



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting
Date: January 27, 2023
Time: 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

To join the Zoom meeting, [CLICK HERE](#) Meeting ID: 859 1356 5239 Passcode: 585868
For audio conference, dial: 253-215-8782 or [click here](#) to find your local number.

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 – 10:15	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement Approval of December 9 meeting minutes	Elsa Schwartz, chair
10:15 – 10:40	Committee reports Executive Committee Science Advisory Committee External Relations Committee	Tom Cowan Julia Parrish Lucas Hart
10:40 – 11:05	Business items Welcome Caitlyn Blair, Program Coordinator Legislative update Conference planning committee MRC Kelp Update Workshop Forage Fish Volunteer Meeting Green Crab Trappers' Summit Retreat – March 30-31, La Conner	Staff Lucas Lucas Sasha Allie Leah Leah Caitlyn



11:05 – 11:10	Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	Cecilia Gobin, NW Indian Fisheries Commission
11:10 – 11:15	Puget Sound Partnership update	Ahren Stroming, Puget Sound Partnership
11:15 – 11:20	NW Straits Foundation update	Don Hunger, NW Straits Foundation
11:20 – 11:50	MRC Reports	MRC Representatives
11:50 – 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.

*Next meeting: February 24, 2023 – **In-person** at Stillaguamish Tribal Center, Snohomish County.*



Minutes

December 9, 2022 - 10:00 AM-12:00PM

Zoom - Virtual meeting

Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Tom Cowan (Vice Chair), Chris Castner, Diane Hennebert (Skagit), Tim Ellis (Snohomish), Alan Clark (Clallam), Ahren Stroming (Puget Sound Partnership-alternate), Bob Cecile (Whatcom), Jeff Taylor (Jefferson), Barbara Bennett (Island – Alternate), Nan McKay, Julia Parrish

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Leah Robison

Others in Attendance: Tessa Francis (Puget Sound Institute) Brooke Friesen (NW Straits Foundation), Sarah Fisker (Jefferson MRC), Austin Rose (Whatcom), Sam Whitridge (San Juan MRC), Troy McKelvey (Jefferson MRC), Don Hunger (NW Straits Foundation), Monica Montgomery (Jefferson MRC)

Absent: Elsa Schwartz (Island-Chair), Laura Blackmore, Cecilia Gobin, Christina Koons (San Juan)

Welcome and Introductions

Vice Chair Tom Cowan opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgment and introductions of attendees.

The Commission approved the minutes from the October 28 meeting by consensus with one correction to note that Jeff Taylor reported for Jefferson MRC.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Tom Cowan reported on the main topics of the November committee meeting, which included the discussion around Commission program focus areas and needs, and the draft Diversity, Equity, Inclusion goals that will be discussed later on the agenda.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia reported that scheduling has been challenging for the committee. The committee work is now moving to implement the [Articles of Association](#), which includes working with Dana on a 2023 schedule and phased approach for how the committee can support the MRC proposal process. They are also seeking to identify new members to nominate for expanded committee membership. In the near future the committee will identify a member to participate on the 2023 conference planning committee.

External Relations Committee: Chris Castner reported that there has not been a full committee meeting for a few months. There has been no activity on the Northwest Straits reauthorization bill, but committee

members are in contact with congressional staff and the primary contact at Senator Murray's office is now back after a leave of absence as she worked on the election campaign.

Business items

- Retreat planning committee – Lucas outlined the plans that are coming together for the March 30-31 planning retreat, which will be held in La Conner. He asked the members of the Commission to contact him if interested in participating in the planning group.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Goals – Lucas thanked Allie Simpson for her work putting together the draft goals document included in the packet. The Executive Committee has reviewed the draft goals and recommended that the Commission consider the goals for approval. The Commission discussed next steps and the process for moving forward. The Commission moved and approved the goals by consensus.

Shoreline Restoration for Nearshore Fishes

Tessa Francis of the Puget Sound Institute shared a presentation on shoreline restoration. She noted that shorelines are a critical area where stressors from land can impact habitat, and also where people live and gather. Studying shorelines allows her to study species interactions and how human activities impact ecosystems.

Tessa shared the results of her work on a project to assess fish abundance associated with characteristics of nearshore environments such as natural, armored, or restored shorelines. Initial results found fish abundance and nearshore characteristics varied by fish species. For example, herring showed a preference for natural shorelines over armored and restored shorelines, while eelgrass was the strongest indicator of chum salmon and location along a known migratory corridor had the strongest association of chinook salmon presence. Next steps will look to extend to incorporate broader datasets. Tessa is available and interested in joining individual MRC meetings to present research.

Partner updates

Puget Sound Partnership: Ahren Stroming mentioned that the Puget SOS bill was included in the [National Defense Authorization Act](#) that was passed by the House December 8. They are hoping that this is the vehicle that will get it passed. The bill will create a national program office for Puget Sound, elevating it to be similar to the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay.

The Partnership also recently updated some of the Puget Sound Vital Signs related to Economic Vitality. The three indicators recently updated were: employment in natural resources industries; percent of employment in natural resource industries, and natural resource industry output. View the Vital Signs here: <https://vitalsigns.pugetsoundinfo.wa.gov/>

Northwest Straits Foundation: Don reported on the Salish Sea Conservation Corps and recruiting for the ten-member cohort going through the program this winter. The Foundation has a commitment to recruiting

for diversity. They are focused on Whatcom County universities and colleges to start with. They are seeking mentors to support the participants. Don provided a description of the mentor role for distribution with the post-meeting materials. He also mentioned that there were scholarship applications submitted for the Caroline Gibson Scholarship, and they plan to award three scholarships this cycle.

MRC Updates

MRCs provided full written reports that are available in the [pre-meeting materials](#). Highlights are included below:

Clallam – Alan Clark

- Continued forage fish sampling. Their sites are at Cline Spit, Elwha beaches, and Ediz Hook. Due to high tides, snow, and waves, only Cline Spit was accessible this month.
- The MRC will reach out to newly elected Department of Community Development Director and County Commissioner.
- Rebecca Mahan attended Responding to Climate Change Impacts to Intertidal Shellfish Resources Workshop.

Island – Barbara Bennett

- MRC Presentation for Navy Families: MRC Chair, Barbara Bennett worked with local Navy veterans to set up an opportunity to speak to a group about our MRC. She did a wonderful job tying the work of the Island MRC in with basic information about the importance of our marine ecosystems. 36 attended, most were retired Navy along with their spouses. We look forward to finding new ways to communicate our work to the different populations in Island County. Barb was successful in recruiting members to join the MRC at this event. We have one retired navy person apply already.
- Hoypus Point Planting Party: Our MRC worked with NWSF to host a planting party. We focused on recruiting folks to help with the planting since Lisa and Brooke focused on the details for the day of. It was an exciting day that was very rewarding. 1,300 plants were successfully put into the ground. Volunteers seemed to leave with smiles on their faces. Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers.
- Coupeville Wharf Video: Back in July we worked with the Sound Water Stewards, Atlantis Steam, Blue Skies Drone, to get video from above and below the Coupeville Wharf. The MRC helped to identify the underwater organisms found in the film and taught the Atlantis Steam students about the importance of our marine ecosystem. The video will be hosted and shown at the Coupeville Wharf. The video covers topics like history and natural history of the local area. Currently, the video credits say Kelly Zupich, MRC. I have put in a request to Sound Water Stewards to change it to say Island County Marine Resources Committee. <https://vimeo.com/767123994>

Jefferson – Jeff Taylor

- The MRC hosted one last rain garden work party on October 28, attended by 4 volunteers and 2 staff who helped weed, replant, and mulch two rain gardens at Franklin/Adams and Lincoln/Adams in Port Townsend.

- The MRC swapped out the Port Townsend waterfront no-anchor zone spar buoys with winter floats in preparation of the stormy winter season.

