



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Location: Zoom Conference Call
Date: March 25, 2022
Time: 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

To join the Zoom meeting, [CLICK HERE](#) Meeting ID: 836 8095 2767 Passcode: 400761
 For audio conference, dial: 253 215 8782 or find your local number [here](#).

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.

10:00 – 10:10	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement Approval of February 2022 meeting minutes	Elsa Schwartz, Chair
10:10 – 10:30	Committee reports Executive Committee Science Advisory Committee External Relations Committee	Tom Cowan Julia Parrish Chris Castner
10:30 – 10:35	Business items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRC grant amendments (Sasha) • NW Straits Commission Conference update (Lucas) • July forage fish training (Leah) • Kelp conservation plan steering committee (Jeff) 	Staff
10:35 – 11:05	Disease Outbreaks in Eelgrass Heating up with Climate Change	Drew Harvell, Ph.D., Cornell University
11:05 – 11:10	Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission/Tribal update	Cecilia Gobin, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
11:10 – 11:15	Puget Sound Partnership update	Jennifer Grimm, Puget Sound Partnership



11:15 – 11:20	NWS Foundation update	Don Hunger, NWS Foundation
11:20 – 11:45	MRC Reports	MRC Representatives
11:45 – 11:55	Meeting highlights and action items Identify key points and action items from this meeting for MRC reps to report back to their MRCs	All
11:55 – 12:00	Public comment	All

30 minute post-meeting open discussion – join if you'd like.



Minutes

February 25, 2022 • 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Zoom – Conference call
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees:

Commission Members: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Jenn Grimm (Puget Sound Partnership alternate), Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Christina Koons (San Juan), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Julia Parrish, Chris Castner, Nan McKay

Commission Staff: Dana Oster, Allie Simpson, Leah Robison, Jeff Whitty

Others in Attendance: Austin Rose (Whatcom), Troy McKelvey (Jefferson), Christy Pattengill-Semmens (REEF), Janna Nichols (REEF), Adam Lorio (NW Straits Foundation), Phil Salditt (NW Straits Foundation), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation)

Absent: Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Alan Clark (Clallam), Tim Ellis (Snohomish)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the January 28 meeting as written by consensus.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan updated the Commission on the February 2022 meeting. The Committee discussed the tentative in-person conference in La Conner November 18 and 19 at Maple Hall. The Committee discussed the NW Straits Commission funding policy change, as further detailed in the report included in the meeting packet. The policy will be brought to the Commission for adoption at a later date.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia Parrish reported on the recent activities of the Committee. The Committee has continued to work on the Articles of Association. The Committee has developed and scheduled the first few months of the new program engaging local scientists. This program will give NW Straits Commission members a deeper insight into relevant local science and opportunities for involvement. The first presentation of this series was by Christy Pattengill-Semmens with REEF. The four-part Climate Change Symposium series finished with the last session on February 17. The Committee would like participants to complete the [follow-up evaluation](#) to provide input on the symposium series.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner reported on the recent activity on the draft NW Straits Initiative reauthorization bill. He reported that there is no change in the status of the bill, and the next step will be for Senator Murray's staff to send the draft bill to NOAA. The Committee also discussed opportunities for conversations with legislators during Puget Sound Day on the Hill to thank them for past support and discuss reauthorization. There are no changes in the status for the potential funding for Northwest Straits through Congressionally Directed Spending as the FY22 budget is delayed though a Continuing Resolution through March 11.

Director's Report: Elsa conveyed Lucas's updates.

- Staff Updates: Dana has returned and will be working four days per week starting March 1. Progress on filling the open administrative position continues. The reclassification phase is almost complete. Recruiting will follow reclassification.



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- Maritime WA National Heritage Area recognizes our state's unique and diverse maritime culture. This new designation supports our coastal communities in celebrating, maintaining, and sharing their water-based stories. A draft management plan for this area has been released. Comments can be provided in several ways, including through a survey that focuses on the key components of the plan:
<https://preservewa.org/programs/maritime-national-heritage-area/mw-nha-get-involved/>
- Legislative Update: The session ends March 10. Here are some bills that are being tracked
 - SB5619: Provides funding to WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to identify priority kelp and eelgrass habitat. The bill has passed in the Senate and will go to the House.
 - HB1700: Provides funding to the DNR derelict vessel removal program. The bill has passed house and will go to the Senate.
 - SB5885: Mandates that replacement of existing shoreline structures must meet most up to date standards. The bill has passed Senate and will go to the house.
 - HB1117: This bill impacts state comprehensive planning by setting Net Ecological Gain standards. The bill is getting mixed testimony.
 - HB1099: Addresses climate change through state's comprehensive planning framework. Passed from Senate housing and local gov't committee. Will be taken up by full Senate.
 - SB5747: Would require consultation with tribes on oil and hazardous substance spill prevention and contingency plans. Passed from House Environment and Energy committee. Will be taken up by full House.
 - HB1172: Recognizes judicially affirmed and treaty-reserved fishing rights. Bill is in hearing in Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources and Parks.
 - SB5590: Extends expiration of the Marine Resources Advisory Council (ocean acidification advisory group) from 2022 to 2032. Passed Senate, Bill is now in the House Environment Committee.

Business items

In addition to the written update, staff provided the following business items:

- Green crab update: Jeff and Leah gave an update on green crab field preparation and presentations. Staff has been busy preparing for the upcoming field season in Whatcom and Skagit counties by coordinating efforts with WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife, WA Sea Grant, Padilla Bay Reserve, local landowners, and local shellfish farmers. The team has also made several presentations on green crabs (e.g. crab ID and what to do if you see a green crab). Staff is also happy to announce that they will be able to work with a WA Conservation Corps and Veterans Conservation Corps crews during the 2022 trapping season. To help with the intensive removal efforts in Whatcom and Skagit counties, staff is starting a pilot volunteer program. MRCs members in these counties received a recruitment announcement for participating in the boots-in-the-mud work later this spring. In addition to trapping, there will also be education and outreach opportunities that would benefit from volunteer support.

Presenting Scientist

Christy Pattengill-Semmens from Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) presented on Linking Citizen Science to Ocean Conservation. Citizen scientists are pushing the field and filling in the data gaps. Opportunities like the REEF Volunteer Fish Surveys provide authentic learning opportunities to connect people to the natural world.



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The extensive data collected in this global project has contributed to many research projects and supported management decisions. In Washington, data REEF collected was useful in assessing the sunflower sea star, which led to the species being listed as critically endangered. REEF data was also used in a case study of rockfishes in Puget Sound. MRC members can make this program more visible to their community members by participating and sharing the Volunteer Fish Survey Project: www.REEF.org.

Partner updates:

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared updates on three key areas:

[Treaty rights at risk](#)- Tribes reconvened regional meeting with federal tribal leaders. The issue of European green crab was elevated to federal agencies (Bureau of Indian Affairs and NOAA) to support with funding this work.

The Lorraine Loomis act in the legislature was pulled. A lot of the conversation is around putting money toward existing salmon protections in preparation for when a bill is in place. They discussed redirecting energy to seeking funding for salmon recovery work in the different Water Resource Inventory Areas.

