



Meeting: Northwest Straits Commission
Date: April 26, 2024
Time: 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Location: [Virtual Zoom Meeting](#)

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.

Documents for NW Straits Commission Review:

- **March 2024 Minutes Approval**
- ***Optional/Speed Date w/ Scientists - Survey report on how partnerships use science***

10:00 -10:10 AM	Welcome and introductions Tribal acknowledgement March minutes approval NWSC elections announcement	Tim Ellis, Chair
10:10 – 10:35 AM	Use of Science in Ecosystem Recovery Partnerships in the Puget Sound	Tom Koontz & Craig Thomas, University of Washington
10:35 – 10:45 AM	Business Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 NWSI Retreat • DEI Update 	Lucas Hart Allie Simpson and Caitlyn Blair
10:45 – 10:50 AM	Project Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Needs Assessment • Senator Murray “Thank You” Video • Kayak Kelp Monitoring 	Dana Oster Jessica Owens Jeff Whitty
10:50 – 11:00 AM	San Juan Vessel Turn-In Event	Dana Oster and Christina Koons



agenda

11:00 – 11:20 AM	Committee Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Science Advisory Committee• Executive Committee• External Relations• Green Crab Ad Hoc Committee	Julia Parrish Alan Clark Nan McKay Lucas Hart
11:20 – 11:40 AM	MRC Reports	MRC Representatives
11:40 – 11:45 AM	Northwest Straits Foundation	Don Hunger
11:45 – 11:50 PM	Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	Cecilia Gobin
11:50 – 11:55 PM	Puget Sound Partnership	Laura Bradstreet
11:55 – 12:00 PM	Public Comment	All
12:00 PM	Adjourn	

Next meeting: In Person at the Camano Island Library, May 31, 2024, from 10 AM – 3 PM



Minutes

March 29, 2024 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Northwest Straits Commission meeting

Attendees

Commission Members: Ken Collins (Island), Tim Ellis (Snohomish – Chair), Alan Clark (Clallam – Vice Chair), Lynne Wenberg-Davidson (Skagit), Ginny Broadhurst, Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission), Tom Cowan, Nan McKay, Sarah Fiske (Jefferson – Alternate), Christina Koons (San Juan), Julia Parrish, Laura Bradstreet

Commission Staff: Lucas Hart, Allie Simpson, Caitlyn Blair, Sasha Horst, Dana Oster, Jeff Whitty, Leah Skare, Jessica Owens

Others in Attendance: Austin Rose, Don Hunger, Diane Hennebert (Skagit)

Absent: Mike Mackay (Whatcom)

Welcome and Introductions:

Tim opened the meeting with the tribal acknowledgement and introductions.

The February minutes were approved as written by consensus.

Business Items

Staff provided updates on the following business items:

2024 NW Straits Initiative Conference: The NW Straits Initiative Conference will be held at the Delta Hotel in Everett, Snohomish County on November 15-16, 2024. Caitlyn shared that Dr. Elin Kelsey will be the keynote speaker.

San Juan boater impact project approval: Sasha summarized the boater impact project proposal from San Juan MRC. The project will allow the MRC to assess vessel presence, activity, and density in relation to sensitive marine habitats. The project was approved by consensus.

NW Straits Initiative Retreat: Lucas shared that ECO Resources Group will be facilitating the NW Straits Initiative retreat in 2024. Caitlyn is currently working on scheduling the dates for the retreat, which will likely be held in late summer or fall. At the retreat, the NW Straits Initiative will focus on internal relationships.

Senator Murray Thank You: Jessica is working on a “thank you” video for Senator Murray for Puget Sound Day on the Hill in May. Members of the meeting recorded a “thank you” message. Jessica will be in touch about the next steps for the video. If you have questions, please reach out to her (owens@nwstraits.org).



Minutes

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: The Committee held their monthly meeting on March 18, 2024. Alan shared that the Committee discussed the process for creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NW Straits Initiative and the Department of Ecology, which will outline the intended relationship. The Executive Committee will review the draft MOU during the writing process. The Committee also discussed “decision packages,” which are state agency funding requests, and will continue this conversation at the next monthly Committee meeting. The Committee is interested in learning more about how the Commission could engage in decision packages and if that would be a good strategic step for the organization. The Committee discussed writing a policy on if the NWS Commission should accept mitigation funds. Ginny Broadhurst will be invited to the next Committee meeting to discuss this policy.