San Juan – Sam Whitridge

- Ten boats in Friday Harbor and surrounds were tagged during a derelict vessel patrol on Nov 18th
- Two MRC positions have been vacated and their openings are currently being advertised
- Letter sent to San Juan County Council outlining concerns highlighted by the sinking of Aleutian Isle

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Bowman Bay Planting Party: Skagit MRC partnered with the Northwest Straits Foundation to host a planting party at Bowman Bay on November 3rd. 17 volunteers, MRC members, and NW Straits Foundation (NWSF) staff planted over 175 native plants. We were able to get it done a lot faster than anticipated, thanks to our wonderful volunteers and NWSF staff. The atmospheric river arrived shortly afterwards to give the plants a good soaking.
- Kids on the Beach: 50 8th grade students from Conway Middle School participated in beach seining and forage fish survey activities at the Fidalgo Bay RV Park on November 18. Despite the cold weather, a broken hose, getting locked out of the building twice, and finding very few fish or forage fish eggs, it was a great day for Kids on the Beach!

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- The Port Susan Subcommittee from Snohomish County and Island County attended a kick-off meeting with ESA consultants on November 15. The group discussed the draft communications plan, which is set to be completed by December 15.
- The Snohomish MRC partnered with WSU Beach Watchers to host a Beach Cleanup at Howarth Park on November 22.

Whatcom – Bob Cecile

- As of January 31, 2023, the MRC will have two vacancies, one Citizen-at-Large (current member is eligible to re-apply and one Scientific). An application for the Scientific seat was received on 12/2 and will be reviewed by the Executive Committee in mid-December.
- The MRC has drafted a comment letter to the City of Bellingham expressing concerns about the proposed housing development on the north side of North Chuckanut Bay. The 30-day comment period began 11/24. It is anticipated that the MRC's letter will be submitted by mid-December.

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:

- The Commission approved a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) vision and goals statement. You can see the statement [here](#) (p. 9). NW Straits Commission staff will begin developing a process to create action items for each of the DEI goals. More information will follow in the coming months
- [Tessa Francis](#) from the Puget Sound Institute presented a study assessing the impact of shoreline armoring on chinook salmon, Chum salmon, herring, and surf smelt. Tessa welcomes the opportunity to present at individual MRC meetings.
- The NW Straits Commission Science Advisory Committee is recruiting new members. MRC members and others are encouraged to suggest names for potential members. More details about the role and expectations of committee members can be found in the Committee's [Articles of Association](#).
- The NW Straits Foundation is starting a [Salish Sea Conservation Corps program](#). The program will create internships for early career professionals. The Foundation is looking for individuals to mentor interns. Contact Don Hunger don@nwstraitsfoundation.org or Brooke Friesen friesen@nwstraitsfoundation.org for more information.
- League of Women voters [released a study](#) on the Shoreline Management Act (SMP) assessing its effectiveness over the last 50 years. Barbara Bennett of the Island MRC has compiled resources on county Comprehensive Plans from an SMP learning group made up of MRC representatives. Please reach out to her if you'd like access to those materials: bennbluw@gmail.com.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

Round table

Tim Ellis noted that Friends of Skagit Beaches contacted WSU Beach Watchers to help on stormwater outflow sampling in Snohomish County. He's going to be helping with a few sites locally. Diane Hennebert said that there has been great success with this program in Anacortes.

Upcoming meetings

January 27, 2023 - Northwest Straits Commission meeting: 10am-12pm via Zoom. Find more information [on our website](#).

February 24, 2023 - Northwest Straits Commission meeting **in-person** (Snohomish County)

March 30-31, 2023 - Northwest Straits Initiative retreat. La Conner Country Inn.

NWSC Draft 2023 - 2025/2026

The Executive Committee discussed the draft NWSC 2023-2026 budget at the January meeting. The budget below includes six sources (EPA, NOAA, State MRC, State Kelp, State green crab, and US Fish and Wildlife Service).

State MRC, Kelp, and Green Crab funds are pending the current legislative session, and must be used over the two-year biennium period (July 2023-June 2025). US Fish and Wildlife Service funding is for a two-year period January 2023-December 2025.

NOAA funds (\$3M) may be used over a one- to three-year period. The Executive Committee is recommending that NOAA funds be used over a three-year period. This approach would provide ~\$192,000/MRC in each of the first two years, support 8.34 NWSC FTEs, and include contractual funds for retreat and conference support and other emerging regional projects. Year three is less predictable due to the unknown status of other funding sources, however, the recommended three-year approach would assure that some funds would be available. The Executive Committee recommends staff be given flexibility to adjust the budget as more information is gathered on the NOAA budget timelines and internal budget needs in the coming weeks. If the TBD NOAA deadline falls before the February Commission meeting, NWSC Staff request that the Executive Committee be given permission to approve the final budget to assure it can be submitted on time.

		NWSC six funding sources					
		EPA	NOAA CDS 23	State MRC	USFWS 23	State Kelp 23-25	State Green Crab 23-25
YEAR 1: 2023-24							
SALARIES (8.34 FTE)*		\$ 223,184	\$ 240,634	-	\$ 5,440	38,014	\$ 59,128
BENEFITS (may adjust)	36%	\$ 80,346	\$ 86,628		\$ 1,959	\$ 13,685	\$ 21,286
INDIRECT: FY23 (may adjust)	28.75%	\$ 87,265	\$ 94,088		\$ 2,127	\$ 14,864	\$ 23,119
SUPPLIES		\$ 11,205	\$ 35,000	\$ -	\$ 7,001	\$ 3,437	\$ 6,415
SUBCONTRACTS							
MRCs (\$192,000 per MRC)		\$ 413,000	\$ 476,000	\$ 455,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other contracts		\$ 22,000	\$ 26,650	\$ -	\$ 16,958	TBD	\$ 54,560
TRAVEL EXPENSES		\$ 13,000	\$ 41,000	0	\$ -	\$ 2,000	\$ 3,525
TOTAL		\$ 850,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 455,000	\$ 33,485	\$ 72,000	\$ 168,034
YEAR 2: 2024-25							
SALARIES (8.34 FTE)*		\$ 225,478	\$ 245,490	\$ -	\$ 4,736	\$ 69,857	\$ 60,258
BENEFITS (may adjust)	36%	\$ 81,172	\$ 88,376	\$ -	\$ 1,705	\$ 25,148	\$ 21,693
INDIRECT: FY23 (may adjust)	28.75%	\$ 88,162	\$ 95,987	\$ -	\$ 1,852	\$ 27,314	\$ 23,561
SUPPLIES		\$ 8,100	\$ 34,000	\$ -	\$ 7,001	\$ 2,900	\$ 5,404
SUBCONTRACTS							
MRCs (\$192,500 per MRC)		\$ 420,000	\$ 472,500	\$ 455,000			\$ -
Other contracts		\$ 14,088	\$ 21,647	\$ -	\$ 16,958	TBD	\$ 56,320
TRAVEL EXPENSES		\$ 13,000	\$ 42,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,781	\$ 2,764
TOTAL		\$ 850,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 455,000	\$ 32,252	\$ 128,000	\$ 170,000

*Salaries covers all current Commission staff positions (filled and vacant) at existing FTE levels.

The year 3 tables below illustrate two different scenarios: The first scenario shows funding availability if only remaining NOAA funds (\$1M) are available. This budget would provide \$69,000 to MRCs and support 3.24 NWSC staff. The second table shows the NWSC receiving EPA, remaining NOAA funds, and State MRC funds. This would provide \$195,000/MRC and support 6.34 NWSC staff. Contracts, travel and supplies would all be reduced in year 3 given these scenarios. If state funds are awarded in 2025, the amounts below would be increased accordingly.

One funding source assumes we are only funded with remaining NOAA funds (\$1M).