They are working with member tribes to figure out the next steps on addressing the Coho mortality due to the tire chemical pollution (6 PPD Quinon). They would like to engage the EPA and their Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention. With EPA regulatory engagement, industry could be brought to the table to discuss safer alternatives and development of a national phase-out approach as part of the long term planning. There was tribal engagement and support on the research phase, now that there are solid findings; it is time to move towards the 'next steps'. Jenn Grimm shared an article with the Commission on this topic: <https://www.washington.edu/news/2020/12/03/tire-related-chemical-largely-responsible-for-adult-coho-salmon-deaths-in-urban-streams/>

Puget Sound Partnership: Jenn Grimm reported on updates from the Puget Sound Partnership and provided the link to the interactive tool for viewing legislative updates: ([Puget Sound Partnership - Legislative Updates \(wa.gov\)](https://www.psp.wa.gov/draft-action-agenda-development-review.php)). She gave a reminder about the Action Agenda which is open for public input and review from March 15 through April 15 (<https://www.psp.wa.gov/draft-action-agenda-development-review.php>). After this, it will make rounds to the boards and then go into effect. Puget Sound Day on the Hill will be hybrid and extended and more details will be provided next month.

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don Hunger reported out on current activities of the Foundation.

- Jason and Haley are continuing beach seining surveys.
- The Mount Erie rain garden project is underway and there will be upcoming volunteer opportunities.
- They are relaunching the marine passport to adventure and will produce a rack card with QR codes to share. The project is a fun engagement opportunity for community members to visit sites and become stewards and supporters.
- The first round of the Caroline Gibson scholarship fund was open for a short period and received five applicants. Two scholarships will be given in March. The next application cycle will align with the next academic year.
- The Foundation has been working with Clallam MRC on the outreach coasters project.



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- They are planning on engaging with Boeing on more projects in the future and will provide more details at a future meeting.
- They received a business planning grant that funds a position to initiate the new AmeriCorps program.

MRC Updates

MRCs provided full written reports that are available in the pre-meeting materials. Highlights are included below:

Clallam – Alan Clark (not present)

- Met with the NW Straits Foundation about their Marine Critter Outreach/Education cards.
- Clallam MRC gave an update presentation to Clallam Board of County Commissioners.
- January 27th Mussel cages were collected and sent to the lab for Biotoxin analysis.

Island – Elsa Schwartz

- Strategic Planning: The Committee is working to hire a consultant to help facilitate the in-person retreat on March 19.
- Staff in Training: Kelly Zupich has started her new position and is being onboarded.

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The rain garden subcommittee conducted site visits at all MRC co-sponsored rain gardens in Port Townsend to assess maintenance needs and created a list of rain gardens overgrown with weeds/grass. The subcommittee is planning a work party on Mar 18 to add mulch to the Franklin and Adams St. rain garden and to weed some of the other rain gardens around Port Townsend.
- No anchor zones subcommittee members (Troy, Pam, Gordon, Bryan) serviced the buoys along the Port Townsend waterfront on Jan 22 – the MRC's first time back to diving since 2019. They swapped out the remaining 4 summer spar buoys with winter floats and checked the integrity of the ropes and hardware, relocating 6 of the anchors.
- Expansion of the Olympia oyster restoration site in South Discovery Bay received permit approvals from WDFW and Jefferson County (DNR, USACE and Ecology pending).
- Student ROV project is coming up for crab pot removal and will also be including a side scan sonar to get a survey of the bay. The experiments with the side scan fish finders is supported by folks from the University of Delaware.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- The MRC welcomed two new members.
- The MRC continues to make progress on the Marine Stewardship Area Plan update.
- A Joint letter to Islands Trust was provided with a request for the Canadian government to reposition an emergency towing tug to Victoria BC.
- MRC members are planning to volunteer with island oil spill association (IOSA)
- Plan to install the Seabin.
- Grade 5 classrooms hear killer whale tales.
- Working on eelgrass protection, and determining where protection buoys should be placed

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

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- Forage fish surveys at the Bowman Bay restoration site have temporarily been put on hold to help protect the northern elephant seal and her new pup until the pup is fully weaned.
- 19 participants have registered so far for the in-person Salish Sea Stewards training program that starts March 1st. Masks and vaccinations are required. Speakers have the option to present virtually. Salish Sea Stewards alumni are invited to attend virtually. The [2022 Training Schedule](#) is now available on the Skagit MRC website.
- Excited to hear that Boeing reached out. The Skagit MRC received some funding from them for stormwater improvement and the deliverable was the Anacortes rain garden that is underway.

Snohomish – Tim Ellis (not present)

- The Stakeholder Survey for the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Conservation Action Plan Update project was launched on February 9. The survey will remain open until March 2, and respondents will have the opportunity to respond either in writing or with a follow up phone interview.
- The MRC contracted with DNR to complete marine vegetation monitoring from Everett to Edmonds this summer. DNR found eelgrass was present at 21 out of 22 sites sampled, and at 192 of 224 transects sampled. DNR submitted their final report on February 11 and presented on this work at the February 16 MRC Meeting.
- The MRC retrieved cages for the Mussel Watch program on January 31. One mussel cage (Kayak Point) was lost during heavy storms shortly after deployment in November, while the remaining 6 cages were successfully retrieved and returned to WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>.
- The MRC will be hosting education and outreach lessons with grade school kids. The program will demonstrate beach seining and will teach about salmon migration.
- The community boating center (CBC) would like to get involved with the MRC Kelp surveying. Allie presented on survey results at their last MRC meeting.
- There was a recent beach access issue with a landowner concerned about public access on the county road. The MRC will continue to monitor what is happening as this county road is used for marine access for various MRC programs.

Meeting highlights and action steps for MRCs

The Commission identified the following key highlights, which staff will share as a separate document to MRC staff and the Commission:

- A reminder for the tentative in-person Northwest Straits conference November 18-19, 2022 at Maple Hall in La Conner. The Northwest Straits Commission plans to announce whether a conference will be held within the next month. A decision is pending public health recommendations.
- The REEF Volunteer Fish Survey Project is a citizen science opportunity for those who dive or snorkel. Learn more about how to get involved here: <https://www.reef.org/what-reef>.
- For invasive European green crab early detection and monitoring information, follow along with the work of Washington Sea Grant's Crab Team: [Get Involved With Crab Team – Washington Sea Grant](#).



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- In Whatcom and Skagit Counties, NWSC staff will be leading intensive green crab removal efforts. Contact Leah Robison (robison@nwstraits.org) for more information about MRC volunteer opportunities in these counties.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

*The next Commission meeting will be on Friday March 25, 2022, via Zoom.



Commission staff highlights - [March 2022]

MRC Support

MRC Grants: Commission staff prepared a timeline and process for amending the current MRC grants to add project or make any other scope/budget changes for year two of the award. Year two begins October 1, 2022.

Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP): Commission staff prepared and submitted a QAPP for green crab project, which is currently under review by Ecology's QA Coordinator.

NW Straits 101: Commission staff hosted a virtual NW Straits 101 webinar on March 17 attended by 29 participants, including new and veteran MRC members and NW Straits Foundation board members.

