



**Meeting:** Northwest Straits Commission  
**Location:** Zoom Conference Call  
**Date:** April 22, 2022  
**Time:** 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

To join the Zoom meeting, [CLICK HERE](#) Meeting ID: 816 4927 8922 Passcode: 539388  
 For audio conference, dial:

*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	<b>Welcome and introductions</b> Tribal acknowledgement Approval of March 2022 meeting minutes	Elsa Schwartz, Chair
10:10 – 10:25	<b>Committee reports</b> Executive Committee  Science Advisory Committee  External Relations Committee	Tom Cowan  Julia Parrish  Chris Castner
10:25 – 10:35	<b>Business items</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NWS Commission Chair and Vice-Chair Nominations (Nan)</li> <li>• Kelp monitoring season kickoff (Allie)</li> <li>• WCC Green Crab training (Jeff)</li> <li>• Forage fish training update (Leah)</li> <li>• Staffing update (Lucas)</li> <li>• MRC Project Planning update (Lucas)</li> <li>• MRC State General Funds Amendments (Sasha)</li> </ul>	Staff
10:35 – 11:05	<b>European green crab</b>	Sean McDonald, Ph.D.
11:05 – 11:10	<b>Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission/Tribal update</b>	Cecilia Gobin, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission



## agenda

11:10 – 11:15	<b>Puget Sound Partnership update</b>	Jennifer Grimm, Puget Sound Partnership
11:15 – 11:20	<b>NWS Foundation update</b>	Don Hunger, NWS Foundation
SD11:20 – 11:45	<b>MRC Reports</b>	MRC Representatives
11:45 – 11:55	<b>Meeting highlights and action items</b> Identify key points and action items from this meeting for MRC reps to report back to their MRCs	All
11:55 – 12:00	<b>Public comment</b>	All

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



# Minutes

March 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), Julia Parrish, Nan McKay, Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Christina Koons (San Juan)

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

**Others in Attendance:** Dr. Drew Harvell, Rebecca Mahan (Clallam), Troy McKelvey (Jefferson), Frances Robertson (San Juan), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation)

**Absent:** Laura Blackmore (Puget Sound Partnership), Alan Clark (Clallam), Cecilia Gobin (Tribal), Chris Castner

## Welcome and Introductions

Chair Elsa Schwartz opened the meeting with introductions of attendees and the tribal acknowledgment. The Commission approved the minutes from the February 25 meeting as written by consensus.

## Congressionally Directed Spending

Lucas shared details on the good news we received about the \$3 million in Congressionally Directed Spending secured by Senator Murray for fiscal year 2022. He explained that this was the result of 12 years of work. Lucas thanked the many entities and individuals that provided letters of support, and NWSC leaders who paved the way to this success over the years. This is a big milestone towards what we hope will eventually be an ongoing appropriation for the NW Straits Commission.

## Committee Reports

**Executive Committee:** Tom Cowan noted the exceptional situation for the federal funding. Senator Murray would not have been able to secure these funds without the work of all the MRCs and the Commission. State biennial budget planning has started for the 2023/2025 biennium. The NW Straits Commission has several state funding priorities, including ongoing MRC funding, kelp and green crab funding.

**Science Advisory Committee:** Julia Parrish provided a short update, noting that the Science Advisory Committee is continuing its plan to bring scientists working in the Northwest Straits region in front of the Commission to share their work and potential opportunities for collaboration. This month Dr. Drew Harvell is presenting.

**External Relations Committee:** Chair Chris Castner was not in attendance. Lucas explained that Senator Murray is still leading on a reauthorization bill for the NW Straits Commission. Bill language is being reviewed by NOAA. We expect an update on progress from Senator Murray's office in the next few weeks.

## Business items

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

- MRC grant amendments – Sasha shared a process and timeline for amending the current MRC grants, which include state funding as well as federal EPA funds via the Puget Sound Partnership. MRC staff have



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also received the information and Sasha will be working directly with MRCs to ensure that the agreement scope and budget are on track for year two.

- Northwest Straits MRC Conference – A tentative in-person conference is scheduled for November 18-19, 2022 at Maple Hall in La Conner, Skagit County. A planning committee will be forming in the near future to move forward with developing the content.
- Forage fish training – Leah reported that she is working with WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife to schedule a forage fish training for volunteers in July, potentially to be held on the Olympic peninsula. Leah will contact forage fish project leads with more information.
- Kelp conservation plan steering committee - Jeff reported that he is working on setting-up a Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee and is also working on a survey to begin investigating what actions within the Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan are and are not being undertaken by current projects within the Puget Sound.

### **Presenting Scientist – Dr. Drew Harvell**

Dr. Drew Harvell shared a presentation on how disease outbreaks in eelgrass meadows are exacerbated by a warming climate. Eelgrass meadows are vital habitat in Puget Sound, providing habitat, carbon storage, and filtering pathogens. However, eelgrass meadows like much of our environment are under threat from a warming climate and urbanization. Disease in eelgrass could be an indicator of potential declines in local meadows. Conservation of this key habitat is critical, and understanding areas of vulnerable and resilient eelgrass meadows will play a vital role in preserving for the future.