YEAR 3: 2025-26 - 1 funding source		EPA	NOAA CDS 23	State MRC	USFWS 23	State Kelp 23-25	State Green Crab 23-25
SALARIES (3.24 FTE)		\$ -	\$ 267,740	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
BENEFITS (may adjust)	36%	\$ -	\$ 96,387	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
INDIRECT: FY23 (may adjust)	28.75%	\$ -	\$ 104,686	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
SUPPLIES		\$ -	\$ 21,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
SUBCONTRACTS							
MRCs (\$69,000 per MRC)		\$ -	\$ 483,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other contracts		\$ -	\$ 15,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TRAVEL EXPENSES		\$ -	\$ 12,187	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL		\$ -	\$ 1,000,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

Note: This scenario is NOAA Funds only, limited staff capacity (3.24 FTE) and smaller MRC grant amounts. No funding for conference. Indirect, benefits, and salary rates will adjust.

Three funding sources assumes we are funded with NOAA, EPA, and State MRC budgets.

YEAR 3: 2025-26 - 3 funding sources		EPA	NOAA CDS 23	State MRC	USFWS 23	State Kelp 23-25	State Green Crab 23-25
SALARIES (6.34 FTE)		\$ 224,927	\$ 266,772		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
BENEFITS (may adjust)	36%	\$ 80,974	\$ 96,038		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
INDIRECT: FY23 (may adjust)	28.75%	\$ 87,946	\$ 104,308		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
SUPPLIES		\$ 17,000	\$ 21,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
SUBCONTRACTS							
MRCs (\$195,000 per MRC)		\$ 427,000	\$ 483,000	\$ 455,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other contracts		\$ -	\$ 15,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TRAVEL EXPENSES		\$ 12,153	\$ 12,187		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL		\$ 850,000	\$ 998,305	\$ 455,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

Note: This scenario contains NOAA, EPA and State awards. Staff capacity is reduced to 6.34 FTE from previous year. MRC grant amount sustained from previous year. No funding for conference. Indirect, benefits, and salary rates will adjust.



Commission staff highlights - [January 2023]

MRC Support

2021-23 MRC Grants: The last quarter of 2022 ended as of December and Commission staff is working with MRCs on the quarterly deliverables and payment request submittal/review.

2023-25 MRC Grants: Commission staff began communications with MRCs via staff to discuss the upcoming Request for Proposals for the next round of awards to begin in this fall/winter. Three drop-in information sessions were offered, and several MRC staff were able to attend and discuss planning and anticipated timelines/budgets. Additional communication is planned for the coming month, and MRCs are encouraged to reach out with any questions.

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: NW Straits Commission staff are developing a two-day in-person Kelp Plan workshop with a Kelp Plan advisory subcommittee, to determine the status of, lessons learned from, and next steps for the actions within the Kelp Plan. The workshop will be held on March 1 and 2.

Kelp Monitoring: NW Straits Commission staff hosted a virtual workshop focused on the kelp monitoring data collected in 2022. There were approximately 50 attendees, many of whom volunteered during kelp surveys. There were multiple presentations that highlighted how the MRC kelp data is being used across different organizations. NW Straits Commission staff presented on the 2022 monitoring data, staff from WA Department of Natural Resources presented on the incorporation of MRC data into the kelp vital sign and protocol updates, and staff from Puget Sound Restoration Fund and Reef Check jointly presented on understory kelp monitoring and co-locating their monitoring sites with MRC kayak monitoring sites.

Green Crab: NW Straits Commission staff attended in-person and presented at the 2023 Washington European Green Crab Trapper's Summit hosted by Washington Sea Grant. The summit included presentations from coastal and inland green crab trapping and management efforts. The presentation by NW Straits Commission staff highlighted the green crab trapping and coordination efforts across Skagit and Whatcom Counties from 2022.

Forage Fish: NW Straits Commission staff hosted a zoom meeting for the MRC Forage Fish project. The meeting was an opportunity for MRC volunteers to share updates on their sampling program, ask questions and troubleshoot issues, and hear updates from WDFW, and hear from Haley Sherman from the NWS Foundation about the forage fish sampling at restoration sites.

Derelict Vessels: NW Straits Commission staff are developing an interagency agreement with Washington Department of Natural Resources to coordinate the removal of derelict vessels



Commission staff highlights - [January 2023]

prioritized by MRCs and Tribal partners. NW Straits Commission staff are also finalizing the list of vessels and priorities with the workgroup and coordinating logistics with specific partners. The total number of vessels being considered includes 14 vessels in the nearshore and marine environment and 18 vessels on land.

Operations

Staff: Caitlyn Blair started on January 17 as the NW Straits Commission Program Coordinator. The NW Straits Commission is recruiting a Communications Coordinator and hopes to hire soon.

Budget: Three funding sources wrapped up as of December 31, 2022: US Fish and Wildlife phase one funding for the Voluntary No-Anchor Zone project, year one federal funding from EPA via the Puget Sound Partnership, and Pew funding via the NW Straits Foundation for kelp policy coordination. As of January 1, 2023, the Congressionally Directed Funding via NOAA started, along with the 2023 US Fish and Wildlife funding for phase two of the Voluntary No-Anchor Zone project.

Meetings Attended

Allie attended: Jefferson MRC meeting 1/3; Green crab data app meeting with WDFW 1/6 & 1/13; NWSI DEI strategy meeting with NWSF 1/9; Green crab strategy meeting 1/9; Puget Sound Floating Kelp Canopy Vital Sign Indicator Workshop 3 1/10; Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone Workgroup 1/12; MRC Kelp Data Workgroup 1/17; MRC kelp 2022 season review 1/19; Green Crab Trapper's Summit 1/24; Puget Sound Kelp Research and Monitoring Workgroup 1/25

Dana attended: DNR Kelp and Eelgrass Health Plan Executive Committee meetings 12/15 & 1/4; Floating Kelp Area Indicator Project team meetings 1/4 & 1/6; San Juan MRC meeting 1/5; Puget Sound Floating Kelp Canopy Vital Sign Indicator Workshop 3 1/10; Skagit MRC meeting 1/12; Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone Workgroup 1/12; MRC kelp 2022 season review 1/19; Puget Sound Kelp Research and Monitoring Workgroup 1/25

Jeff attended: San Juan MRC meeting 1/5; Puget Sound Floating Kelp Canopy Vital Sign Indicator Workshop 3 1/10; MRC kelp 2022 season review 1/19; Green Crab Trapper's Summit 1/24; Puget Sound Kelp Research and Monitoring Workgroup 1/25

Leah attended: Whatcom MRC meeting 1/5; Green crab strategy meeting 1/9; Green crab data app meeting with WDFW 1/13; MRC kelp 2022 season review 1/19; Green Crab Trapper's Summit 1/24; MRC/WDFW Forage Fish check-in 1/24

Lucas attended: Green crab strategy meeting 1/9, 1/20; Derelict vessel strategy call 1/4; NW Straits Commission funding info session 1/6, 1/10, 1/11; Puget Sound Partnership Legislative update 1/6,



Commission staff highlights - [January 2023]

1/13, 1/27; NWSI DEI strategy meeting with NWSF 1/9; NWSC/NWSF staff meeting 1/11; Derelict vessel strategy meeting 1/ 4, 1/11, 1/18, 1/19; Puget Sound Partnership Transboundary Caucus meeting 1/11; No anchor zone project strategy call 1/17; MRC kelp 2022 season review 1/19; Ecology Program Management Team DEI meeting 1/23;

Sasha attended: Island MRC meeting 1/3; Derelict vessel strategy call 1/ 4; NW Straits Commission funding info session 1/6, 1/10, 1/11; Skagit MRC meeting 1/12; Salish Sea No-Anchor Zone Workgroup 1/12; MRC kelp 2022 season review 1/19; MRC Forage fish data and check in with WDFW 1/24

Northwest Straits Foundation December 2022 Program Updates

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*

Caroline Gibson Scholarship in Marine Studies

We are excited to announce the two recipients of the Caroline Gibson Scholarship in Marine Studies: Katherine Qi, Phd student, UW School of Oceanography; Sarah Davidson, Master of Marine Affairs student, UW School of Marine and Environmental Affairs. Please join us for a Celebratory Scholars Reception, where you will meet the scholars and learn about their studies on January 13th from 4-5:30pm at the Fairhaven Library in Bellingham. Email Friesen@nwstraitsfoundation.org to RSVP.