Regional Projects

Eelgrass: Staff are coordinating with the NW Straits Foundation to prepare permit applications and coordinate outreach and engagement with tribes and local interests to discuss proposed voluntary no-anchor zones for select sites.

Kelp Plan: The agenda for the first in a series of workshops and small group discussions is nearly complete in an effort to better link science with policy and regulations that protect and restore kelp. Jeff is forming a steering committee to guide the work of coordinating the Kelp Plan. Staff continue to participate in transboundary kelp meetings to establish how and when groups in Washington and Canada can improve communication and work together to further kelp conservation and restoration.

Kelp Monitoring: Staff are preparing for the 2022 kelp season kick off meeting to coordinate efforts of kelp kayak volunteers and connect work to regional kelp monitoring efforts. Staff are coordinating with WA DNR and the Vital Sign kelp canopy indicator team to integrate MRC kelp data into the regional kelp indicator.

Green Crab: Staff continue to prep for fieldwork that commences April 4, which includes preparing a training week for the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) in collaboration with Roger Fuller at Padilla Bay Reserve.

Forage fish: Staff is coordinating with MRC leads for survey supplies and sample delivery to WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife as needed.

Derelict vessel removal: Lucas and Don Hunger met with DNR Aquatic Lands Manager to discuss derelict vessel removal opportunities and needs. They are evaluating whether there are opportunities for the NWSI to engage in vessel removal, prevention, and/or education/outreach. More discussions are expected in the future.

Operations

Staffing update: The NWSC Program Coordinator position is expected to be posted the week of 3/21.

COVID-19 update: Ecology Covid guidelines now allow staff to work unmasked, unless interacting with the public or other partners whose vaccination status is unknown. Padilla Bay guidelines are in development.

Funding update: Senator Patty Murray secured \$3M in federal funding in the FY22 budget. Her staff has recommended we apply for FY23 funding as well. Lucas is preparing the application and seeking letters of support. Lucas is working with Ecology to prepare for the next state legislative session funding requests.

Meetings attended:

Lucas attended: Leadership Council Meeting 3/3; Derelict vessel removal meeting 3/10, 3/14; Clayton Beach Restoration visit 3/10; NWS 101 3/17; Ecology recruitment meeting 3/21; Salish Sea Institute Advisory Board 3/22; Ecology Budgeting Meeting 3/23; MRC Lead Staff meeting 3/24

Allie attended: Jefferson MRC meeting (3/1); San Juan MRC meeting (3/3); North Sound European Green Crab meeting (3/4); DNR Derelict Vessel presentation (3/10); Skagit Water Week meeting with Skagit MRC members (3/15)

Sasha attended: DNR Derelict Vessel presentation (3/10); Salish Sea Stewards training on creosote/MyCoast (3/15), External Relations committee (3/16); Northwest Straits 101 (3/17); Executive Committee (3/21); Clallam MRC meeting (3/21); MRC Lead Staff meeting (3/24)

Leah attended: Island County MRC meeting (3/1); Whatcom MRC meeting (3/3); North Sound European Green Crab meeting (3/4); Skagit MRC meeting (3/10); DNR Derelict Vessel presentation (3/10); Skagit Water Week meeting with Skagit MRC members (3/15)

Jeff attended: Salish Sea Kelp coordinators meeting (3/1); Island County MRC meeting (3/1); Whatcom MRC meeting (3/3); PSEMP Nearshore (3/4); North Sound European Green Crab meeting (3/4); Skagit MRC meeting (3/10); Salish Sea Kelp coordinators meeting (3/18); Skagit Water Week meeting with Skagit MRC members (3/15); PSEMP Forage Fish (3/4); Clallam MRC meeting (3/21); Salish Sea Kelp coordinators meeting (3/25)

Dana attended: Skagit MRC Salish Sea Stewards training presentation (3/1); Snohomish and Island MRC Port Susan MSA planning (3/3); PSEMP Nearshore (3/4); Kelp canopy indicator data and project team meetings (3/9 and (3/11); Salish Sea Kelp coordinators meeting (3/18); Skagit MRC Salish Sea Stewards presentation on kelp (3/22)

2021-23 Marine Resources Committee Grants

Year two amendment timeline - DRAFT

<u>Task</u>	<u>Date</u>
Amendment opportunity begins for year two revisions/additions MRCs will use Word document versions of the project proposal forms to submit new projects and revise existing tasks in the grant scope of work. The amendment will not be initiated in EAGL until proposed projects are approved by the Commission.	April 2022
<p>If the MRC does not have new proposed projects, the timeline below can be condensed. Commission staff will work with your MRC to determine the best timeline for minor scope or budget changes.</p>	
Project review and evaluation New projects to be reviewed by Commission staff, Science Advisory Committee and/or other technical advisors as needed. Clarification or additional information from MRCs may be requested.	May-June 2022
Project amendment approval NWS Staff will work with Executive Committee to conduct final review of year two proposed projects and make recommendations for approval to the Northwest Straits Commission.	June 2022
Prepare year two project amendments Commission and MRC staff will initiate the grant amendments in EAGL to move forward for processing and signature by Ecology and affiliated counties. NOTE: The April-June payment request must be submitted and approved in EAGL before the amendment can be initiated.	July 2022
Year <u>one</u> EPA fund expenditure deadline The first year of EPA funding must be spent by the end of September, 2022. Extensions are not possible.	September 30, 2022
State funds expenditure deadline All 2021-23 state funding must be spent by the end of June, 2023. Extensions are not possible. Any state funds remaining will expire.	June 30, 2023
Grant completion date All grants must be fully expended and all projects completed by September 30, 2023. Extension beyond September 2023 is not possible.	September 2023



Northwest Straits Foundation 2022 Program Updates – March 2022

Mission Statement - To protect and restore the health of the marine ecosystem by promoting and implementing science-based restoration and stewardship, enhancing collaboration and attracting resources for the work of the Northwest Straits Initiative

Welcoming Jessie Page Foundation AmeriCorps Partnership Coordinator



Jessie joined the NWSF this month as the AmeriCorps Partnership Coordinator. She has a degree in Environmental Science from the University of Washington and grew up in Kirkland, WA. Since graduating, she worked as an AmeriCorps community program coordinator in Utah. Jessie has a passion for youth, conservation and education and is helping us design a marine conservation corps program for the Northwest Straits region. She is inspired by the collaborative restoration efforts taking place all around the Salish Sea and can't wait to continue learning through her work at the Northwest Straits Foundation.

AmeriCorps Planning Grant

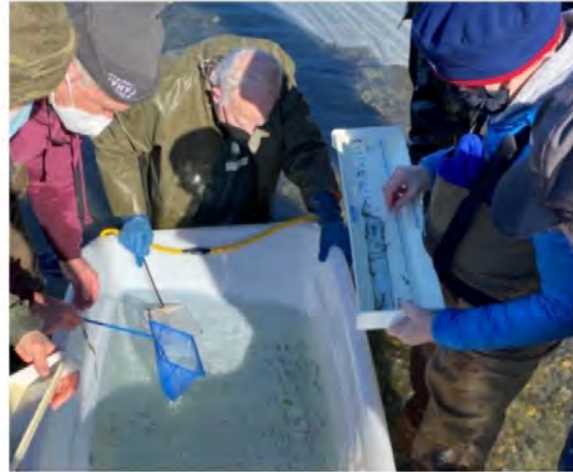
We need your help identifying opportunities for AmeriCorps members to support Marine Resources Committees and partner conservation projects in the Northwest Straits region. Partnership Coordinator, Jessie Page, will be contacting agency, nonprofit, tribal and other community organizations to inventory current shoreline projects, learn about emerging opportunities and identify partnership opportunities where AmeriCorps members can provide capacity, knowledge, skills and abilities supporting local marine projects.