### **Partner updates:**

**Puget Sound Partnership:** Jenn Grimm gave another reminder about the Action Agenda which is open for public input and review from March 15 through April 15 (<https://www.psp.wa.gov/2022AAupdate.php>). Puget Sound Day on the Hill will be virtual and extended and more details will be provided next month. Jenn encouraged everyone to tune in on May 11 for the livestream and to sign on to the letter in advance at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeZGydou3331d6WPMSVFQLJEm5bDate0XbNUFeXpekRc2FhOg/viewform>

**Northwest Straits Foundation:** Don Hunger shared information from the Foundation's recent newsletter, which included an introduction to the three students selected for the Caroline Gibson scholarships. The NW Straits Foundation will be reaching out to MRCs to discuss opportunities for AmeriCorps members to support MRC and partner projects.

### **MRC Updates**

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

#### **Clallam – Rebecca Mahan**

- Marine Critter Outreach/Education cards all distributed to local venues.
- Organized Derelict Vessel presentation from WA Dept of Natural Resources staff to other MRCs and NW Straits Commission staff.



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### **Island – Elsa Schwartz**

- 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.

### **Jefferson – Jeff Taylor**

- 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.

### **San Juan – Frances Robertson**

- The MRC continues to make progress on the Marine Stewardship Area Plan update.

### **Skagit – Diane Hennebert**

- 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.

### **Snohomish – Tim Ellis**

- 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.

### **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/>



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- 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.

### **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:

- Senator Murray secured \$3M in Congressional funding for FY22. MRCs are prioritizing projects they would like to fund with this money. The Commission is waiting for further instructions from NOAA regarding timelines and other details.
- The NW Straits Commission will be applying for FY23 Congressional funds. Lucas notified MRC staff. Letters of support from counties or other MRC partners are greatly appreciated. Letters can be sent to [hart@nwstraits.org](mailto:hart@nwstraits.org) by April 1. Contact Lucas if you plan to provide a letter.
- The NW Straits Commission is planning for future hybrid meetings, and have ordered an Owl camera to make those hybrid meetings more effective.
- The NW Straits Commission plans to hold an in-person conference November 18-19 at Maple Hall in La Conner. More information will be provided as planning commences.
- Leah Robison on NW Straits Commission staff is planning a forage fish spawn monitoring training for July. Contact Leah for more information ([robison@nwstraits.org](mailto:robison@nwstraits.org))
- The NW Straits Foundation is researching and designing an AmeriCorps marine conservation corps program. This is part of a planning grant to assess the need for a program in the Northwest Straits region. They will be reaching out to MRC staff starting in April to learn about emerging opportunities and to identify partnership opportunities where AmeriCorps members can provide capacity, knowledge, skills and abilities supporting local marine projects.

### **Public comment**

There was no public comment.

\*The next Commission meeting will be on Friday April 22, 2022, via Zoom.



## Commission staff highlights - [April 2022]

### MRC Support

**MRC Grants:** Commission staff are coordinating with MRCs individually to develop plans for year two amendments to the current grant agreements. There is also emerging information on the State 2022-2023 Supplemental Budget that will impact the current grant agreements. Commission staff is coordinating with Ecology staff to gather information and will be reaching out to MRCs as soon as possible to discuss in more detail and identify next steps.

**Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP):** Most of the QAPPs for 2022 or addendums for prior QAPPs have been submitted, reviewed and signed. A QAPP for a new project for the San Juan MRC in False Bay is now in review by Ecology's QA Coordinator.

### Regional Projects

**Elgrass:** NW Straits Commission and NW Straits Foundation staff held planning meetings to discuss the proposed footprint of two Voluntary No-Anchor Zone sites. The Shallow Bay on Sucia Island discussion included project partners from WA Dept of Natural Resources, WA State Parks, and San Juan County. Partners for Seafarers' Park in Anacortes included Skagit MRC members and the Port of Anacortes staff.

**Kelp Plan:** NW Straits Commission staff hosted the first Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Team and discussed coordination and communication tactics to advance the Kelp Plan, including sending out a survey and hosting multiple workshops to investigate what Kelp Plan actions are being completed.

**Kelp Monitoring:** NW Straits Commission staff hosted a Kelp Season Kickoff for MRC and volunteer kayakers. Approximately 40 participants tuned in for a refresher on kayak safety, planning, and protocols. Staff from the NW Straits Foundation presented on safety requirements, staff from WA Dept of Natural Resources presented on best practices for following the protocol, former lead for North Beach Kelp Site presented an overview of the protocols, and NW Straits Commission database volunteer provided an overview on the online data form used to collect field data.

**Green Crab:** NW Straits Commission staff and Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve staff provided classroom and field training for the Washington Conservation Corps crew assigned to NWSC for green crab removal. Classrooms presentations included species identification techniques, decontamination, tips for and interacting with the public. Presenters from Washington Sea Grant, Lummi Natural Resources, and Taylor Shellfish were brought in to provide broader knowledge of green crab efforts across the state. Allie Simpsons also presented general European green crab information and NWSC role in green crab removal to Ecology's Bellingham field office.

## Operations

**Staffing update:** The first review deadline for the Program Coordinator position was on April 6. Applications received are currently under review. Additional information about this position should be available by the May Commission meeting.

**COVID-19 update:** Masks are no longer required and in-person meetings are now allowed by Ecology. A health screening is required to visit agency offices. Commission staff have purchased an Owl Pro that will allow for future hybrid meetings. Once the Owl is received, staff will begin some testing and create procedures to ensure hybrid meetings run smoothly.