Science Advisory Committee: Julia shared that the Committee has been discussing creating short skills-based trainings for MRCs. This idea came from interactions with Committee members at the 2023 conference. Dana has been orienting the new Committee member, Dr. Anne Beaudreau. Anne is an associate professor for the School of Marine Affairs at the University of WA and specializes in community work surrounding issues in fisheries. Additionally, the Committee has become involved in the green crab ad hoc committee discussions.

External Relations Committee: Nan shared that Senator Murray included one million dollars in programmatic funds for the NW Straits Commission in the recent appropriations bill for fiscal year 2024. The funding will be provided through NOAA Fisheries. This is the first time the NW Straits Commission will receive programmatic funding. Lucas and Nan met with Senator Murray’s staff to discuss the funding. Lucas will follow up with NOAA to identify next steps.

Green Crab Ad Hoc Committee: The goal of the ad hoc committee is to provide recommendations for how the Commission should engage in green crab work in the future. Several MRC members and NW Straits Commission staff were involved in the first meeting in March 2024. The next steps include talking with the Science Advisory Committee about invasive species removal. Staff are also creating an informational document for the Committee to share how other organizations are addressing green crab removal and how staff feel the Commission should engage on this issue longer term.

MRC Reports

Clallam – Alan Clark

- A special joint meeting was held with Jefferson MRC, including a presentation on tribal treaty rights by Cecilia Gobin.
- 74 tons of clean Pacific oyster shell spread by barge with Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe for Olympia oyster restoration in Sequim Bay.



Minutes

- Clallam MRC advisory subcommittee has drafted an advisory process protocol with Lucas Hart's assistance. The draft is now in review by all MRC members.

Island – Ken Collins

- The MRC hosted a Forage Fish Class with the Alternative Learning Experience program.
- The MRC Comprehensive Plan committee has been tracking the County's development of a new Comprehensive Plan.
- The MRC hosted a retreat at the Cornet Bay Retreat Center.

Jefferson – Sarah Fisken

- Jefferson and Clallam MRCs hosted a joint meeting on March 6 at Red Cedar Hall in Jamestown. Cecilia Gobin gave a great presentation on tribal treaty rights.
- The MRC hiring subcommittee will begin the hiring process for Monica's replacement in April.
- ROV Project: Due to reduced staff support, the MRC won't be retrieving derelict crab pots this year in Port Townsend Bay. They will be performing sonar scans to get a better idea of how many pots are still in the water.

San Juan – Christina Koons

- Applications have been coming in for the Free Vessel Turn-In event in April. The goal is to take care of as many derelict vessels as possible in a safe and responsible way. MRC members have helped with outreach and planning as they look forward to a successful event clearing vessels from waterways and marinas.
- The Spring Great Islands Cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, April 20th. They are following this year's theme for Earth Day "Plastics vs. Planet." Activities have been planned on Orcas, Lopez, Shaw, and San Juan Island.

Skagit – Diane Hennebert

- Olympia Oyster Restoration: Olympia oyster restoration work in Fidalgo Bay has been in the news recently and has sparked some interest from the public about getting involved and volunteering. Paul Dinnel was invited to give a presentation on oyster restoration to the Kiwanis Club of Anacortes on March 21 and the Salish Sea Stewards class on March 19.
- New NWSC Representative: Diane Hennebert has accepted a new position and will be resigning from the MRC at the end of March and will no longer be the NWSC representative. Lynne Wenberg-Davidson has been appointed as the new NWSC representative for Skagit MRC.



Minutes

Snohomish – Tim Ellis

- A beach cleanup in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers is scheduled for March 28 at Howarth Park.
- The MRC is currently hiring for the Marine Ecology Intern position. The selected intern is expected to start in June 2024.

Whatcom – Austin Rose

- The MRC recently lost an MRC member because she no longer lives in Whatcom County.
- The MRC has just reviewed the county's comprehensive plan update, and the MRC gathered six pages of comments and recommendations for the county.
- Beach seining with kids will kick off in April. Four schools and 190 students will be participating in the program.
- The MRC recently completed the social marketing design for protecting eelgrass in Wildcat Cove.