Monitoring, Cornet Bay

The second month of beach seining at Cornet Bay is done. Island County MRC volunteers and Foundation staff have been catching lots of pink and chum salmon as well as a variety of very unique sculpins. In the past, seinings have shown Cornet Bay to be a hot spot for juvenile salmon, likely due to the site's proximity to the Skagit River output. We are beginning to see high numbers already in the season, having caught a total of 284 juvenile pink salmon in just one seining on February 25th! This suggests we will likely see even higher numbers when we get closer to the spring and summer months. Cornet Bay monitoring will continue through June.



Seining at Cornet Bay on February 25, 2022



Volunteers seining and counting pink salmon at Cornet Bay on Feb. 25th

Skagit County Derelict Crab Pot Removal Project

The kick-off meeting and planning has begun for the Foundation's two-year derelict crab pot removal and outreach project in Skagit County. This project will include pot removals in the Anacortes/Padilla Bay area, training and employing local commercial crab harvesters (including the Swinomish and State removal fleets), and working with commercial fleets to develop a crab pot loss prevention outreach plan. The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Marine Debris Program and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife fund this project.

Advancement

Thanks to the support of all seven MRCs, the Foundation is updating its Passport to Marine Adventure environmental education shoreline exploration sites in time for summer, 2022. The Passport is an exploration and education travel game that invites people to visit their shorelines, learn about marine habitats, and promote Northwest Straits Initiatives projects.

This month we submitted a grant proposal to The Skagit Community Foundation, for Skagit landowner outreach to engage them in the Nearshore Restoration program. Foundation staffs are working on grant proposals supporting marine conservation with The Whatcom Community Foundation, The Boeing Corporation, The Sustainable Path Foundation, The Stillaguamish Tribe, and The Campbell Foundation.



Mt. Erie Rain Garden

The Foundation is working with multiple partners to plant and finish a demonstration rain garden this month at Mt. Erie Elementary School, Anacortes. Teacher, students and families will be planting more than 150 plants. NWSF Rain Garden Fellow, Margeaux Bailey, is also giving a presentation on the scientific benefits of rain gardens on water quality and related habitat. This event is a collaboration among Azusa Farm and Gardens, the City of Anacortes, Holly Frontier, Mt. Erie Elementary School, the Northwest Straits Foundation, and the Skagit Marine Resources Committee.

Meet The 2022 Caroline Gibson Scholars

In honor of Caroline Gibson's enduring love and commitment to the Salish Sea, the Northwest Straits Foundation is pleased to award three scholarships this year to graduate students in the Salish Sea region. The scholarships support current college students pursuing applied academic studies in marine science, policy, education, and management of the Salish Sea.

During her career in the Northwest Straits, Caroline served as Director of the Northwest Straits Foundation, as a Marine Program Manager at the Northwest Straits Commission, and as a member of the Jefferson Marine Resources Committee. Her spark and passion inspired others to not just talk about marine conservation, but to roll up their sleeves and do it!

We're happy to acknowledge these scholarship recipients who embody the spark, creativity and drive to be the next generation of marine conservationists. Caroline would be celebrating their work with us.



Sarah Gutzmann



Mary Margaret Stoll



Michael Sadler



Sarah Gutzmann is a Master of Resource Management (MRM) student and interdisciplinary coastal researcher at Simon Fraser University (SFU), and an Environmental Scientist with Azimuth Consulting Group. She is passionate about coastal marine social-ecological systems and addressing their challenges. One of her major academic goals is to learn about how she can tackle environmental crises (be it biodiversity loss, climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, etc.) through co-producing knowledge and supporting decentralized governance and management, specifically in collaboration with Indigenous nations.

Before starting her MRM, Sarah completed a B.Sc. (Honors) in Environmental Science with a minor in Environmental Toxicology at SFU. Her thesis research established that photography can be used as an application for community-based fisheries monitoring of broad whitefish in the Canadian Arctic. Her dedication to bettering our environment has given her a diverse background in conservation biology, toxicology, marine ecology, as well as public outreach and science communication.

Sarah has worked in riparian habitat restoration, researched salmon energetics, searched for pests in cranberry fields, ran experiments to evaluate microplastic toxicity, developed public educational programming, helped rehabilitate sick/injured marine mammals, etc.

Sarah lives in Port Moody, BC, and loves having the Salish Sea in her backyard. In her free time, you can usually find her hiking, kayaking, reading, or traveling.

Mary Margaret Stoll is a third-year graduate student studying in the School of Oceanography at the University of Washington. Growing up in New England, she attributes her love for the ocean to her family's annual camping trips to Acadia National Park, Maine. As an undergraduate, Mary Margaret fostered her passion for protecting the ocean by pursuing a dual degree program in Chemistry and Environmental Studies at Amherst College, in addition to Engineering at Dartmouth College.

Her graduate research goal is to identify the primary processes that affect ocean acidification in the Salish Sea using paleoclimate records and Regional Ocean Modeling Systems (ROMS). These insights will enhance our understanding of coastal waters and projections of climate change impacts in the region. From these scientific findings, she hopes to open pathways of engagement within the community to collaboratively inform strategies to protect and restore the Salish Sea.

Outside of research, Mary Margaret enjoys hiking, skiing, playing field hockey, singing, spending time with family and friends, and exploring her new home in Washington.



“As a scientist aspiring to conduct research that protects both communities and the environment, I deeply recognize that science and policy go hand-in-hand in establishing meaningful change. The Caroline Gibson Scholarship in Marine Science will allow me to combine my policy and community-based science interests to marine conservation efforts in the Salish Sea,” said Mary Margaret.

Michael Sadler has always been connected to the natural world, which he attributes to growing up near Ogden, Utah. Michael obtained his BS in microbiology from Weber State University and a MS in Environmental Biology from Missouri University of Science and Technology. After graduating, Michael moved to the Seattle to manage a municipal wastewater treatment lab.

With a growing interest in local conservation efforts and love of Puget Sound, Michael joined the Snohomish County Marine Resource Committee (MRC). Shortly after, he was inspired to pursue a Ph.D. in Oceanography. He’s currently in his first year as a Ph.D. student at the University of Washington's School of Oceanography studying marine bacteria and their viruses.

In his free time, Michael enjoys running and rock climbing.