**Modern Work Environment:** The Dept of Ecology is transitioning to what is called the Modern Work Environment, and NW Straits Commission staff are developing ongoing telework agreements on an individual basis. Most staff will maintain a majority telework status at this time.

**Funding update:** An application was submitted to Senator Murray for Fiscal Year 23 Congressionally Directed Spending, which was due by April 15, 2022. Eighteen letters of support were submitted as part of the application, which included all seven MRC counties as well as the Puget Sound Partnership and NW Indian Fisheries Commission. Commission staff are engaged in conversations with US Fish and Wildlife Service for phase two funding for the Voluntary No-Anchor Zone. A draft budget and scope of work were submitted for review this month.

### Meetings attended:

Lucas attended: San Juan MRC Restructuring meeting 3/28; MRAC 3/29; Skagit MRC retreat planning 3/30; NWSC DEI meeting 3/31; NW Regional Office meeting presentation 4/4; San Juan MRC restructuring meeting 4/5; San Juan MRC restructuring meeting 4/6; WCC presentation 4/7; Skagit MRC retreat planning 4/8; San Juan MRC restructuring meeting 4/20.

Allie attended: Green crab training for WCC (4/4-4/7), Skagit MRC Project Prioritization Retreat (4/13), MRC Kelp Season Kickoff (4/14)

Sasha attended: USFWS No-Anchor Zone check in 3/29, San Juan MRC (4/7), Whatcom MRC (4/7), MRC Kelp Season Kickoff 4/14, Kelp proviso check in meetings (Puget Sound Restoration Fund 3/31, Lower Elwha Klallam 4/15, Samish 4/14)

Jeff attended: Green crab training for WCC (4/4-4/7), Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee meeting (4/29)

Dana attended: USFWS No-Anchor Zone check in 3/29, Island MRC meeting 4/5, Port Susan MSA meeting 4/6, Science Advisory Committee meeting 4/6, Kelp Vital Sign project team meeting 4/8, Skagit MRC Project Prioritization Retreat 4/13, MRC Kelp Season Kickoff 4/14, Vital Sign project team meeting 4/22, Kelp proviso check in meetings (Puget Sound Restoration Fund 3/31, Lower Elwha Klallam 4/15, Samish 4/14)



## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Clallam

**Month/Year:** April 2022

**Submitted by:** Rebecca Mahan

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

- Continued Forage Fish sampling on three beaches.
- Preparing for Port Angeles Earth Day Celebration (4/23) on the City Pier.

**Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Allyce Miller was appointed as Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe's alternate, Geoff James appointed alternate for Port of Port Angeles and Kathy Downer appointed City of Sequim alternate.

**Events/Meetings** (events/meetings from past month with any noteworthy highlights and information on upcoming events): April 23<sup>rd</sup> is Earth Day Celebration on the City Pier. CMRC will be there as part of Outreach to the community.

Monthly MRC Meeting: April 18, 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):

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 Biotxin monitoring: CMRC members added back a site at Freshwater Bay and first sampling event was April 5<sup>th</sup>.

**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.):

**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:** April/ 2022

**Submitted by:** Kelly Zupich

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

- **Strategic Planning:** Our members participated in a strategic planning retreat. The committee will continue to work out the details to finalize a plan at monthly meetings and subcommittee meetings.
- **April Fool's Planting Event:** The NWSF, WA State Parks, and Sound Water Stewards partnered to add 20 yards of mulch and soil to the areas disturbed by the construction of a new dock. Additionally, over 200 shoreline plants were planted to work towards restoring the area to a more natural state.

**Membership/Leadership changes** (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): MRC member, Gwendolyn Hannam has had her baby! *Lillian Masage* (*Meh-see-ya*) Hannam was born Saturday 19 March at 18:18. She will be on maternity leave for the next 6 months or so.



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

- April 1: MRC meeting 3:00 pm-5:00 pm Topic: Continue project planning discussions

### Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- April 20: Low tide walk w/ the public to celebrate Earth/Ocean Month
- April 23: Earth Day at the Clyde Theater – Showing of 5 family friendly films filmed and produced by underwater videographer Florian Graner Ph.D including a Q&A after with Dr. Graner, Kelly Zupich (MRC), and Allie Hudec (SWS)
- May 3: 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):

- Cornet Bay Stewardship April 1 was the kickoff event of the season. The planting helped 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. We are planning to host a mulching event on May 11 if all the details work out.
- 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 accompanied Commissioner St. Clair on the March 25 seining.
- 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) Island County will focus on reviewing the progress of the literature review being produced by the students. The first four chapters of the literature review have been reviewed, and comments have been sent to the students. We are currently working with Snohomish MRC to figure out 2<sup>nd</sup> year deliverables for this project.

**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.
- Resources on developing project budgets and proposals

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



Volunteers at Cornet Bay Planting

photo by Kelly Zupich



Janet St. Clair, County Commissioner and  
volunteers at Cornet Bay seining

photo by Kelly Zupich



## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Jefferson

**Month/Year:** April 2022

**Submitted by:** Monica Montgomery

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

- The rain garden subcommittee organized a work party in Port Townsend on March 18<sup>th</sup> and addressed maintenance needs of three rain gardens (see photos below), and will be organizing another [work party on April 29<sup>th</sup>](#).
- The MRC presented its annual update to the Board of Jefferson County Commissioners on March 28.
- The MRC executed a contract for side scan sonar surveys of lost crab pots in Discovery Bay (Adelma Beach and Cape George areas), to be scheduled sometime mid-May.