Shore Friendly

Northwest Straits Foundation's Shore Friendly Outreach team has been planning the next workshops, sending landowner outreach materials, scheduling site visits, and bulking up the NWSF newsletter to include a Shore Friendly segment. The segment will highlight Shore Friendly projects, resources, and useful tips for shoreline homeowners. This month's newsletter segment will cover the Do's and Don'ts of drainage and stormwater management for shoreline homeowners.

Newly Lost Net Reporting, Response, and Retrieval Program



Net Removed near Port Madison, WA

Our newly lost net Reporting, Response, and Retrieval program removed three derelict gillnets, two of which were in Bellingham Bay and one in Port Madison. Found entangled in the nets were 9 seabirds, 2 harbor seals, 109 fish including chum salmon, lingcod, and rockfish, and 304 invertebrates mostly consisting of Dungeness crab and red rock crab. It is imperative that newly lost nets are reported immediately so we can locate them and initiate removal efforts before weather conditions cause them

to move and potentially be lost forever. We cannot do this without our partners in fisheries throughout the Puget Sound region.

This is a “no-fault” program. No one wants to lose gear, it’s an unfortunate event that happens but we have the mechanisms in place to take action. Help us in protecting our marine resources by reporting lost nets at derelictgear.org or **360-733-1725**.

Salish Sea Conservation Corps

A key element of the Salish Sea Conservation Corps is mentorship. Each of the ten college students chosen to be a part of the SSCC will be paired with a mentor. Serving as a mentor is an inspiring opportunity to help a member of the SSCC gain from your knowledge and experience in marine conservation, business, career and personal development. You should be able to listen to your mentee, provide guidance and support in areas where you have experience, encourage their participation in SSCC projects and activities, and open doors introducing them to your community. **To learn more** and join us as a mentor please contact NWSF Executive Director Don Hunger at don@nwstraitsfoundation.org or **360-739-9909**

Year End Monitoring Report



Volunteers Seine for Forage Fish at Cornet Bay

Over the course of the year the Northwest Straits Foundation surveyed 18 restoration sites throughout the Puget Sound region, part of a collaborative project monitoring long-term ecosystem responses to shoreline restoration efforts. Marine Projects Manager Jason Morgan, Partnership Coordinator Jessica Page, and Environmental Technician Haley Sherman led surveys designed to evaluate changes in habitat and habitat usage over time. All of this work would not have been possible without help from our dedicated volunteers. In 2022 our volunteers provided 760 hours of service surveying forage fish spawning, nearshore fish use, and large woody debris and beach wrack accumulation.

Outcomes from this project include a case study which may be found [here](#), and a published manuscript which may be found [here](#) evaluating the effects of shoreline restoration efforts throughout the Puget Sound.

Northwest Straits Foundation January 2023 Program Updates

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*



Shore Friendly Workshop

The Shore Friendly program of the Northwest Straits Foundation and the Snohomish and Island County Marine Resources Committees are hosting an in-person workshop for shoreline landowners to learn about the drivers and impacts of coastal erosion, how sea level rise can intensify coastal erosion, and strategies and adaptations to prepare for future conditions.

Join Rachel Johnson and Andrea MacLennan of Herrera Environmental and Jeff McCord of Nickel Bros to learn about Shore Friendly Living.

Workshop topics include:

- Signs of change on the shoreline
- Shoreline responses to climate change
- Adaptations to protect your shoreline property
- Home relocation and its benefits

Join us Saturday, February 25th from 10am - 12:30pm at Village Community Services in Arlington, WA.

[Click here to learn more and register.](#)

Northwest Straits Foundation is working with Clallam and Jefferson MRCs to schedule the next Shore Friendly workshop in their area.

Shore Friendly Mailing

The mailing of introductory Shore Friendly outreach packets to new shoreline homeowners who purchased a home in the Northwest Straits region during 2021 or 2022 is complete. The packets provided information on the Shore Friendly program and encouraged shoreline owners to apply for a site visit if they have concerns about shoreline erosion. This year's packets also included some Catch

More Crab materials, an informational flyer on how to spot European Green Crabs, and information on the Passport to Marine Adventure App.

Shore Friendly and Northwest Straits Foundation in the News

Check out this article written by Kai Uyehara for the Salish Current.

[Bulkheads: protecting property at what cost to the environment? By KAI UYEHARA, Salish Current](#)

Salish Sea Conservation Corps



Some of the SSCC Members pose with Program Coordinator, Brooke Friesen after playing a round of mini golf

Salish Sea Conservation Corps Program Coordinator, Brooke Friesen, welcomed the first cohort of members this month! The group, comprised of Bellingham Technical College and Western Washington University students, exude passion for the Salish Sea.

Join us February 8th, 2023 at Bellingham Library, Fairhaven branch from 4-5:45pm for an official Salish Sea Conservation Corps Welcome Social. Foundation Staff Lisa Kaufman will be presenting on Nearshore Restoration, the members will meet their mentors, and there will be plenty of time to network. Come meet these inspiring group of students!

Cornet Bay Restoration Project

The Northwest Straits Foundation is gearing up for one last season of beach seining at Cornet Bay. In partnership with the Island County MRC, surveys will start at the end of January and continue twice a month through June to capture the juvenile salmon outmigration season. This is part of a long-term study on nearshore ecosystem responses to the Cornet Bay Restoration Project.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: December 2022

Submitted by: Rebecca Mahan

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

- Continued forage fish sampling on Cline Spit, Elwha beaches and Ediz Hook.
- Retreat scheduled for February 23rd.

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): Nothing to report.

Monthly MRC Meeting: will be on January 23rd.

Funding updates (newly-awarded grants, in-kind support or other funding commitments): Olympia Oyster CDS funding contract signed. CMRC and JST have begun process of obtaining permits.

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, Elwha Beaches and Ediz Hook.

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

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: December/ 2022

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- Climate Action Panel ALE Program
- Forage Fish Class

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

- The Executive Committee is targeting members of the farming and Navy communities to try and get more diverse representation to serve as members

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

Previous Meetings/Events:

- Dec 6: MRC Committee Meeting
- Dec 8: Climate Change Panel Discussion w/ South Whidbey Scholl District Students
- Dec 22: Executive Committee Meeting
- Jan 3: MRC Committee Meeting
- Jan 12: Forage Fish Class – ALE Program

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- Jan 26: Executive Committee Meeting
- Feb 7: MRC Committee Meeting

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):

Monitoring – Forage Fish: Our work monitoring for Forage fish eggs continues at most of our sites year-round. Teams continue to monitor monthly at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Hidden Beach, Glendale, Seahorse Siesta.

Bull Kelp Surveys: We are still working to get all the data from the volunteers.

Outreach – Climate Action Panel: A few of our MRC members were invited to sit on a Climate Action Panel for the South Whidbey School District Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) class. During the class students shared their ideas for ways to combat climate change in Island County. The panel members gave feedback and additional ideas to the students. The students were very creative in coming up with solutions to real world issues. These ideas will be shared with the Island County Commissioners in hopes of some of these ideas being incorporated into the County's Climate Action Plan.

Outreach – Forage Fish Class: We were given the opportunity to work with the South Whidbey School District ALE students. We spent the two hours with these 5th-8th grade students learning about forage

fish and their importance in our environment. The school provided microscopes, so we were able to view forage fish eggs and do some work in identifying them. Overall, it was a good time and we look forward to working with this class further in the future.