“These funds will assist me in researching the heterotrophic marine bacterial group known as SAR11. Specifically, (the scholarship) will help me investigate the mechanisms of how these bacteria exchange genetic material, and the role this exchange might play in a warming climate,” said Michael.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: March 2022

Submitted by: Rebecca Mahan

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- Marine Critter Outreach/Education cards all distributed to local venues.
- Organized Derelict Vessel presentation to other MRCs and NWSC staff.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): None to report.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events): Troy Woods, Manager of Derelict Vessel program with DNR gave a virtual presentation on DNR's DV program. This presentation was attended by other MRC and NWSC staff and was coordinated by Clallam MRC Coordinator. The presentation was recorded so it can be shared within the MRC/NWSC community.

Monthly MRC Meeting: March 21, 2022

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): None to report.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

Don Hunger, Executive Director NWSF would like to collaborate with Clallam on the coaster project. This will be discussed at March meeting.

Forage Fish sampling is going well. Clallam MRC continued to collect the monthly samples at Cline Spit and Ediz Hook and Elwha beaches East and West.

Shellfish Biotoxin monitoring: Katie Kowal new Water Quality Specialist with Clallam County Environmental Health looked in the history of shellfish sampling due to request from several CMRC members. Conclusion is that if CMRC wants to start sampling at Freshwater Bay (old site that was sampled in the past) she was comfortable and there are funds. CMRC will discuss picking up FWB site at March meeting.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

CMRC was asked to have a table/booth at Port Angeles Earth Day celebration on the Pier April 23rd. CMRC will discuss it at March meeting.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: March/ 2022

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- **Jan Holmes Coastal Volunteer of the Year Award:** Frances Wood
- **Strategic Planning:** Our members have been preparing for our retreat by completing surveys and working on some pre-work provided by the retreat facilitator.
- **Kelly Zupich:** Is still working to get settled in the coordinator position. She is learning lots of new things and is very excited about this new challenge.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): None

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

- March 1: MRC meeting 3:00 pm-5:00 pm Topic: Retreat and strategic planning

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- March 19: MRC Retreat 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
- April 1: April Fools Day Planting at Cornet Bay 10am – Volunteers needed
- April 5: MRC Meeting 3:00pm – 5:00 pm

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): None

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

- Jan Holmes Coastal Volunteer of the Year Award - [Watcher on the beach | Whidbey News-Times \(whidbeynewstimes.com\)](https://www.whidbeynewstimes.com/watcher-on-the-beach/)
- Cornet Bay Stewardship planning has begun! April 1 will be the kickoff event of the season. The planting will help to fill back in areas disturbed by the construction of the new State Parks dock. Additionally, we plan to host a few volunteer weeding dates in the spring and fall, and a plan for watering the newly established plants this summer is in the works.
- Monitoring – Forage Fish: Teams continue to monitor monthly at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Hidden Beach, Glendale, and Seahorse Siesta.
- Seining: The seining team is going strong and continuing monthly. Kelly Zupich will be accompanying Commissioner St. Clair on the March 25 seining to demonstrate the process.

- Outreach – Port Susan MSA: The project “Integrating science and local knowledge to review the effectiveness of the current Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Conservation Action Plan” groups (Island MRC, Snohomish MRC, and the student team at the Evans School of Public Policy and Governance) This work will look at the potential of updating the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Conservation Action Plan. Island County will focus on reviewing the progress of the literature review being produced by the students. The first two chapters of the literature review have been reviewed, and comments have been sent to the students.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

- Island MRC could use any help with how to incorporate D.E.I. into our activities and operations.
- We also are looking for any resources on how to measure the impact of our work.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

Frances Wood ready to watch birds!



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: March 2022

Submitted by: Monica Montgomery

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- The rain garden subcommittee is organizing a rain garden work party on March 18th to weed and cleanup rain gardens across Port Townsend.
- The Fort Townsend forage fish team conducted its last survey for the season on March 9th, marking 7 years of monitoring this site.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Nothing to report

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

Past Events/Meetings

Feb 21 – Fort Townsend forage fish survey
Feb 25 – Straits ERN LIO quarterly meeting
Feb 25 – NWSC monthly meeting
Feb 28 – Education & Outreach subcommittee meeting
Feb 28 – Forage fish survey at Adelma
Mar 1 – MRC monthly meeting
Mar 9 – Fort Townsend forage fish survey
Mar 10 – Derelict Vessel Removal Program presentation by DNR

Upcoming Events/Meetings

Mar 22 – Executive Committee meeting
Mar 22 – Forage fish survey at Dabob
Mar 25 – NWSC monthly meeting
Mar 28 – MRC presentation to the BoCC
Apr 5 – MRC monthly meeting
Apr 14 – NWSI kelp season kickoff
Apr – Forage fish survey at Adelma & Dabob

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): Nothing to report.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

1. Monitoring:

- **Forage fish - Fort Townsend:** The MRC Coordinator and three MRC Members (Troy, Frank, Joanie) conducted the last survey of the season on March 9.

- **Forage fish - Adelma Beach (Index):** The Project Lead (Jeff), with one community volunteer (Cindy), surveyed on February 28.
- **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The MRC Coordinator, Project Lead (Sarah), and other volunteers will survey on March 22.
- **Kelp:** The Project Lead, Solenne, is organizing a subcommittee meeting in late March. Members are also looking forward to the NWSI season kickoff on April 14.

2. Rain Gardens:

- The subcommittee is organizing a rain garden work party on March 18, weather depending, to add mulch to the Franklin and Adams St. rain garden (new rain garden installed last year) and to weed some of the other rain gardens around Port Townsend.

3. Education & Outreach:

- Subcommittee members (Brenda, Liz, Sarah, Frank, Betsy, Joan) met on February 28 to discuss putting 2022 plans into action, including upcoming festivals to participate in, completing an inventory and maintenance of interpretive signs, confirming the year's expenditures (for targeted ads, etc.), and additional considerations, e.g., conducting a community needs assessment.
- The MRC Coordinator delivered hundreds of rack cards focused on rain gardens, soft shore stabilization, Catch More Crab, picking up pet waste, and voluntary no-anchor zones for the Port Townsend Marine Science Center's museum and new building.
- The MRC signed up to be an exhibitor at Forever Streamfest, taking place June 25 at Peninsula College.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- The MRC Coordinator and Project Lead (Neil) met with WDFW and Puget Sound Restoration Fund partners on February 28 to discuss plans for assessing Olympia oyster populations in Kilisut Harbor.
- The MRC Coordinator submitted permit materials to USACE and Ecology, and is awaiting their and DNR's approval for renewing and modifying permits in Discovery Bay. The MRC has already secured permit approvals from WDFW and Jefferson County.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- The MRC Coordinator is working on developing an eelgrass monitoring quality assurance project plan and contracting a survey for assessing presence/absence of eelgrass along the Port Townsend waterfront.