**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

Mar 18 – Rain garden work party in Port Townsend  
Mar 22 – Executive Committee meeting  
Mar 22 – Forage fish survey at Dabob  
Mar 24 – MRC staff meeting  
Mar 25 – NWSC monthly meeting  
Mar 28 – MRC presentation to the BoCC  
Mar 29 – Education & Outreach subcommittee meeting  
Mar 29 – Forage fish survey at Adelma  
Mar 30 – Kelp subcommittee meeting  
Apr 5 – MRC monthly meeting  
Apr 14 – NWSI kelp season kickoff

### Upcoming Events/Meetings

Apr 20 – Executive Committee meeting  
Apr 20 – Kelp subcommittee meeting  
Apr 22 – NWSC monthly meeting  
Apr 26-28 – Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference (all MRC members are registered)  
Apr 29 – Rain garden work party in Port Townsend  
Apr – Forage fish survey at Adelma & Dabob  
May 3 – MRC monthly meeting  
May 6 – Strait ERN LIO meeting  
May 24 – Executive Committee meeting  
May 26 – Olympia oyster meeting w/ partners: Kilisut Harbor plans

**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:** Nothing to report.
- **Forage fish - Adelma Beach (Index):** The Project Lead (Jeff), with one community volunteer (Cindy), surveyed on March 29.
- **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The MRC Coordinator, Project Lead (Sarah), and two MRC members (Troy, Janette) surveyed on March 22.
- **Kelp:** The project lead (Solenne) and three subcommittee members (Brenda, Bryan, Betsy) met on March 29 to review kelp status in the region and locally, recent data results shared from DNR, current legislative actions, and plans for the upcoming season. The subcommittee will meet again for the NWSI season kickoff on April 14 and as a subcommittee on April 20 to review the MRC's data and survey protocol.

2. Rain Gardens:

- The subcommittee hosted a rain garden work party on March 18, attended by the MRC Coordinator, project lead (Janette), three MRC members (Frank, Betsy, Troy), and two community volunteers (Vern Bessey, Annalee). The group weeded and added mulch to the rain gardens at Franklin/Adams St., Garfield/Madison St., and Garfield/Adams St. The subcommittee is organizing another rain garden work party for April 29 to do some maintenance on the rain gardens at Lincoln/Adams St., Lawrence/Monroe St., and Point Hudson.

3. Education & Outreach:

- Subcommittee members (Brenda, Frank, Liz, Sarah, Joan) met on March 29 to follow up discussion on putting 2022 plans into action, confirming four festivals to participate in this year, including Wooden Boat Festival, Forever Streamfest, Shrimpfest and Crabfest.
- The MRC Coordinator, project lead (Brenda), and two subcommittee members (Joan, Sarah) met in-person on April 6 to inventory education & outreach supplies for tabling events and determine needs for targeting different audiences.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- The MRC received approval from USACE and Ecology and is awaiting DNR's approval for renewing and modifying permits in Discovery Bay.
- The project lead (Neil) and the MRC Coordinator will be meeting with WDFW and PSRF partners on May 26 to discuss plans for surveying Olympia oyster populations near Kilisut Harbor.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- The MRC Coordinator retrieved spar buoys for storage after one MRC member (Gordon) cleaned them after pulling them out from the Port Townsend buoy field in January. The MRC will need to work on relabeling buoys before placing them back in the water.

6. Mapping Lost Crab Pots:

- *Side Scan Sonar:* The side scan sonar survey contract has been fully executed. The project lead (Jeff) is working on scheduling survey dates in May.

- **ROV:** The MRC is awaiting permits and approval from WDFW for removing derelict crab and shrimp pots. Plans are to survey sometime in early 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 submitted a letter on March 30 to the Commission, signed by the Board of Jefferson County Commissioners, in support of FY23 congressional funding of the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative.

The MRC submitted a letter of support on April 6 to the Port Townsend Arts Commission for a public art piece bringing attention to zooplankton, Zoea, that a local artist is proposing to install in Port Townsend.

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

March 18: Rain garden work party in Port Townsend – photos by Monica Montgomery



Betsy, Frank, Troy, Janette, and Annalee weeding the Franklin/Adams St. rain garden in Port Townsend.





Frank spreading mulch at the Franklin/Adams St rain garden in Port Townsend.



Vern, Betsy, Frank, Troy and Janette weeding the Garfield/Adams St rain garden in Port Townsend.





Troy, Betsy, Janette, Vern, and Frank after pulling up weeds at the Garfield/Adams St rain garden in Port Townsend.

## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** San Juan County

**Month/Year:** April 2022

**Submitted by:** Frances Robertson

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

- Plans are ramping for summer projects; a summer intern has been found.
- Quarterly reporting was completed, and presentations created for the SSEC
- The MRC approved the Annual Report.

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

There have been no changes in membership of 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 April 7<sup>th</sup>
- Planning is underway for the spring Great Islands Clean-up taking place on April 23.
- Presentations have been created and uploaded for the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference.

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

The MRC are excited and grateful for the additional federal funds that the NWSC were successful in acquiring. An additional letter for support was provided for the 2023 funding request.