Partner Updates

NW Straits Foundation: Don shared that the NW Straits Foundation has received funding for the Clayton Beach Restoration project. They also received funding for two paid interns, who will be working at Larrabee State Park to educate boaters and kayakers about eelgrass. They will also be assisting with rain gardens in Skagit for the MRC.

NW Indian Fisheries Commission: Cecilia Gobin shared that the NW Indian Fisheries Commission is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to amend the regional conditions of shoreline armor permitting. They will likely share a special public notice in the coming weeks about the comment period, which will be open for thirty days. Stay tuned for the notice.

Puget Sound Partnership: Laura shared that Puget Sound Day on the Hill is from May 13-17. Events will be planned for May 14-17. They will be highlighting reauthorization of the NW Straits Initiative as one of the Day on the Hill priorities.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.



Executive Committee Meeting
April 15, 2024 • 11:00am-12:00pm (Zoom)
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Committee Members: Alan Clark, Tim Ellis, Nan McKay, Jude Apple (ex officio)

NWSC Staff: Caitlyn Blair, Lucas Hart, Sasha Horst

Additional Attendees: Cecilia Gobin (NW Indian Fisheries Commission/NWS Commissioner), Ginny Broadhurst (NWS Commissioner)

Mitigation Funding: In February, the Executive Committee referred the discussion about whether to have a policy about the use of mitigation funding to the full NW Straits Commission. NW Straits Commission members Ginny Broadhurst and Cecilia Gobin expressed interest in discussing the topic further with the Executive Committee.

The Committee had a robust discussion about the ways these funds could be used and shared their thoughts and concerns about accepting future mitigation funding. Ginny suggested that mitigation funds are part of a regulatory framework, which is separate from what the NWS Commission does. The NWS Commission is meant to provide additive benefits to conservation. Questions were raised, including: Do we know if mitigation funds fully mitigate for habitat damage that results from the projects that generate the mitigation funds?; If damage is done to ESA habitat, how do you assure ESA habitat is restored in another area to make up for the loss?

Cecilia shared that the NW Indian Fisheries Commission created a policy that guides a decision making process for when to accept mitigation dollars. It's a process that evaluates if mitigation dollars are support Treaty rights or other Tribal needs. Cecilia Gobin will share this policy as an example of how such guidance could be written.

The Committee would like to invite Ahren Stroming from the Puget Sound Partnership to share with the Executive Committee information on the Conservation Credit Program, which is a mitigation-type fund. Lucas will invite Ahren to a future meeting.

Allocating NWSC Resources: At the March Committee meeting, the Committee suggested that the NW Straits Commission discuss the allocation of resources between central programming/staff and Marine Resources Committee driven projects.

To start this conversation, Lucas shared the 1998 NWS Commission Mission from the Murray Metcalf Report. That mission outlines all the areas the founders intended the NWS Commission to engage. The Committee talked about this mission as a starting point to evaluate how resources



should be allocated to support all the various mission related focus areas. The Committee discussed if the 1998 Mission areas are still relevant today. They suggested that time be given for the Committee to review the mission, think about if/how it is still relevant, and if certain things should be changed. The Committee would also like to review the benchmarks included in the draft reauthorization legislation. The Committee will discuss their thoughts at the next Committee meeting and talk about next steps for a Commission conversation related to this mission and resource allocation.

May 20 Meeting: The Committee approved moving the May 20, 2024, meeting to May 28, 2024.

Decision Package Update: Lucas shared that the NW Straits Commission has been working with Padilla Bay on a Dept. of Ecology decision package to fund European Green Crab work. The preliminary request form will be submitted to Ecology the week of April 22, 2024.

The European Green Crab Ad Hoc Committee has been discussing the NW Straits Commission's long-term role in European Green Crab efforts. If the Ad Hoc Committee decides against the continuation of the NW Straits Commission's role in European Green Crab, the decision package can be modified before a TBD deadline. The next Ad Hoc Committee meeting is on April 29, 2024.



Commission staff highlights - [April 2024]

MRC Support

2023 CDS MRC Grants: Four MRCs are continuing their work under these awards, which are funded by the fiscal year 2022 NOAA award that was extended to the end of 2024.

