. Their work on Cornet Bay provided inspiration for other MRCs to get involved in big projects.
- Thank you and congratulations Island MRC!

Jefferson – Fort Townsend Beach Restoration



- Jefferson MRC had a busy year, installing two new rain gardens to improve water quality, maintaining their voluntary no anchor zones that protect over 140 acres of eelgrass, conducting outreach on pet waste disposal, restoring Olympia oysters and a variety of citizen science monitoring activities.
- One of the standout accomplishments this year was the beach restoration at Fort Townsend State Park. In the planning stages for four years, construction was completed this October, removing 1,700 cubic yards of fill and rip rap, restoring natural feeder bluff processes and beach habitat for shorebirds, forage fish and other marine animals. This project was the result of a well-coordinated team including the MRC, the Northwest Straits Foundation, and Washington State Parks. The MRC conducted outreach and installed interpretive signage, and volunteers will be back out on the beach for post-restoration monitoring in the coming year.
- Thank you Jefferson MRC for doing the crucial work of making sure that people understand the value of these investments to restore our marine waters!

Clallam – Oil Spill Preparedness



- Clallam MRC had a banner year in 2016 that included: hosting community beach cleanup events; engaging over a thousand visitors to the Dungeness River Festival; partnering with Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe to restore 1.5 acres of

Olympia oysters; surveying for bull kelp; and conducting Pigeon Guillemot surveys for the first time in the County.

- A signature issue for the Clallam MRC is oil spill preparedness. This year they maintained their HAZWOPER and oiled wildlife trainings to ensure local volunteers are qualified to respond to a spill. Since 2009 over 750 participants have attended these trainings. This year, the MRC also hosted an oil spill awareness workshop for the local community, and initiated a project to ensure that recent and detailed data would be available for the Geographic Response Plan that helps guide and prioritize the state's response to an oil spill, and ensure that the baseline inventory is known to gauge post-spill resource damage.
- Thank you Clallam MRC for your work to ensure that the front door to the Salish Sea is protected!

Snohomish – Nearshore Beach Restoration



Photo: Al Bergstein

- Snohomish MRC also has a long list of projects, many of them quite large with significant environmental benefits. Their ongoing work includes the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area and monitoring projects such as mussel watch, bull kelp and forage fish spawning surveys. Snohomish MRC outreach efforts such as their #CatchMoreCrab campaign and coastal landowner workshops have served as a model for other areas.
- In 2016 Snohomish MRC completed a nearshore beach restoration at Howarth Park, removing riprap bulkhead on the beach and placing more than 1,500 truckloads of beach sand to restore 0.85 miles of shoreline and **2.4 acres** that will benefit juvenile salmon and forage fish as well as improve access for the public. Almost as important as this restoration is their accomplishment in developing key partnerships that prepare the way for future projects.
- The Snohomish MRC is also working directly with the County Executive's office to ratchet up policies and actions to protect marine waters.
- Thank you Snohomish MRC for your continued success with big projects!

Skagit – Salish Sea Stewards



- Skagit MRC emphasizes a boots-in-the-mud approach to their work, taking on Olympia oyster restoration fourteen years ago to bring populations in Fidalgo Bay from about 50,000 to an estimated 4.8 million today. They're working on restoring Pinto abalone, and their annual Fidalgo Bay Day consistently energizes the community and demonstrates amazing support for their work. MRC members, each and every one, get involved in projects and no MRC project happens unless it has a strong volunteer champion to see it through.
- This year we congratulate the Skagit MRC for their successful Salish Sea Stewards program. The MRC recognized the need for trained volunteers to expand the capacity of the MRC and other local marine-focused organizations, and launched the Salish Sea Stewards program in 2014. After graduating their third class this year, the exponential effect of this training is clear, with volunteers recording more than 8,000 hours of volunteer service in 2015-16.

- Salish Sea Stewards graduates are monitoring bull kelp, conducting beach seining and forage fish spawn surveys, looking for invasive green crab, serving as beach naturalists at Washington Park, and many other projects that benefit the Salish Sea ecosystem.
- Thank you Skagit MRC!

Whatcom – Youth Outreach



Photo: Al Bergstein

- The Whatcom MRC has a long history of emphasizing clean water and protecting shellfish resources such as clams and oysters. From their public speaker series to Jerry's Trail and Mussel Watch, the MRC keeps an eye on the shellfish and local waters and communicating issues of concern to the public. An impressive amount of MRC volunteer hours is contributed for kelp monitoring, Mussel Watch and Chuckanut Bay water quality sampling.
- This year, Whatcom MRC made a special effort to connect with a younger crowd by involving over 100 elementary school students to get involved with water

quality sampling in North Chuckanut Bay. Participants found 500 clams representing 8 different species. Data from this event was shared with NWSC to include in Sound IQ. This student involvement was just one piece of a bigger effort to create community connections to water quality issues and to achieve significant improvements in water quality in Chuckanut Bay.

- We applaud the Whatcom MRC for involving so many residents and for working with younger students as part of the Chuckanut project. Thank you Whatcom MRC.

Final Slide

- Thank you again to all of the members of the MRCs, as well as your many project volunteers and partners.
- In the past year, more than 10,000 volunteer hours were contributed by MRC members and other volunteers in support of MRC projects.
- Volunteers in all seven counties are monitoring bull kelp by kayak, and we created a regional database of the collected data that is included in SoundIQ.
- All seven MRCs are contributing data to the SoundIQ system, and the system has improved access to metadata with links to viewing your own webmap of SoundIQ data.
- The Commission, Foundation and multiple MRCs launched a targeted campaign to Catch More Crab by reducing the number of lost crab pots in Puget Sound.
- In addition to volunteer support, counties and project partners contributed more than \$130,000 to the work of the MRCs, and restoration projects since our last conference leveraged over \$3 million in other funds, through grants to the Counties and the Northwest Straits Foundation.