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

MRC staff are beginning to ramp up activities to ensure that field projects can start as planned at the end of May. Efforts this month have included:

- Creating presentations, re-engaging with Beach Stewards, and participating in the GICU (April 23).
- Maintenance efforts on the Odlin buoys have started.
- The False Bay QAPP has been completed and will be submitted by the end of April.
- The Annual Report was completed and published.

The core effort of MRC staff and subcommittee 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 reviewed the full list of identified strategic actions and is working to apply the SMART approach to setting targets.

**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 approved the direction that the County's Marine Program has taken with their SRKW westside study to identify alternate strategies to protect SRKW foraging areas on the westside of San Juan Island. While this has been a project funded predominantly through a NFWF grant and the County, MRC project funds and a small grant from the NWSF have assisted with the community engagement aspects of the project. Staff will be presenting this project to the County Council on April 19, and at the SSEC on April 27.

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

The Plastic Free Salish Sea poster due to be presented at the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference by MRC Vice-Chair and PFSS lead Karin Roemers-Kleven.



# PLASTIC FREE SALISH SEA

Karin Roemers-Kleven<sup>1</sup>, Katie Fleming<sup>2,4</sup>  
Nikyta Palmisani<sup>3</sup>, Frances Robertson<sup>1,2</sup>

1. Sea has changed; 2. no resources; 3. the Salish Sea; 4. Friends of the Salish Sea




**Plastic Free Salish Sea is an example of transboundary citizen led efforts to address the broader challenges of plastic consumption and pollution from local perspectives.**

[Plasticfreesalishsea.org](http://Plasticfreesalishsea.org)

### Background

Plastic pollution has become a globally recognized problem. Its presence is having a devastating effect on marine life as well as human health. The impacts of larger marine debris such as derelict fishing gear and discarded household items can result in deadly entanglements of marine life including mammals, birds, sea turtles and fish. More alarming is the proliferation of microplastics throughout the world's oceans, including here in the Salish Sea. Plastics of all forms can be found along shorelines throughout the Salish Sea, including San Juan County.



Photo credit: Conservation Corps central and the Salish Sea

In 2018, the San Juan County Marine Resources Committee joined forces with solid waste managers and non-profits throughout the county to develop an education and awareness building campaign aimed at changing citizen behavior and the culture of plastics use. This campaign, Plastic Free Salish Sea was established with the bold vision to eliminate single-use plastics in San Juan County. Check the Plastic Free Salish Sea Website by scanning this QR code!



### Beach Stewards

### Tool kits & Resources

### SeaBin

We've recruited community members as beach stewards to help keep San Juan County's shorelines and beaches beautiful.




Individuals, families, and teams adopt beaches and pledge to clean their chosen beach at regular time intervals. They can report their effort and what they collect through the Plastic Free Salish Sea website.



Plastic Free Salish Sea beach stewards from industry, public and private businesses cover San Juan County

We created toolkits to living plastic free in the San Juan Islands.

We have created some nifty guides and videos with easily accessible steps and resources to reduce plastic usage for individuals, community event organizers, and small businesses in the San Juan Islands, emphasizing the strength we have in the community.





We're using innovative ocean-cleaning technology to collect trash and filter pollution, gather data, and raise public awareness.




The SeaBin is like a marine vacuum cleaner that moves up and down with the tide, collecting floating debris, microplastics, and oil.

**pump circulates 25,000 liters each hour**

catchbag, filter, and oil absorbing pad

- Contents emptied and checked daily
- Collects floating debris, microplastics over 2 mm, and surface oils and fuels.
- Is not harmful to wildlife (fish avoid it, and any marine creatures caught are unharmed and returned to their habitat by careful hands).



## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: April/2022

Submitted by: Tracy/ Diane

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

- MRC Project Planning Retreat: The MRC Project Planning Retreat was held virtually on April 13 and was facilitated by Lucas and Allie. MRC members evaluated and ranked the proposals prior to the retreat. The comments and questions raised by MRC members from the evaluations were addressed which led to some really great discussions about the projects.
- Fidalgo Bay Day: Fidalgo Bay Day will be held in person this year! The event date has been set for **Saturday, August 20, 2022**, 11am-3:00pm at the Fidalgo Bay Resort in Anacortes. We are still working out the details, but it will be similar to past events with beach seining, a touch tank, bird watching, forage fish beach walks, interactive educational booths, games, face painting, kids crafts, and a no host salmon BBQ.

**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):

- Voluntary No Anchor Zone at Seafarer's Park Meeting- **April 1**. Attended by 2 MRC members, MRC staff, NWSC staff, and Port of Anacortes reps.
- Salish Sea Conservation Corp Meeting- **April 4**. Attended by MRC Staff, NWSF staff, and NWSF AmeriCorps Partnership Coordinator
- MRC Project Planning Retreat – **April 13** (via Microsoft Teams). *Attended by 12 MRC members, MRC staff, and 3 NWSC staff.* The MRC April 14<sup>th</sup> Monthly Meeting was canceled.
- Salish Sea Stewards Training Every Tuesday, 1-5pm at Padilla Bay **March 1 -May 24**. Attended by 26 new volunteers, Padilla Bay Staff, and Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee members.
- Conway Middle School (2 classes) KOTB Field Trip to Fidalgo Bay- **April 13**, 10am-1:30pm
- Annual Kelp Kick-off Meeting via Zoom- **April 14**, 3pm – 5pm
- Concrete Middle School KOTB Field Trip to Fidalgo Bay- **April 27**, 10:30am-1:30pm
- Fidalgo Bay Day Planning Committee Meetings- **April 6**, 2:30pm-3:30pm (attended by MRC staff and 2 MRC members) and **April 29**, 10am-11am (attended by MRC staff, 2 MRC members, and 11 Salish Sea Stewards).