6. Mapping Lost Crab Pots:

- *Side Scan Sonar:* The side scan sonar survey contract has been signed by the contractor and is awaiting final county signatures. Plans are to survey some time May-June.
- *ROV:* The MRC Coordinator submitted a Scientific Collection Permit application, General Study Plan, and Removal Plan to WDFW for approval to remove derelict crab and shrimp pots. The Project Lead, Jeff, attended the Puget Sound Anglers meeting in March to solicit volunteer boaters with fish finders, to support the project. The ROV survey protocol is in development. Plans are to survey some time May-June, following the side scan sonar survey.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

The MRC forwarded a letter to Jefferson County Commissioners on March 16 to support FY23 congressional funding of the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

March 9 Forage fish survey (Frank, Joanie, and Troy) at Fort Townsend State Park – photo by Monica Montgomery



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: March 2022

Submitted by: Frances Robertson

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- The MRC continues to make progress on the MSA Plan update

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

There have been no changes in membership or staffing this month.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

- The MRC held their monthly meeting on March 3rd
- The MRC attended the quarterly LIO meeting on March 3rd
- The MRC attended the monthly San Juan County Stewardship meeting on March 2nd
- Frances Robertson presented to Jefferson MRC about the San Juan County and MRC Derelict Vessel Prevention and Removal efforts on March 1st.

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments):

No new funding updates.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

This is generally a quieter time for the MRC as they work to set up projects that will take place over the summer. This month progress has been made in:

- Plastic Free Salish Sea where efforts are underway to revamp the PFSS website and re-engage with Beach Stewards.
- The maintenance of the Odlin County Park Anchor Out Buoys remains on hold until the County is able to process the contract, we hope for the maintenance to occur before the end of April.
- The QAPP for monitoring *Ulva* spp. at False Bay was drafted and is due to submission in early April.
- The Annual Report is being drafted.

The core effort of the MRC coordinator and MRC continues to be progressing the MSA Plan update. The MSA Plan subcommittee are undertaking reviews of drafted chapters and providing input to chapters currently in progress. The MRC discussed and reviewed strategic actions related to addressing invasive species and variations in food web dynamics at the March MRC meeting. This brings the initial discussions and brainstorming for strategic actions on each identified threat category to a finish. The MSA Subcommittee is now working to review and refine these lists.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.): The MRC were able to connect volunteers with the SeaGrant Green Crab teams to fill needed gaps on sampling teams in the San Juans. MRC member Jeff Dyer continues to sample for green crabs at two sites on Lopez. In addition, due to the interest from islanders an additional in-person training was set up for the County by the SeaGrant training team.

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

No photos from this month.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: March/2022

Submitted by: Tracy/ Diane

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- Kids on the Beach: 360 students from 4 schools are participating in the Kids on the Beach program this year: Sedro-Wooley, Conway, Concrete, and Anacortes middle schools. The level of involvement ranges from fully virtual to in-person. 13 volunteers signed up to assist with the 5 (in-person) field days in March and April.
- MRC Project Planning Retreat: The MRC Project Planning Retreat will be held in-person at Padilla Bay on Wednesday, April 13, 9am-11am. The retreat will be facilitated by Lucas and Allie. MRC members will have 3 weeks to evaluate and rank the 11 MRC project proposals prepared by the project leads prior to the retreat.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

No changes.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

- MRC Monthly Meeting- **March 10** (via Microsoft Teams)- *Attended by 19 people.*
- Clayton Beach Restoration Site Visit- **March 10**: *attended by 1 Skagit MRC member, Whatcom MRC, NWSF staff, State Parks staff, and the ESRP grant team.*
- Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee Meeting- **March 28** (via Zoom)
- Salish Sea Stewards Training Every Tuesday, 1-5pm at Padilla Bay **March 1 -May 24.**
- Kids on the Beach Seining Activity with Sedro Wooley Middle School at Padilla Bay - **March 29-31**
- Skagit MRC Project Planning Retreat/MRC Meeting at Padilla Bay- Wednesday, **April 13**, 9am-11am. It will be combined with the MRC business meeting. There will be no regular MRC meeting on Thursday, April 14 as originally scheduled.
- Conway Middle School (2 classes) KOTB Field Trip to Fidalgo Bay- **April 13**, 10am-1:30pm
- Concrete Middle School KOTB Field Trip to Fidalgo Bay- **April 27**, 10:30am-1:30pm

Funding updates (newly - awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments):

No updates.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

- Salish Sea Stewards: The 2022 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program started March 1 – May 24, 2022. Classes are being held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. 26 people are registered to take the in-person training. SSS training participants are no longer required to wear masks and we are no longer restricted by the occupancy limit moving forward. 4 people who were on the waiting list will now be able to attend if interested. The [2022 Training Schedule](#) is now available on the Skagit MRC website. Padilla Bay staff are working to resolve the audio inaccessibility technology issues for our class participants who are hard of hearing. The next SSS Advisory Committee meeting will be held March 28th. The Advisory Committee drafted a proposed statement of work for the SSS Part-Time Volunteer Coordinator proposal for the MRC's consideration for the upcoming congressional funding. The Part Time Coordinator would be focused solely on supporting our 300+ alumni Salish Sea Stewards

volunteers, keeping the entire volunteer group informed and active. The Advisory Committee finalized the SSS Program Facebook page "About Section".

- Fidalgo Bay Day: A planning meeting will be held in April. We contacted the Fidalgo Bay Resort to reserve the facility, but there weren't very many dates available in August or early September that will work with the tides for beach seining. We are also exploring alternate locations. We also contacted the Shannon Point Marine Center to check on the availability of the touch tank and are still waiting to hear back. As soon as we select a date and location, we will reach out a survey to past participating organizations to gauge their interest and comfort level in participating in-person.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: At last month's Kelp workshop, the Department of Natural Resources indicated they were interested in expanding the parameters of kelp surveys to include more kelp beds. The kelp data will be used as a vital sign at the Puget Sound Partnership. There has been a lot of interest from volunteers to help with the surveys. Some of the experienced lead kayakers are discussing the possibility of providing training for volunteers who want to become leads to survey new kelp beds. The MRC Kayak Kelp Survey season kick off meeting will take place this spring where they will talk more about the survey parameters and the possibility of adding more kelp beds. Surveys won't start again until June 2022.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: Parts of the beach area are still closed to protect a new northern elephant seal pup. The mother has already left the area. The pup is hunting on its own now and getting fatter but isn't quite ready to head out to the ocean on yet. All planting and plant maintenance activities at Bowman Bay is temporarily put on hold until the elephant seal pup is gone. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) is seeking funding for a feasibility study to restore the pocket estuary to improve flushing and have requested a Letter of Endorsement for their grant proposal from the Skagit MRC. The MRC voted by consensus to draft a letter of endorsement for grant funding for the feasibility study. The full grant application is due in May.
- Forage Fish Surveys: Monthly forage fish surveys continue. In Fidalgo Bay and around March's Point, volunteers have been observing more surf smelt spawning and egg viability than they've seen in the past during this time of year.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern: The intern is a college graduate who is mentoring a 7th grader from Shoreline to collect and analyze forage fish data at several locations along March's Point. Field work is occurring monthly between Feb-October. Last month they were able to capture some great video of the newly hatched surf smelt swimming around under the microscope with a smart phone. The intern will present results to the MRC in January 2023.
- Kids on the Beach: Four schools are participating in the spring KOTB program this year with 360 students: Sedro-Wooley, Conway, Concrete, and Anacortes middle schools. The level of involvement ranges from fully virtual to in-person.
 - Anacortes is completely virtual.
 - Sedro Woolley will be in-person and will be going on a field trip to Padilla Bay on March 29th, 30th & 31st 11am-2:00 pm.
 - Conway is set to have two classes go on a field trip to Fidalgo Bay on April 13th, 10am-1:30 pm.
 - Concrete will be a mix of virtual and in-person. The in-person portion will include an in-class visit with forage fish eggs. The other will be a field trip to Fidalgo Bay on April 27th, 10:30-1:30pm.
 - La Conner Middle School and the Swinomish's Between Two Worlds aren't interested in participating this year.