2023-25 MRC Grants: The second quarter of the award period is complete, with deliverables and payment requests coming in from each MRC. These awards include state funding that will expire at the end of June, so MRC staff are encouraged to closely monitor budgets to ensure those funds are put to use on projects.

2023-25 CDS MRC Grants: The first quarter of the grant period is complete.

Regional Projects

Kelp Plan: Staff met with the Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee to discuss the sequencing of Kelp Plan actions to provide guidance for coordinators, managers, and funders in kelp conservation and recovery. Staff also continue to communicate and work closely with coordinators from WA DNR's Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy and the Washing Kelp and Eelgrass Health and Conservation Plan on parallel efforts.

Kelp Monitoring: Staff have been preparing for the 2024 Kayak Kickoff to prepare kelp kayak monitoring volunteers for the upcoming season. This year's kickoff will be held at Padilla Bay NERR on May 1 from 10:00-2:00. The first Kelp Kayak Monitoring Workgroup meeting was convened with NWSC and NWSF staff and representatives from MRC kayak groups. The workgroup discussed each group's interests and hurdles with kelp monitoring.

Green Crab: Staff hosted a week-long training for the Washington Conservation Corps crew who will be trapping for green crabs in Samish Bay. The training program included presentations on NWSI, Padilla Bay NERR, management strategies of green crab in the Salish Sea, species identification, and decontamination techniques from WDFW. The WCC crew captured 1 green crab in Samish Bay. Trapping efforts have also started in Drayton Harbor. Staff attended the Molt Search train-the-trainers workshop to discuss lessons learned from last year's molt search events. In collaboration with Skagit MRC, staff hosted a green crab focused outreach booth at Mt Vernon High School Science Night. Additionally, staff continue to work with the green crab ad-hoc committee and science advisory committee to determine the best fit for the NWSC in green crab management.



Commission staff highlights - [April 2024]

Voluntary No-Anchor Zones: Commission staff held a social marketing workgroup meeting to discuss the contractor's proposed tools for implementing the campaign and prioritized carrying out a joint commitment campaign as a high near term priority for the team.

Derelict Vessels: The Commission and San Juan MRC teamed up with San Juan County, the Port of Friday Harbor, and DNR to host a vessel turn in recycling event. The event lasted through the first two weeks of April and included a media event on site April 4th. 14 vessels were voluntarily brought in to be deconstructed and recycled. Commission staff are currently coordinating two additional turn-in events for 2024.

Operations

Staff: Caitlyn Blair was nominated and received the Department of Ecology's Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program's Outstanding Achievement Award at the program all-staff meeting this month. Other nominated staff include Allie Simpson, Leah Skare, Jessica Owens, Jeff Whitty, and Sasha Horst.

As of May 1, Leah Skare will move into the position vacated by Jeff Whitty as a Project Coordinator (Environmental Specialist (ES 2) and Allie Simpson is reallocated to a new classification (ES2 to ES3).

Budget: There are no new updates on the Commission budget this month.

Meetings Attended

Allie attended: San Juan MRC Meeting 4/4; Washington Conservation Corps Training Week 4/8 – 4/11; Molt Search Train-the-Trainers Workshop 4/12; Science Advisory Committee Green Crab Discussion 4/17; DEI Check in (Internal) 4/17; Green Crab Outreach Booth with Skagit MRC 4/18; DEI Check In 4/19; NW Straits Commission Meeting 4/26; NAZ Social Marketing 4/29; DEI Project Summary Check in with Athena Group 4/29; Green Crab Ad-Hoc Committee 4/29

Dana attended: Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Meeting 4/1; San Juan Vessel turn in recycling media day 4/4; Skagit MRC Meeting 4/11; Voluntary no-anchor zone social marketing workgroup 4/11; A path towards equity 4/16; Science Advisory Committee green crab discussion 4/17; Science Advisory Committee meeting 4/24

Jeff attended: Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Meeting 04/01; Kelp Kayak Monitoring Workgroup 04/03; San Juan MRC Meeting 04/04; Transboundary Kelp Node Floating Kelp



Commission staff highlights - [April 2024]

Workgroup (04/09); Skagit MRC Meeting 04/11; Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Meeting Part II 04/12; Salish Sea Stewards Presentation 04/16; Snohomish MRC Meeting 04/17/2024; Transboundary Kelp Node Subtidal Kelp Workgroup (04/23)