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):



Climate Action Panel

photo by Kelly Zupich



Forage Fish Class

photo by Kelly Zupich

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: January 2023

Submitted by: Monica Montgomery

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

- The MRC voted in its 2023 Executive Committee officers at the December MRC meeting: Troy McKelvey – Chair, Gordon King – Vice Chair, Jeff Taylor – NWSC Rep, Sarah Fiskens – NWSC Alt
- The MRC voted to establish a DEI subcommittee at the December MRC meeting, for improving practices to better represent and engage the broader community of East Jefferson County in MRC projects and efforts.
- Storm surge monitoring is ongoing, with recent surveys conducted on December 2 and 26, and a site assessment planned for January 23.

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

The 2023 Executive Committee officers voted in at the December meeting include:

Troy McKelvey – Chair

Gordon King – Vice Chair

Jeff Taylor – NWSC Rep

Sarah Fiskens – NWSC Alt

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

Past Events/Meetings

December 1 – Adelma forage fish survey

December 2 – Storm surge monitoring

December 6 – MRC monthly meeting

December 7 – Olympia oyster meeting

December 9 – Strait ERN LIO meeting

December 9 – NWSC monthly meeting

December 12 – ROV derelict crab pot removal meeting

December 12 – Shoreline landowner outreach meeting w/ NWSF

December 15 – Crabber outreach meeting

December 19 – Derelict vessel removal meeting

December 20 – MRC Executive Committee meeting

December 22 – Rain garden meeting

December 26 – Storm surge monitoring

January 3 – Shoreline landowner outreach meeting

January 3 – MRC monthly meeting

January 5 – Storm surge monitoring meeting

January 12 – Salish Sea NAZ meeting

January 13 – Fort Townsend forage fish survey

January 13 – Adelma forage fish survey

January 17 – Olympia oyster meeting

Upcoming Events/Meetings

January 19 – NWSI kelp data review workshop

January 24 – MRC Executive Committee meeting

January 24 – Dabob forage fish survey

January 24 – WDFW forage fish index site data review meeting

January 25 – Education & outreach meeting

January 27 – Shoreline landowner outreach meeting w/ NWSF

February 7 – MRC monthly meeting

February 21 – MRC Executive Committee meeting

February – Forage fish survey at Adelma, Dabob and Fort Townsend

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 Fort Townsend team surveyed on January 13, though the high tide limited access to the beach and only 2 of the 5 samples were collected. Volunteers included 5 MRC members (Janette, Sarah, Frank, Troy, and Joanie) and 2 community volunteers (Gregg, Jon).
- **Forage fish - Adelma Beach (Index):** The Project Lead (Jeff) surveyed on December 1 (results: 58 sand lance eggs) and January 13.
- **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The Project Lead (Sarah) did not survey in December due to the lack of daytime low tides and is planning the next survey for January 24.
- **Kelp:** The team is looking forward to the January 19 NWSI kelp data review, as well as other regional meetings led by DNR.

2. Rain Gardens:

- The team (Janette, Sarah, Brenda, Frank, Troy) met on December 22 to discuss the role of a rain garden intern in 2023.

3. Education & Outreach:

- The team is set to meet on January 25 to discuss 2023 outreach events and efforts.
- The crabber outreach team (Roy, Sarah, Brenda, Troy), as well as Neil, met on December 15 to discuss the role of a crabber intern in 2023.
- The shoreline landowner outreach project lead, Sarah, and the MRC Coordinator met with Lisa and other NWSF staff on December 12 to discuss plans for 2023. The team met on January 3 to share 2023 plans and discuss ways to promote site visits and Shore Friendly resources in East Jefferson County. The project lead and MRC Coordinator will be meeting with NWSF partners again on January 27.

4. Olympia Oysters:

- The Project Lead and MRC Coordinator met with the Kilisut Harbor team on December 7 and January 17 to discuss 2023 plans for community outreach.

- The MRC Coordinator secured a WDFW shellfish transfer permit for 2023 and is working on renewing another 5-year Right of Entry with DNR.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- The MRC Coordinator attended the January 12 Salish Sea No-Anchor Zones meeting with regional partners.

6. Mapping Lost Crab Pots:

- The team (Jeff, Troy, Sarah) met on December 12 to discuss potential sites for side scan sonar surveys and ROV crab pot removals in 2023. We hope to finalize selection of sites with the Sea Dragons by the end of January, for submitting permit application materials and writing up contract agreements.

7. Storm Surge Monitoring:

- On December 26, the project lead and two community volunteers (Dave, Barney) monitored total water levels near the NW Maritime Center in Port Townsend. The team plans to head out on January 23 with Ian Miller to assess the new potential monitoring site near Chetzemoka Park.
- The team and MRC Coordinator met on January 5 to discuss the role of a storm surge monitoring intern in 2023.

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):

January 13 Fort Townsend forage fish survey



Photo by Troy McKelvey



Photo of Jonathan, Janette, Gregg, Joanie, Frank and Sarah post-survey by Troy McKelvey

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: Jan 2023

Submitted by: Tyler Davis

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

- **Two MRC positions have vacated, and we have been interviewing for these positions. We hope to have two new members approved by County Council in early February.**
- **A draft of the MSA Plan is now complete. The MRC is now working on planning a Marine Managers Workshop in the spring to work on prioritizing actions in the MSA Plan.**

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

Four interviews were conducted in January for the two vacant MRC positions, by an interview panel consisting of the MRC Coordinator, MRC support staff, MRC chair, and San Juan County Council representative Cindy Wolf. The interviews went well, with all four candidates exhibiting various strengths. While each of the four would be a good fit for different reasons, two candidates stood out and the intent is that they will be confirmed in the next couple weeks. The other two candidates will be encouraged to join the next series of monthly MRC meetings as interested members of the public, with an eye towards reaffirming their applications in June when two more MRC seats will be vacated.

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

- Stewardship Network meeting – Jan 4th
- Monthly MRC meeting – Jan 5th (with LIO/CAG)
- Plastic Free Salish Sea Retreat – Jan 14th
- Storming the Sound Conference – January 19th
- Next MRC meeting: Feb 2nd

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

San Juan County's Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC) awarded \$20k to the Department of Environmental Stewardship to develop and install interpretative signage at the Cattle Point Interpretative Area within the existing infrastructure (an old Navy radio compass station), a project that will be spearheaded by the MRC.

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

Plastic Free Salish Sea (PFSS) is mentoring three juniors from Friday Harbor High School for their Community Projects class. Two students are working to create an Adopt-a-Road program similar to the existing Adopt-a-Beach program, and another student is developing a project using ecobricks. PFSS also had their annual retreat on January 14th to plan for the year ahead.

Progress on assessing mooring buoys via aerial photos was delayed in previous months as we needed to first replace the intern position that had been working on this project. This month, intern Yuki Wilmerding is wrapping up the project and the results of the assessment will be available in late January.

A full draft of the MSA plan is now complete and will be uploaded into EAGL as part of our quarterly reporting. The MSA draft was finished following input and edits from the MRC at the December retreat. The tentative plan is for the MSA Plan to be presented to San Juan County Council for their review in February. The next step in the process will be to host a Marine Managers Workshop in late March or early April (exact date TBD). This event will bring together marine managers, scientists, and marine resource users from local organizations, and state, federal, local, and tribal governments to prioritize the

MSA Plan strategic actions during a 2-day workshop. The first day of the workshop will include introductory presentations on the plan and a series of breakout sessions with subject area experts to discuss and propose prioritization of the strategic actions identified in the update. The second day, expected to be shorter to accommodate ferry travel, will focus on bringing all groups back together and seek to reach a consensus to identify the top 3 strategies in each of the nine categories that include: Climate Resilience, Oil spill prevention and preparedness, Protect submerged aquatic vegetation, Enhance nearshore foodwebs, Reduce human impact, Improve regulatory compliance, Ensure shoreline functioning, Reduce vessel Impacts, Upgrade Marine Infrastructure.