The program will not host a research symposium on site, but Annie is encouraging students to create virtual presentations. We plan to have the symposium next year. Skagit Valley Herald's environmental reporter, Kimberly Cauvel, is planning on coming to one of the Sedro-Woolley days and one of the Concrete days. We have a total 13 volunteers signed up to assist with our in-person field days. There are no plans for the Fall KOTB program yet. Annie will reach out to teachers in the next few months.

- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF), WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Shannon Point divers have been conducting routine annual surveys of the various seeding plots during the last 3 weeks, including 4 Skagit County sites. Those sites continue to be in good shape population wise. This month the dive team will be assessing the possibility of adding a few new sites for seeding, including one or two in Skagit waters. Or they could decide not to add new sites and continue to overseed some of the already established sites (4 Skagit sites were overseeded in 2021). PSRF has about 9,000 juvenile abalone ready to be deployed in the next few months.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Field work will start up again in April or May 2022 with abbreviated monitoring again this year. More intensive monitoring is planned in 2023 if federal appropriations funding is approved. Paul will present on the native oyster restoration project as part of the 2022 Salish Sea Stewards training program on March 29.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling: It is anticipated that the QAPP will be completed later this month.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.): NA

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: March 2022

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- Washington State Department of Natural Resources has withdrawn approximately 2,298.01 acres of aquatic lands from leasing as authorized under RCW 79.10.210 effective February 28, 2022. The data that the MRC collected in 2020 in partnership with Snohomish County Surface Water Management and DNR to survey and map the presence of marine vegetation within the Snohomish estuary helped inform this action by DNR. We are pleased to see the data that we gathered being used to help inform the protection of these important ecosystems.
- The Snohomish MRC partnered with WSU Snohomish County Beach Watchers to host a shoreline cleanup on March 3 at Howarth Park. Along with WSU Beach Watchers, MRC members and staff attended. Additional cleanups are planned on April 23 and September 17.
- Snohomish MRC closed the Port Susan Stakeholder Survey on March 2. The project team is continuing to conduct follow-up interviews with some stakeholders who expressed a preference to share information via one-on-one discussion. The Joint Island-Snohomish MRC Port Susan Team will reconvene in early April to debrief from the Stakeholder Survey and interviews and will begin to plan for stakeholder meetings this spring and summer.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

Three new MRC members nominated for appointment to the MRC are still awaiting formal appointment by Snohomish County Council. They are scheduled to be reviewed at the March 22nd County Council Meeting.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

Alex Pittman and David Bain attended the SMP Learning Group Meeting on February 24.

Elisa Dawson presented to the Jefferson MRC on the Snohomish MRC's derelict vessel program on March 1.

There was a Snohomish Estuary Derelict Vessels partner meeting on March 2. Elisa Dawson facilitated the meeting, and there were representatives from DNR, City of Everett, and Snohomish County in attendance.

Alex Pittman attended calls with Jonathan Robinson and Meghan Massaua on March 2 to discuss the Port Susan project.

The Snohomish MRC partnered with WSU Snohomish County Beach Watchers to host a shoreline cleanup on March 3 at Howarth Park. Along with several WSU Beach Watchers, MRC Members Tim Ellis, Mike Ehlebracht, and Andrew Gobin attended. MRC Staff Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman also attended.

There was a joint Island County and Snohomish County MRC Port Susan meeting on March 3.

Elisa Dawson attended a call with Ian Miller on March 7 to discuss the Port Susan project.

Elisa Dawson met with Snohomish County Parks staff on March 8th to discuss future plans for the Meadowdale Park Estuary and Restoration project,

Snohomish County Staff Elisa Dawson, Alex Pittman, and Adam Jackson met on March 14 to discuss the Meadowdale Restoration planting plan.

The MRC Oil Spill subcommittee met on March 14.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman attended the Snohomish County training for a new volunteer management tracking tool on March 14.

Elisa Dawson met with SWM management to discuss quarterly updates on March 16.

The MRC hosted their monthly meeting on March 16. The MRC reviewed their 2021 Annual Report, discussed their next steps for adopting a Tribal Land Acknowledgement, and reviewed interpretive signs planned for Meadowdale Park.

MRC Members attended the Northwest straits 101 informational session on March 17.

Funding updates (newly awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments)

None.

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area (MRC grant project for 2021-2022): Snohomish MRC closed the Port Susan Stakeholder Survey on March 2. The project team is continuing to conduct follow-up interviews with some stakeholders who expressed a preference to share information via one-on-one discussion. The Joint Island-Snohomish MRC Port Susan Team will

reconvene in early April to debrief from the Stakeholder Survey and interviews and will begin to plan for stakeholder meetings this spring and summer.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): MRC staff are working on removing 5 vessels in the Snohomish Estuary this year. The team is waiting on the new state-budget to be finalized, which will enable the state to give reimbursement to Snohomish County for the removals.

Below projects are other projects of the MRC funded by SWM fees:

Forage Fish Monitoring: Forage fish samples continue to be taken once per month at Picnic Point, Meadowdale, and Howarth Park. Sampling occurred on March 22 (Picnic Point & Meadowdale) and March 23 (Howarth Park).

Nearshore Restoration: MRC staff have continued to work with project consultant ESA to develop the Meadowdale Monitoring Plan. A draft has been reviewed by partners and ESA is currently developing a second draft for review. The next Meadowdale partner meeting is scheduled for March 30.

The Nearshore Restoration subcommittee also continues to develop a one-pager on the beneficial re-use of dredged material from the Snohomish River to help facilitate discussions about this prospective opportunity for nearshore projects.

MRC Outreach Subcommittee: The Snohomish MRC partnered with WSU Snohomish County Beach Watchers to host a shoreline cleanup on March 3 at Howarth Park. Along with several WSU Beach Watchers, MRC Members Tim Ellis, Mike Ehlebracht, and Andrew Gobin attended. MRC Staff Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman also attended. Additional cleanups are planned on

- April 23 – Picnic Point (Earth Day)
- September 17 – location TBD (International Coastal Cleanup Day)

Marine Vegetation Monitoring: Washington State Department of Natural Resources has withdrawn approximately 2,298.01 acres of aquatic lands from leasing as authorized under RCW 79.10.210 effective February 28, 2022. The data that the MRC collected in 2020 in partnership with Snohomish County Surface Water Management and DNR to survey and map the presence of marine vegetation within the Snohomish estuary helped inform this action by DNR. We are pleased to see the data that we gathered being used to help inform the protection of these important ecosystems.