Lucas attended: Builders Initiative briefing 4/11

Sasha attended: NWSI Retreat Kickoff 04/04; Athena Group + NW Straits 04/05; Voluntary no-anchor zone social marketing workgroup 4/11; Executive Committee meeting 04/15; NWSI Conference Planning Meeting 04/18; Science Advisory Committee meeting 4/24

Caitlyn attended: NWSC all staff meeting in-person 04/01; Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Meeting 04/01; Island MRC Meeting 04/02; San Juan MRC Meeting 04/04; NWSI Retreat Kickoff 04/04; Athena Group + NW Straits 04/05; Executive Committee meeting 04/15; DEI Check in (Internal) 04/17; NWSI Conference Planning Meeting 04/18; DEI Check In 04/19; Bowman Bay Beach Seining with Island MRC & NWSF 04/19; NW Straits Commission meeting 04/26; A Path Toward Equity Module 3 04/30

Jessica attended: SoundIQ GIS Skagit MRC 04/10; A Path Toward Equity Module 2 04/10; NAZ social marketing 04/15; NWSI Conference Planning Meeting 04/18; Website Kick-Off 04/19; Bowman Bay Beach Seining with Island MRC & NWSF 04/19; External Relations 04/24; Skagit Vessel Turn In Meeting 04/25; NW Straits Commission Meeting 04/26; NAZ Social Marketing 04/29

Leah attended: Washington Conservation Corps Training Week 4/8 – 4/11, Fidalgo Forage Fish Surveys 10 year review 04/16, Kayak Kickoff Run Through 04/19, NW Straits Commission Meeting 04/26

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Clallam

Month/Year: April 2024

Submitted by: Rebecca Mahan

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

- A planting event was held on Ediz Hook 3/26/24 and 3/28/24 in partnership with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Clallam Conservation District. 59 volunteers planted 3,000 plants and sowed 5 pounds of seed over two days.
- The MRC hosted Max Showalter and Cynthia Harbison during the April meeting to discuss the [kelp and eelgrass health plan](#) from DNR, and MRC members and staff provided feedback and relevant local connections.

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)

- A planting event was held on Ediz Hook 3/26/24 and 3/28/24 in partnership with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Clallam Conservation District. 59 volunteers planted 3,000 plants and sowed 5 pounds of seed over two days.
- April monthly MRC meeting was held 4/15/24, featuring a presentation from the DNR Kelp and Eelgrass team.

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): The Olympia oyster restoration season kicked off with placement of Pacific oyster shells by barge.

- Olympia oyster broodstock collection, population surveys, and Pacific oyster shell spread are planned for the Sequim Bay restoration site in late April and early March (pending amendment to the project plan).
- Several Clallam MRC members continued to collect the monthly Forage fish samples at Cline Spit, Ediz Hook and Elwha beach.
- MRC members continued supplying local eateries and community establishments with educational outreach coasters featuring information on local marine life.
- MRC members continued developing new displays for outreach at local festivals.
- Clallam MRC continued to steward the beach at the mouth of the Elwha River.
- MRC member Nancy Stephanz continues to process samples weekly for the Sound Toxins project (with Feiro Marine Life Center).
- The Clallam MRC continued to prepare for its upcoming Pinto Abalone monitoring project, with fieldwork expected to begin late 2024. A QAPP was completed this month.
- The MRC is planning its fieldwork seasons for kelp monitoring, shellfish biotoxin monitoring (beginning late April), and pigeon guillemot monitoring.

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 has established an advisory subcommittee, which continues to meet with the goal of establishing a defined process for MRC response to advisory topics. MRC members reviewed a draft of this process in March, and a final draft was presented to members in April. The committee will vote to accept this process in May.
- The MRC hosted Max Showalter and Cynthia Harbison during the April meeting to discuss the [kelp and eelgrass health plan](#) from DNR, and MRC members and staff provided feedback and relevant local connections.
- The MRC prepared its [annual report](#) for the 2023 grant year.

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



A crew of volunteers plants the restoration area on Ediz Hook 3/28. Photo credit: Rebecca Mahan.



A crew of volunteers plants the restoration area on Ediz Hook 3/28, with Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe staff / MRC member Allyce Miller at right in blue. Photo credit: Rebecca Mahan.