The Morning Star (Blind Bay, Shaw Island), a vessel that was tagged in September of this year and listed as a top priority for San Juan County's submission for the NWSC's Derelict Vessel Workgroup's consideration, has since sunk and continues to await salvage. Additionally, The Robin's Nest, a 40-ft wooden cruiser, had run aground in Aleck Bay, Lopez Island, and was breaking apart in king tides over the holidays. The remains of the vessel were removed in the first week of January before debris could scatter further. This just-in-time success was the result of a great collaboration of our local contractors.

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 heard two presentations during our January meeting. The first was by Zach Pajka on a proposed kelp farm near Lopez Island. The MRC provided feedback and input on this potential project and advised Zach on outreach he needs to conduct in order to ensure success in moving the project forward. The MRC also attended a presentation (during the LIO portion of the meeting) by Gary Greene and his team on their Assessment of Pacific Sand Lance Substrate Habitats in San Juans.

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



SAN JUAN COUNTY
Marine Resources
Committee

San Juan County MRC new logo.



Representative Rick Larsen
closing out the Storming the
Sound Conference in La Conner
on Jan. 19th.





Cleanup of Robin's Nest that had run aground in Aleck Bay, Lopez Island

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: January /2023

Submitted by: Tracy/ Diane

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

- The MRC- Salish Sea School Intern and the Forage Fish STaRS student finished their research project in January. The Final Report is now available on the [Skagit MRC website](#) and the STaRS student presentations are available on [YouTube](#).
- The 2023 Salish Sea Stewards Training Program is now at full capacity (26), and we've started a waiting list. Classes start February 7 – April 25, 2023, Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay NERR. The training schedule is available on the [Skagit MRC website](#).

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Jay Lind recently resigned from his position on the Skagit MRC after moving to Poulsbo. Jay has been an invaluable member of the Skagit MRC since 2012. He represented recreational and commercial fishing interests and served as MRC Chair, Vice Chair, NWSC rep, NWSF board member. He also participated on multiple MRC subcommittees and was the former MRC Project Lead for Fidalgo Bay Day. Jay was a great addition to the Skagit MRC, and we are extremely grateful for his dedication, reliability, sense of humor and kind spirit.

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

- **January 7-** MRC-Salish Sea School Intern STaRS presentations
- **January 12-** Skagit MRC's monthly meeting via Microsoft Teams (9am-11am). Jonn Lunsford, Parks & Rec Director with the City of Anacortes, presented an update on the Fidalgo Bay Trestle project.
- **January 18-** Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting via Zoom

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:** 2023 SSS training will start **February 7th through April 25th**. The earlier start date is to accommodate spring volunteer opportunities. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1pm to 5pm at Padilla Bay. The deadline to register is January 31, 2023. The registration form is on the Skagit MRC website: www.skagitmrc.org. 26 people have registered to take the training. We are now at full capacity and have started a Waiting List. The [speaker schedule](#) has been finalized and is now available on the Skagit MRC website. Members of the SSS Advisory Committee will present an overview of the Salish Sea Stewards program on the first day of class and Lucas Hart will give a presentation to introduce the Northwest Straits Initiative. The SSS Advisory Committee developed a new 'Volunteer Buddy System' to help support the new Salish Sea Stewards volunteers after they complete the training and introduce them to some amazing volunteer opportunities.
- **Fidalgo Bay Day:** The date for the 2023 Fidalgo Bay Day event has been tentatively set for **Saturday, August 26, 2023**, from 11am to 3pm. The Fidalgo Bay Resort facility has been reserved. The Shannon Point Marine Center confirmed their participation with the portable Touch Tank. The County intern, Cindy Elston, will temporarily take the lead for Fidalgo Bay

Day through the end of July. We are still looking for someone to take the lead during the month of August.

- Forage Fish Surveys: The forage fish Index Site surveys at Ship Harbor, Samish Island, and Similk Bay continue to occur monthly. Forage Fish surveys at the Kukatali nearshore restoration site will likely end in July (or significantly be reduced) after collecting 5 years' worth of data. Surveys have ended at our March's Point restoration site but will continue at the Bowman Bay nearshore restoration site once a month or every other month. Surveys at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic reserve, on behalf of the WDNR, have been reduced to once a month. The MRC Forage Fish Survey Project Check-In meeting with WDFW will be held Tuesday, January 24th. Pete Haase will provide an update on the Skagit MRC sampling program. They will also discuss whether to add new Index Sites and decommission one or two of the sites that haven't been very good sampling sites.
- MRC- Salish Sea School Intern: The intern and STaRS student finished collecting forage fish data at March's Point in November. The STaRS students presented their projects virtually via Zoom on January 7th. The presentations are available on YouTube at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhppJ8nHiKQ>. The Year 1 Final Report is available on the [Skagit MRC Website](#). The 2023 MRC Intern Program Plan will take a slightly different approach by integrating the MRC intern forage fish project into classrooms and bringing the classrooms onto beaches to learn how, when, where, and why forage fish lay their eggs, with one or two interns as teaching assistants. There are ongoing conversations with Fiddlehead Montessori, Acton Academy, and Island View Elementary to create a lesson plan for local classrooms.
- Kids on the Beach: 50 8th grade students from Conway Middle School participated in beach seining and forage fish survey activities at the Fidalgo Bay RV Park on November 18th. Planning is now underway for the spring program.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys: We are gearing up for the 2023 kelp survey season. MRC Project Lead Lynne Wenberg-Davidson, attended WDNR's Puget Sound Floating Kelp Vital Sign Indicator Workshop on January 10th. They are collecting data from 172 locations from multiple sources, including the MRCs, to create an interactive map to help tell the story. There is currently insufficient data in the north Puget Sound subbasin (just 8%) to establish any trends. A minimum of years of data is needed to qualify. Several Skagit MRC members and kayak kelp survey volunteers attended the MRC Kelp Kayak Data Review Workshop that was held Thursday January 19th. Skagit MRC currently has 14 experienced kayakers involved in surveying 4 kelp beds (Biz Point, Coffin Rocks, Shannon Point East, and Shannon Point West) since 2017. So far Skagit MRC kelp bed survey sites appear to be remaining stable with some seasonal variations. Several Skagit MRC members and volunteers plan to attend WDNR's Eelgrass and Kelp Recovery Workshop on Jan 31 as well as the workshop in March.
- Bowman Bay Restoration: The newly planted trees and shrubs seem to be doing well. Some erosion is happening at the site that we will continue to monitor. Plant maintenance will start back up in the spring under the management of the Northwest Straits Foundation.
- Pinto Abalone Recovery: Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) staff are currently rearing approximately 4500 juveniles for outplanting spring 2023. The 2023 QAPP Addenda has been drafted. Field work will start field work in February 2023 and will include a team of divers from PSRF, WDFW, UW and the Seattle Aquarium. Dive platforms will include vessels from the WDFW subtidal shellfish team, WDFW Enforcement and Shannon Point Marine Center. Priority field work this year will include outplant site surveys, historic index site surveys (2 in Skagit County), site scouting for new sites, outplanting and broodstock collection. Pinto abalone recovery efforts and collaboration will be well represented at the International Abalone Symposium (held once every three years) in Auckland, NZ in late February. Researchers from PSRF, UW, WWU and WDFW will be there to present talks across our research and restoration program! The

Environmental Reporter with the Skagit Valley Herald is interested in doing story about our Pinto abalone recovery efforts in Skagit County waters.

- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Not much happening right now. We will be conducting a large bay-wide native oyster population survey with NOAA Congressional funding in partnership with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund starting in April or May 2023, depending on tides. Bay-wide surveys will only occur at 5-year intervals as funding allows. The last bay-wide survey was completed in 2018.
- Sharpes Corner Stormwater Sampling: Due to staff and volunteer capacity and monitoring requirements, we were unable to complete the work as originally planned. The MRC is considering including this project in the next round of MRC grant funding.