Statement by DNR: These state-owned aquatic lands have kelp forests and eelgrass meadows that require additional protection and restoration activities. Such habitats provide critical habitat for threatened and endangered species such as salmon, rockfish, and Pinto abalone. These marine forests and meadows also play an important role in climate mitigation and adaptation by sequestering carbon and relieving ocean acidification. In addition to these

ecological benefits, kelp and eelgrass have important cultural value to Northwest Tribal Nations, playing a prominent role in traditional fishing, hunting, and food preparation and storage.

Oil Spills: The MRC Oil Spill subcommittee met on March 14. The group reviewed work that had been done by the Oil Spill Subcommittee in the past, and discussed priorities for the group moving forward. The Subcommittee will focus on updating contact information for emergency response and hold a meeting to review the 2011 Snohomish County Oil Spill Preparedness Report.

No updates for:

- Crabber Education
- Snohomish Estuary Pilings
- Stormwater (formerly Mussel Watch)

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

None.

Upcoming Events:

- MRC Kelp Monitoring Kick off April 14.
- Forage Fish Monitoring – April 19 and 20
- Next MRC Meeting – April 20
- WSU Beach Watchers Beach Cleanup Event – April 23

Photos (photos of recent projects or members—include project, photo credit and additional info):

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: MARCH 2022

Submitted by: Austin Rose

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep:

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/>
- Whatcom County Executive Sidhu ordered full re-opening of County facilities for public business, which allows for the MRC to meet in person and host a hybrid meeting if they wish. The MRC Executive Subcommittee will determine whether the committee meets in person when they meet to develop the meeting agenda each month. The committee agreed to meet in person for the April meeting.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff):

- The MRC has a vacancy for an Economic interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the MRC homepage <https://www.whatcomcountymrc.org/> in addition to the Whatcom County Executive's Boards and Commissions website.

Events/Meetings (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events):

- The MRC held their March meeting on March 3. In addition to project updates, meeting topics included:
 - Leah Robison, NWSC, shared that the NWSC will be leading European Green Crab trapping efforts along Whatcom County shorelines – outside of tribal jurisdiction. Volunteers will now be able to participate more. Austin sent a volunteer announcement to the committee.
 - Combined Review Team – Austin sent committee members their annual invitation from the WRIA 1 Lead Entity Coordinator for a community member to participate on the Combined Review Team (CRT). The CRT reviews and ranks local salmon recovery projects proposed for funding by the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and recommends the ranked list to the WRIA 1 salmon recovery lead entity, which is the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Board. Heather Spore participated in 2021, and has volunteered again for 2022.
 - In-person meetings – Whatcom County Executive Sidhu ordered full re-opening of County facilities for public business, which allows for the MRC to meet in person and host a hybrid meeting if they wish. The MRC Executive Subcommittee will determine whether the committee meets in person when they meet to develop the meeting agenda each month. The committee agreed to meet in person for the April meeting.
 - MRC Vacancies – The MRC has two vacancies for a Scientific interest position and a Conservation/Environmental interest position. These vacancies are advertised on the MRC website in addition to the Whatcom County Executive Boards and Commissions

- The Whatcom Marine Research Symposium was a huge success, with 109 participants. A new zoom platform was used, [Zoom Events](#), which worked well given the number of presenters and sessions. The event began with stories from Nooksack Tribal Elder Tammy Cooper-Woodrich and her daughter Angela Letoi, Nooksack Storyteller. Sessions featured research on aquatic species, stressors and a changing environment, research at Cherry Point, and a discussion about natural resource management and moving forward particularly in light of climate change. The luncheon keynote was Rena Preist, Washington State Poet Laureate and Lummi Tribal member.

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments):

Project Updates (project activities and highlights from the past month, any new projects identified):

Education and Outreach

- **Beach Seine with Schools:** The Beach Seine with Schools project will focus on working with 4th grade classrooms in 2022. 4th graders will field trip to Boulevard Park to observe a beach seine led by Lummi Natural Resources staff/field crew. The goal is to have students see juvenile salmon using their intertidal habitat along the shoreline. Three dates have been set: April 26, May 10, and June 7, all with a 11:00am start time. Each event will be preceded by a short talk by a Tribal leader/elder and/or a marine scientist. The project is being considered a pilot this year, but will likely grow in popularity as teachers are eager to share applied science and data collection with their students. This project connects well with the salmon curriculum already established in schools. MRC project leads will be meeting with students in the classroom before the field events. Invitations/applications were sent to every 4th grade teacher and principals in the Bellingham school district (14 schools and 32 classrooms). 7 applications have been submitted, and 3 classrooms will be chosen to participate.
- **What's the Point?:** What's the Point is a community event sponsored by the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Advisory Committee and is intended to raise awareness of the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve and the importance of the marine habitat. Naturalists are on the beach to teach visitors about the intertidal habitat and organisms. In previous years, the Point Whitehorn County Park (hence, "What's the Point") was used as the event location – however, the public access is currently closed. In 2022, the program will be held at Semiahmoo on Saturday, June 18th, 1:00pm – 5:00pm. The MRC has participated in the past with their educational booth, and members have been recruited to participate again this year.

Monitoring

- **Olympia oysters:** The MRC will once again partner with Bellingham Technical College students to help with the annual population survey – and dates in May are being considered for the survey. Guidance from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Dr. Paul Dinnel on project next steps has been discussed. The MRC would like to scope additional pilot plots in the bay within harder substrate areas.
- **Kelp:** The Bellingham Community Boating Center is interested in working with the MRC on their kelp monitoring. Ideas discussed include: a hosted zoom lecture about Bull Kelp in Puget Sound, a youth internship for high school students throughout the summer, and help with locating and monitoring additional kelp beds the MRC does not have the capacity to monitor. The MRC champion met with DNR staff about certain Whatcom sites with data to include in the Vital Sign, and how multi-year polygons reflect changes in the kelp beds.

Restoration

- The MRC would again like to complete a beach cleanup on Lummi Island, working with island residents and the Lummi Island Heritage Trust (LIHT). A landing craft will be hired to help transport volunteers and garbage collected. Bob Cecile (project champion) will work with the LIHT to settle on a date for a cleanup in 2022, most likely in July. The Northwest Indian College will also be invited to participate, as they participated in the MRC led cleanup in 2019.

Other (anything not covered above, including local issues of interest to the regional group, advisory actions the MRC is taking, questions to the Commission, etc.):

- **Derelict boat on Nooksack Delta:** Lummi Natural Resources staff informed Austin of a derelict boat in the Nooksack Delta. The boat has been logged into [MyCoast](#) several times which informs Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Bob Cecile spoke with a DNR – Derelict Vessel Removal Program representative and learned the custody process for removal. This was brought to the MRC’s attention to consider addressing with CDS funding. If this removal is a priority to the MRC, the County will consider acting as the Authorized Public Entity to begin the custody process.
- **Clayton Beach:** A recent meeting was held with all interested parties involved in the Clayton Beach restoration project. Objectives and goals identified include: the pedestrian overpass, where the funding is coming from, project timelines, beach restoration goals and management of recreation to not impact the resources, incorporating interpretive signage, coastal resiliency, current habitat forming processes, engaging both Skagit and Whatcom MRC in long term monitoring, and stakeholder identification.

Photos: (photos by Lisa Kaufman, NWSF, Clayton Beach site visit (08/20/21))