**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* runs *March 1 through May 24, 2022*; twelve Tuesdays, from 1:00-5:00 pm, at Padilla Bay's Stevens Center room. There are currently 304 Trained Salish Sea Stewards on our Trained Salish Sea Master List and 24 Trainees in the 2022 Class. The SSS Trainee class has completed Session 7 with 5 remaining. The SMRC Advisory Committee continues to adapt to in-person training after 2 years of being held on-line; vetting requests for approval of programs to be added to the SSS Volunteer list & readying gear and certificates for the 2022 SSS Class graduation. All is positive with the training program & larger trained SSS Group.

- Fidalgo Bay Day: Planning meetings were held April 6 and April 29. The event date has been set for **Saturday, August 20, 2022**, 11am-3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility has been reserved. The Shannon Point Marine Center confirmed the availability of their touch tank and volunteers for Fidalgo Bay Day. Rosie James and her Samish family will offer a no-host salmon BBQ. A Save the Date notice went out to past participating organizations to gauge interest in hosting a booth at this year's event. So far there seems to be a lot of interest in participating in FBD this year. We are in the process of courting the Whale Scouts Naturalist Program to join us with their large inflatable Orca Whale mascot. Friends of Skagit Beaches will be running the *Passport Program & Childrens' Art Contest*. We will be working with *Taylor's Shellfish for oysters & clams/blue mussels* to grill with our oyster guru's *Paul Dinnel's special* sauce, and enticing several Anacortes Restaurants for chowder donations (for the famous FBD chowder contest). We are *very pleased to have recruited eleven of the Salish Sea Stewards 2022 Trainees* to help re-establish this amazing one day, in-person community.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: The annual kickoff meeting for the MRC Kelp Season Kickoff (virtual) was held April 14, 2022. Seven new experienced kayak volunteers plus five 2022 SSS trainees have expressed interest in joining. The three Skagit Kayak Teams are currently full, but we will see if we can accommodate some new team members. Surveys won't start again until June 2022.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: The Bowman Bay plant maintenance activities have been put on hold pending Emerson's (the new elephant seal pup) departure to the sea, feeding and adulthood. According to Elizabeth Drozda, Volunteer Team Lead for Pacific Mammal Network, Emerson is still at Bowman Bay. He has not started swimming in earnest of eating, yet, although that is certainly going to happen soon. He is now roaming all over the park. The Park plans to keep the lower parking area closed when Emerson is in that area, but open if he is elsewhere. Temporary enclosures are being put in place to keep visitors at a safe distance of about 100 feet. This is a fluid situation. Adam Airolidi, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group lead, will be leading efforts with interns and volunteers to install conifer and other trees, using water bags (as weather dictates), adding mulch and also weeding. The following are Adam's proposed maintenance activities with an effort to coordinate timing to coincide with Bowman Bay Forage Fish Surveys: May 18 (W), June 20 (M), July 13 (W), and Aug 8 (M).
- Forage Fish Surveys: Monthly forage fish surveys continue, with the exception of Bowman Bay. Surveys are expected to start up again at Bowman Bay in late April.
- MRC Salish Sea School Intern: Intern project continues – field trip survey in late March with another planned for late April. Monthly field trip surveys continue into late Fall. Hope to have Intern and team give brief report to MRC (Zoom) maybe in June.
- 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 went on a field trip to Padilla Bay (Bay View State Park) on March 29th, 30th & 31st 11am-2:00 pm. Activities included beach seining and mudflat exploration with the help of volunteers.
  - Conway (two classes) went on a field trip to Fidalgo Bay on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 10am-1:30 pm. Activities included beach seining and forage fish surveys and examining forage fish eggs under a microscope with the help of volunteers.
  - Concrete went on a field trip to Fidalgo Bay on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 10:30-1:30pm. Activities included beach seining and forage fish surveys and examining forage fish eggs under a microscope with the help of volunteers.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Coordinated pinto abalone restoration work in Skagit County waters with Puget Sound Restoration Fund personnel. Much of the 2022 monitoring of previously seed

sites was accomplished in February and March 2022 by Puget Sound Restoration Fund, WDFW and Shannon Point Marine Center divers. About 9,000 juvenile abalone are being readied for out planting in the coming months. Many of those abalone will be out planted to old and/or new Skagit County sites. Paul attended a Zoom seminar by Dr. Deb Donovan, WWU on her students' work on abalone restoration and ecology.

- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Prepared a project proposal for possible federal appropriations for intensive Fidalgo Bay-wide monitoring and population assessment in 2023. Skagit MRC and, Salish Sea Stewards and community volunteers would work with Puget Sound Restoration Fund personnel to accomplish this task next year. Helped coordinate access to Shell Refinery's property so that Padilla Bay NERR personnel could evaluate the success of Olympia oyster spat settlement on about 50 bags of cultch set out in Fidalgo Bay in 2022. The natural set seed on these bags of oyster shells will be transplanted to southern Padilla Bay in Summer 2022. Prepared an Olympia oyster restoration presentation for the 2022 Salish Sea Stewards class and presented this presentation via ZOOM in late March.
- 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):

**Kids on the Beach**

**April 13-** Conway Middle School Students at Fidalgo Bay Conducting Beach Seining and Forage Fish Surveys with Volunteers.