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: December 2022

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The Port Susan Subcommittee is reviewing the draft Communications Strategy. There was a subcommittee meeting on 29th with Island County and Snohomish County subcommittee members. Comments will be provided to ESA by early January, and a final Communications Strategy will be complete in late January.
- The MRC will start recruiting for 4 Snohomish County MRC vacant positions in early 2023.
- All are invited to attend the January 18 Beach Walk in Edmonds. The event is family friendly, and Members are encouraged to bring family and friends. The MRC will be providing hot chocolate and cider for participants.

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

Mike Ehlebracht, Laura Gurley, Tom Doerge, and Bob Margulis will be leaving the MRC at the end of the calendar year. Leaving 4 vacant spots on the MRC in 2023. Elisa suggested a new approach to recruitment for a rolling application for MRC Members, along with MRC Members reaching out to specific potential applicants to ask them to apply. The MRC specifically needs to fill roles in Economic and Local Government interests, and ideally find an applicant from Districts 1, 4 and 5. For each application that passes staff screening for minimum qualifications, staff would ask that person to attend 1-2 MRC meetings prior to an interview with MRC members and staff. If they are still interested after attending a meeting or two, we could setup an interview with Staff and a minimum of 2 MRC Members. The MRC agreed to this approach and will start recruitment in early 2023.

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

Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue met with Ardi Kveven, Executive Director of the Ocean Research College Academy, on December 1st.

The MRC conducted forage fish sampling on December 5th.

There was a Meadowdale Monitoring Team Meeting on December 8th.

Elisa Dawson gave a quarterly update to SWM management on December 12th.

There was a meeting to coordinate the January 18 Starlight Beach Walk on December 13th.

Elisa Dawson participate din the Statewide Kelp and Eelgrass Executive Working Group Meeting on December 15th.

Elisa Dawson met with Department of Enterprise Services to discuss the Derelict Vessel Removal contract for 2023 on December 19th.

There was a Port Susan Subcommittee meeting on December 29th.

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): The Port Susan Subcommittee from Snohomish County and Island County is reviewing the draft Communications Strategy provided by ESA. There was a subcommittee meeting on December 29th with Island County and Snohomish County subcommittee members. Comments will be provided to ESA by early January, and a final Communications Strategy will be complete by January 15.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): No Updates.

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 and Howarth Park. Sampling at Meadowdale is expected to restart in January 2023. January forage fish sampling is scheduled for January 26th at 1PM.

Nearshore Restoration: Meadowdale construction of the estuary area is complete. The Park is expected to open to the public in January 2023. The Snohomish MRC's Meadowdale webpage has been updated with the Story Map and information on Meadowdale:
<https://www.snocomrc.org/projects/meadowdale-beach-and-estuary-restoration/>

Outreach: The Snohomish MRC partnered with WSU Beach Watchers to host a Starlight Beach Walk on January 18th at 7PM. The event is located at Olympic Beach Park in Edmonds.

Marine Water Quality: The MRC had a presentation from the Executive Director of the Ocean Research College Academy (ORCA) at their December meeting. The ORCA program was founded

at Everett Community College with start-up funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2003, addressing a unique niche for high school students to earn college credit through dual enrollment. By offering a cohort-based learning community, supportive networks, interdisciplinary instruction centered on active learning in oceanographic research, ORCA has pioneered investigative learning in the local marine environment in Everett, WA. As students learn about the Snohomish River Estuary up close, students transition to sampling out in Port Gardner on our research vessel, where monthly (and sometimes bimonthly) cruises collect a suite of oceanographic data (to 50 meters): temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, pH, relative chlorophyll concentration and turbidity. Phytoplankton 20 micron at the Halocline, Zooplankton 335 micron from 50m to surface, Species of Concern Tracking: Marine Birds and Marine Mammals, Nutrient testing (Ammonium, Nitrates, Nitrites, Phosphates & Silicates), at Surface, Cline, Deep/Near Bottom, Navigation and Weather Data along with Heavy Metals (EPA's suite of six Hg, Pb, Cu, Cd, Ar, Zn) seasonally. This project, which ORCA calls State of Possession Sound (SOPS), extends the parameters that many state agencies use and engages more than 100 students annually as student researchers.

The MRC is investigating ways to partner with ORCA to use their State of Possession Sound data in 2023. The MRC is currently waiting to hear back from Snohomish County Management and legal staff on options for contracts in 2023.

No updates for:

- Marine Vegetation Monitoring
- Crabber Outreach
- Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention

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:

- Starlight Beach Walk January 18 at 7PM at Edmonds Olympic Beach
- Forage Fish Sampling January 26
- MRC Meeting February 15 at 6:30

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: January 2022

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The Marine Vegetation mapping project in partnership with DNR is complete. Snohomish County hired DNR to map the entire Snohomish County shoreline over the last 3 years. The report found that the shoreline of Snohomish County supports 912 ha of eelgrass and 168 ha of understory kelp. This was compared to an older dataset from 1999-2007 when there was approximately in Snohomish County. DNR will present their findings at the February 15th MRC Meeting.
- The Meadowdale Estuary Restoration Project is now open to the public and access has been restored to the beach. MRC Staff Elisa Dawson had interviews with the Seattle Times, Everett Herald, My Edmonds News, and gave a site tour to Representative Rick Larsen in early January.
- The MRC partnered with WSU Beach Watchers and the City of Edmonds to host the January 18 Beach Walk in Edmonds. The event is family friendly, and the MRC provided warm drinks for participants. There were 13 beach Watcher volunteers and 84 participants at the event.

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

The MRC cancelled their January MRC Meeting to host the January 18th Beach Walk in Edmonds in its place. MRC Elections for 2023 will be held at the February 15th meeting.

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

Elisa Dawson is participating in the State Executive Working Group for Kelp and Eelgrass. There was the first meeting of this working group on January 4th.

Staff and Members attended the Kelp Vital Sign Indicator meeting on January 10th.

Elisa Dawson met with Seattle Times reporters and photographers at Meadowdale on January 10th.

MRC Staff met with ORCA to discuss their 2023 contract on January 12.

Elisa Dawson met with Everett Herald reporters on January 12th to discuss the Meadowdale project.

Elisa Dawson met with Senator Rick Larsen and his staff at Meadowdale Beach Park to give a site tour on January 13th. They were joined by My Edmonds News.

The MRC partnered with WSU Beach Watchers and the City of Edmonds to host the January 18th Beach Walk in Edmonds.

MRC Staff Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue, and MRC Members Brie Townsend, Julie Schlenger, and Tim Ellis attended the NWSC Kelp Monitoring Data Review on January 19th.

Elisa Dawson met with consultant ESA to go over the final draft on the Port Susan Communications Strategy on January 20th prior to their submission of the final to the MRC.

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): The Port Susan Subcommittee from Snohomish County and Island County reviewed the draft Communications Strategy provided by ESA and provided comments in early January. ESA is updating the plan, and a final will be provided by January 31. Next, the Port Susan Subcommittee will pick which activities they will focus on from the menu of items the plan lays out.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): No Updates.

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 and Howarth Park. Sampling at Meadowdale will restart in January 2023 as public access has been restored. January forage fish sampling is scheduled for January 26th at 1PM.

Nearshore Restoration: The Meadowdale Estuary Restoration Project is now open to the public and access has been restored to the beach. MRC Staff Elisa Dawson had interviews with the Seattle Times, Everett Herald, and gave a site tour to Representative Rick Larsen in early January.