*Photo Credit: Pete Haase*





**Mt. Erie Elementary School Rain Garden**  
Photo Credit: Diane Hennebert





## MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

**County:** Snohomish

**Month/Year:** April 2022

**Submitted by:** Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman

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

- Snohomish MRC wrapped up the Stakeholder Survey and follow up Stakeholder Interviews in March for the Port Susan CAP Update Project. Overall, the results demonstrate strong commitment to the responsible management of the Port Susan MSA. Key takeaways include:
  - Many partners are not regularly utilizing the Port Susan MSA CAP.
  - Partners broadly supported shifting the focus towards implementation.
  - Some objectives and strategies would benefit from additional context and framing, particularly as they relate to climate change, wellbeing, and new considerations.
  - Most respondents chose options to cross walk the plan with PSP's Action Agenda and host biannual implementation meetings to make the plan more useful.
- Three new MRC members (Franchesca Perez, Allan Hicks, and Bob Margulis) recommended for appointment to the MRC were formally appointed by Snohomish County Council on March 30.
- MRC staff posted 4 vessels for removal from the Snohomish Estuary on March 28. Contractor bids are expected in late April, with the hope to start removing vessels in late May.

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

Three new MRC members recommended for appointment to the MRC were formally appointed by Snohomish County Council on March 30.

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

Elisa Dawson attended the Snohomish County Council Conservation, Sustainability and Recreation Committee Meeting on March 22 to be available for questions with regard to the review and appointment of three new MRC members recommended for appointment.

The MRC conducted Forage Fish Monitoring on March 22 at Picnic Point and Meadowdale and March 23 at Howarth Park.

Elisa Dawson attended a meeting with staff from Snohomish County Surface Water Management (SWM) and WSU Extension to discuss the WSU Beach Watchers program on March 22.

Elisa Dawson met with a reporter from the Everett Herald to discuss eelgrass and kelp forests on March 23.

Elisa Dawson attended a meeting with Snohomish County SWM staff to discuss beach erosion at Howarth Park on March 24.

Elisa Dawson attended a meeting with Snohomish County staff to discuss proposed changes to the County's process for derelict vessel removal projects on March 24.

Elisa Dawson attended a meeting for MRC Lead Staff hosted by the NWSC on March 24.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman posted vessels for removal in the Snohomish River Estuary on March 28.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman met with Island County MRC Staff to discuss the Port Susan project on March 28.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman attended a call with SWM staff member David Wilson to discuss the Port Susan project on March 29.

Elisa Dawson attended the Snohomish County Council General Legislative Session on March 30 for formal Council appointment of three new MRC members recommended for appointment.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman attended the fourth Meadowdale Monitoring Team Meeting on March 30.

Elisa Dawson met with Snohomish County SWM staff on March 31 to discuss potential NOAA funding for the MRC.

Elisa Dawson met with NWSC staff on March 31 to discuss Congressional funds for the Snohomish MRC.

Elisa Dawson met with staff from King County, representing WRIA 8, to discuss Meadowdale Monitoring on April 1.

Elisa Dawson met with Jessie Page from the Northwest Straits Foundation to discuss the Foundation's proposal for the Salish Sea Conservation Corps on April 5.

There was a joint Island County and Snohomish County MRC Port Susan meeting on April 6.

Alex Pittman conducted forage fish monitoring at Meadowdale on April 7.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman met with project consultant ESA to discuss the Port Susan project on April 8.

Elisa Dawson and Alex Pittman met with Snohomish County SWM staff to discuss opportunities for coordination between the MRC's Port Susan Project and the Snohomish-Stillaguamish LIO on April 11.

Elisa Dawson met with staff from DNR to discuss a sunken vessel at Hawkes Marina in the Snohomish River Estuary on April 11.

Elisa Dawson attended the presenter training for the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference on April 12. Elisa will be presenting on the MRC's Snohomish Estuary Pilings Project during the conference.

Elisa Dawson met with staff from Snohomish County, the City of Everett, and the Port of Everett to discuss renourishment of the beach at Howarth Park on April 13.

MRC New Member Orientation was held on April 14 for three newly appointed members.

Elisa Dawson conducted a field visit to the Meadowdale Beach & Estuary Restoration Project on April 14.

MRC Staff and Members attended the MRC Kelp Monitoring Season Kickoff Meeting on April 14.

**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 wrapped up the Stakeholder Survey and follow up Stakeholder Interviews in March. Overall, the survey results and information shared during interviews demonstrate strong commitment to the responsible management of the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area from a broad range of stakeholders and community members. Key takeaways include:

- Many partners are not regularly utilizing the Port Susan MSA CAP.
- Partners broadly supported shifting the focus towards implementation.
- Some objectives and strategies would benefit from additional context and framing, particularly as they relate to climate change, wellbeing, and new considerations.
- Most respondents chose options to cross walk the plan with PSP's Action Agenda and host biannual implementation meetings to make the plan more useful.