Seattle Times Article: [Park near Edmonds gets makeover: Will the salmon return? | The Seattle Times](#)

My Edmonds News (features Rick Larsen Tour): [Scene at Meadowdale Beach Park: Congressman Larsen tours restoration work - My Edmonds News](#)

Everett Herald Article: [Meadowdale Beach updates give fish, hikers more room to roam | HeraldNet.com](#)

Outreach: The MRC partnered with WSU Beach Watchers and the City of Edmonds to host the January 18 Beach Walk in Edmonds. The event is family friendly, and the MRC provided warm drinks for participants. There were 13 beach Watcher volunteers and 84 participants at the event.

Marine Water Quality: The MRC is working on drafting an Intergovernmental Services Agreement with ORCA (Ocean Research College Academy). ORCA is an early college program for high school juniors and seniors. Marine research is a unifying thread of interdisciplinary student studies at ORCA. To support this, ORCA maintains two long-term in-water deployments. These stationary instruments collect a variety of data, including, but not limited to, salinity, temperature, pH, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen. One instrument is stationed at Everett Marina (48.003228, -122.223383), and one is stationed at Mount Baker Terminal (47.953548, -122.288400). These instruments collected data approximately every 15-30 minutes. These instruments are fixed in the water column. Data collection at these sites is subject to interruptions for servicing.

These data collected by ORCA are not currently accessible to those outside the institution. Through this contract, ORCA intends to collect, clean, organize, and store data in a manner that is accessible to the County and the public. ORCA also intends to provide a year-end report card on the State of the Sound. ORCA students are the primary users of these data, and one of our learning objectives is to enhance student use of big data as they develop and enhance their skills in data visualization. As such, preparation of the data for outside use will be embedded with students and learning outcomes.

Marine Vegetation Monitoring: The Marine Vegetation mapping project in partnership with DNR is complete. Snohomish County hired DNR to map the entire Snohomish County shoreline over the last 3 years. The report found that the shoreline of Snohomish County supports 912 ha of eelgrass and 168 ha of understory kelp. This was compared to an older dataset from 1999-2007 when there was approximately in Snohomish County. DNR will present their findings at the February 15th MRC Meeting.

Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: The Subcommittee held a meeting in early January to discuss direction for the year. They noted the Oil Spills 101 website and will be following up with Ecology for volunteer opportunities during this calendar year.

No updates for:

- Crabber Outreach

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 Sampling January 26 and 31
- Kelp and Eelgrass Workshop January 31
- MRC Meeting February 15 at 6:30
- NWSC Meeting in Snohomish County February 24

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



Photo from My Edmonds News.

U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen, second from left, talks with Snohomish County officials at Meadowdale Beach Park during a tour Friday afternoon. County officials pictured with Larsen (L-R) are Stephanie Wright, executive policy officer; Larsen; Elisa Dawson, marine resources senior planner; Rob Marchand, senior park planner; and Sharon Swain, parks and recreation division director.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Whatcom

Month/Year: JANUARY 2023

Submitted by: Austin Rose

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

- The MRC Executive Committee wrote a recommendation to the County Executive for the appointments of Glen Alexander (Alex) to fulfill his second term in a Citizen-at-Large position, and Rick Beauregard to fill the Scientific Intern vacancy. Appointments are expected on January 24.
- A job announcement for a MRC Extra staff person was posted on January 19. The announcement will close on February 12. For more information [CLICK HERE](#). This position is grant funded for an average of ~24hrs/week for the 2023 calendar year.
- The Committee discussed suggested amendments to their Policies and Procedures to address a clear protocol for MRC meetings now that most meetings are hosted virtually. Suggested amendments clarified the meaning of consensus when it comes to decision making, and protocols for voting and meeting summaries from a hybrid meeting.

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

The MRC Executive Committee wrote a recommendation to the County Executive for the appointments of Glen Alexander (Alex) to fulfill his second term in a Citizen-at-Large position, and Rick Beauregard to fill the Scientific Intern vacancy. Rick is a Retired environmental consultant with 40 years' experience in marine science, water quality, hazardous waste management, environmental compliance, and project management. He is a current member and past chair Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District Advisory Committee and founder of the Drayton Harbor HAB Hunters, a citizen science program to monitor harmful algae.

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

The MRC held their January meeting on January 5. Highlights included:

- MRC members recently drafted a comment letter to the City of Bellingham regarding the proposed Jones Subdivision ('[The Woods at Viewcrest](#)') – a proposed development on the cliffs of the north side of North Chuckanut Bay. The City informed the MRC that there is intent to issue a follow up Request for Information from the applicant. In which case, new information will be available to review and comment on. The committee agreed that there is ample time to review the new information and decide how to best comment at a later date. Currently, there is concern within the adjacent community about the proposed stormwater treatment. The MRC has concern about how the development will impact the ecosystem of Chuckanut Bay and the

various MRC projects in the area (water quality, Olympia oyster restoration).

- Rick Beauregard shared information about a citizen science program involving volunteers sampling for harmful algae blooms in Drayton Harbor and Birch Bay. Over the years, northern Whatcom County has had some of the highest biotoxin levels. With the influence of the Fraser River on the Salish Sea, this area is a strategic location to understand HAB distribution throughout Puget Sound. There is a desire to make this monitoring a standalone project that is not reliant on volunteers, with the potential to add sample sites. Rick asked the MRC to consider taking on the project to provide more stability with funding, additional volunteers, and a forum to share data.
- The Committee discussed suggested amendments to their Policies and Procedures to address a clear protocol for MRC meetings now that most meetings are hosted virtually. Suggested amendments clarified the meaning of consensus when it comes to decision making, and protocols for voting and meeting summaries from a hybrid meeting.
- MRC Staff relayed that the 2023 federal budget did include \$3M in Congressionally Directed Spending to the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) and that the NWSC plans to issue a single Request for Proposals to MRCs for both the EPA/State funded award and the Congressional funding award. Due to the condensed timeline, and the need to develop a list of anticipated projects by March 1, the MRC is scheduling a project prioritization work session in lieu of their MRC retreat.

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):

- Forage Fish
The job announcement for the MRC forage fish intern closed on January 15. 15 applications were received and two will be interviewed. It is anticipated the intern will begin their position in February.
- Beach Seine with Kids (BSWK)
The BSWK planning team met on January 11 to continue planning for the 2023 school events. After reviewing the tides for seining concluded that the best day of the week was Friday with the following dates: **4/14, 4/28, 5/12**, 6/9 - alternate if needed.

The group concluded that it was more efficient to expand the participation and each event rather than have more events. Folks agreed to have 3 events this year and for one event increase the class participation. This might work well if the Lummi Tribal School wanted to have both of their fourth-grade classes attend.

The new Outreach Coordinator with Lummi Natural Resources is willing to coordinate the Lummi fourth-grade contacts and help connect with Tribal Elders to speak at events.

The role of the SSCC interns was discussed. They could assist with larger class sizes for example with assisting students at several activity stations. One idea would be to have a station for

viewing living plankton using MRC dissecting scope. Volunteers could also assist the students filling out their field forms and act as chaperones if needed by the classes who might not be able to participate without sufficient parent chaperones.

- Kelp Monitoring

Eleanor Hines and MRC Staff presented information about the MRCs kelp monitoring to a WWU Environmental Science – Marine Conservation capstone class. Students will be spending 10 weeks doing applied projects, and the theme for this year will be Kelp conservation and part of this would be engaging with the new Floating Kelp Indicator that is in the process of development. The professor hopes that it would be possible to build something in Whatcom to allow students get more involved in kelp monitoring. The Bellingham Community Boating Center is on board to help and can host a student as a summer intern. Eleanor suggested that students or a student could help with a presence/absence survey during the peak growing season.

- Education and Outreach

As a project partner on the City of Bellingham's Little Squalicum Estuary Restoration project, the MRC was invited to table at a community event on January 14. Members made connection with 50 people and 20 signed up to receive MRC/NWSI news.

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.):

A job announcement for a MRC Extra staff person was posted on January 19. The announcement will close on February 12. For more information [CLICK HERE](#). This position is grant funded for an average of ~24hrs/week for the 2023 calendar year.