The joint Snohomish-Island Port Susan Team met on April 6 to discuss these results and begin planning for stakeholder meeting this Spring and Summer. This team will meet again in early-mid May to continue Stakeholder Meeting planning.

**Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds):** MRC staff posted 4 vessels for removal on March 28. One vessel planned for posting in Ebey Slough could not be located. Staff will be hosting a contractor tour as part of the bidding process on April 25. Bids are expected in late April, with the hope to start removing vessels in late May.

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

**Forage Fish Monitoring:** Forage fish samples have continued to be taken once per month at Picnic Point, Meadowdale, and Howarth Park, though sampling at Meadowdale is now on hold with beach access being closed on April 11 for construction of the Meadowdale Beach & Estuary Restoration Project. April sampling at Meadowdale occurred on April 7, and sampling at Picnic Point and Howarth Park is scheduled for April 19.

**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. A Meadowdale Monitoring Team meeting was held on March 30 to discuss comments on the draft monitoring plan.

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 is partnering with WSU Snohomish County Beach Watchers to host a shoreline cleanup on April 23 at Picnic Point for Earth Day. An additional cleanup is currently planned for International Coastal Cleanup Day in September.

**Marine Vegetation Monitoring:** MRC Staff and Members attended the MRC Kelp Monitoring Season Kickoff Meeting on April 14 to begin preparation for Summer 2022 monitoring.

**Oil Spills:** The MRC Oil Spill subcommittee met last month. The Subcommittee will focus on updating contact information for emergency response and hold a follow up 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:**

- Forage Fish Monitoring – April 19
- WSU Beach Watchers Beach Cleanup Event – April 23
- MRC Annual Report Presentation to Snohomish County Council – April 26
- Next MRC Meeting – May 18

**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:** APRIL 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 Council and the Whatcom County Planning Commission will be discussing ways to increase public beach access in Whatcom County. Councilman Donavon has docketed the topic for future council agendas and has requested support from the Whatcom MRC.
- The Bellingham Community Boating Center (CBC) is offering more citizen science program and youth internship opportunities. There is interest in involving CBC participants in MRC field work.

**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 April meeting on April 7. In addition to project updates, meeting topics included:
  - Sara Welsh, Bellingham Community Boating Center, shared her extensive background with environmental tourism. The Community Boating Center (CBC) is offering more programs involving citizen science, and is interested in working with the MRC to involve CBC participants in data collection (i.e. the MRC's kelp monitoring or water quality work). A kelp bed recon paddle along the Chuckanut shoreline was discussed. The CBC is also hosting a youth internship program, and the group discussed ways high school students could participate in MRC field work to gain experience with data collection and an understanding of a potential career path.
  - The committee finalized their list of additional projects that could be funded with Congressionally Directed Spending. Projects include:
    - Assisting WA State Parks with addressing impacts to eelgrass meadow at Larrabee State Park – Wildcat Cove from use of boat ramp at low tide to launch boats during crabbing season.

- Hiring consultant and purchasing equipment for (Phase 1) voluntary no-anchor zone.
- Clayton Beach Restoration funding needs
- Rain garden assessment report and feasibility design
- Derelict boat removal (*Wanderlust*) from Bellingham Bay tidelands
- MRC retreat
- Councilman Donovan shared a recent discussion/concern about the lack of public beach access in Whatcom County. There will be continued discussion with the Whatcom County Planning Commission about ways to increase public access, whether through easements, land swaps, land purchases, etc. Councilman Donavon has docketed the topic for future council agendas and has requested support from the Whatcom MRC. The Whatcom County Parks Department will be fixing the stairway access to Point Whitehorn this summer.

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

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

#### Education and Outreach

- **Beach seine with schools:** Three different dates have been set (April 26, May 10, and June 7) for the beach seine with schools field trips at Boulevard Park. Three different 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms were selected to participate – one class per day - (Northern Heights elementary, Birchwood elementary, and Silver Beach elementary). Classes will meet at the Boulevard Park pavilion and will hear from a Lummi Tribal elder before joining Lummi Natural Resources staff for a beach seine at a nearby pocket beach. A MRC member will conduct a pre-event classroom visit to inform the class about the importance of the intertidal migratory corridor for salmon.

#### Monitoring

- **Olympia oysters:** The Olympia oyster restoration subcommittee met in early April to evaluate the project and discuss future work. The group would like to scope out new pilot restoration plots with harder substrate and higher potential for oyster survival and recruitment. Data was shared with WDFW staff and scoping additional site was encouraged. Bellingham Technical College students will again assist with the annual population survey. Ceramic tiles will again be used to monitor for larvae settlement. There was a large flooding event in Chuckanut Creek in November 2021, and the committee is interested to see if there as any impact to the test plots.
- **Kelp:** 2022 will be the end of Eleanor Hines' two-year term on the MRC. Eleanor is willing to continue volunteering for the project. However, there is strong encouragement to get more MRC members involved to help identify a new project champion.

**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.):

- MRC Staff met with NW Regional State Park staff regarding the potential damage to a large eelgrass meadow adjacent to the Larrabee State Park boat ramp due to vehicles driving over the eelgrass to launch boats at low tide. State Parks is interested in the MRC working with DNR to

gather data on previous eelgrass assessments in the area and identifying an entity who could conduct a more recent analysis. Having data on the impact to the eelgrass bed will inform a protective action, which State Parks views as a priority and is encouraged the MRC is interested in helping.