A crew of volunteers plants the restoration area on Ediz Hook 3/28, with MRC project lead Helle Andersen in the foreground with white sleeves. Photo credit: Amelia Kalagher.



A group of students from the Pacific Northwest Discovery Academy, with chaperones and other volunteers, listen to an introduction to plants and planting techniques for the 3/28 planting event. Photo credit: Helle Andersen.



A crew of volunteers plants the restoration area on Ediz Hook 3/28. Photo credit: Helle Andersen.



A young volunteer and her adult assistant plant the restoration area on Ediz Hook 3/28. Photo credit: Helle Andersen.

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Island

Month/Year: April / 2024

Submitted by: Kelly Zupich

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

- **Cornet Bay & Hoypus Point Stewardship Event**
- **ALE Program Forage Fish Field Day**

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

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

Previous Meetings/Events:

- March 25: SWSD ALE Forage Fish Survey Field Trip
- April 2: MRC Monthly Meeting
- April 10: Stewardship Event at Cornet Bay and Hoypus Point

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- May 7: MRC Monthly Meeting
- May 15: Stewardship Event
- June 4: MRC Monthly Meeting

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):

Monitoring – Forage Fish: Our work monitoring for Forage fish eggs continues year-round at most sites. Teams continue to monitor monthly at Hoypus Point, Cornet Bay, Sunlight Shores, Maple Grove, Glendale, and Keystone Preserve. Seahorse Siesta is finished for the season and will begin again next winter. The committee has been discussing how to move forward with this project. The team is trying to decide between the importance of index sites and/or working to get protections on as many beaches as possible by moving sites once forage fish eggs are identified at the location. Additionally, the team is looking to find more ways to utilize the volunteers while they are already on the beach and can capture more data.

Bull Kelp Surveys: Planning meetings are underway for the 2024 monitoring season. The team is looking at adding new equipment to measure temperature and salinity and then a device that will measure depth and build contour maps.

Stewardship – Cornet Bay/Hoypus Point: The NWSF, MRC, and volunteers gathered at Cornet Bay and Hoypus Point for the first stewardship event of the year. Together we planted 800 Dune grass, 30 Nootka roses, and 25 Hooker willows. The Dune grass was fenced off to help protect it from foot traffic.

Additionally, we will be hosting monthly stewardship events throughout the growing season and are getting ready for weekly watering.

Water Quality Testing: The Water Quality team is working on collecting QAPP's from other groups to use for our testing. Additionally, the team continues to compile sources of water quality data in our region.

Shoreline Education and Survey: Herrera Environmental Consultants are working on analyzing permits against our armoring survey data to see how much of the added armoring in Island County since 2016 was permitted vs. unpermitted. Herrera will be presenting the results at our May MRC Meeting.

Derelict Vessels: Kelly Webb has been working with the NWSC and state DNR to get a vessel removed from the south end of Whidbey. It is slated to be removed on April 22nd.

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.):

Comprehensive Plan: The IC MRC Comp Plan committee includes Jill Lipoti, PaulBen McIlwain, Greg Easton and Barbara Bennett. The committee is tracking the County's development of a new comprehensive plan for use through 2045 by attending meetings, reviewing discussions recorded at formal meetings, making public comments, and submitting written comments.

ALE Program Forage Fish Field Day: MRC member Kirk Larsen and staff Kelly Zupich joined the South Whidbey School District ALE Class to conduct a mock forage fish survey at Keystone Farm. The students were divided into smaller groups, and each team collected substrate samples. Once the students completed that portion of the experience, we took them to sieve one of the samples to see the whole process. We look forward to our continued work with the ALE Program.

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



Cornet Bay – Red
Flowering Current

Photo by Kelly Zupich



Hoypus Point – Dune
grass planting

Photo by Kelly Zupich



Keystone Farm – Forage
fish field day

Photo by Kelly Zupich

MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Jefferson

Month/Year: April 2024

Submitted by: Jeff Taylor

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

- Interviewed 4 candidates for the MRC Coordinator.
- Eel grass protection summer spar buoys deployed on April 7th.
- Two yards of cultch spread in the south end of Discovery Bay on April 15th for Olympia oyster restoration.
- Digging for dinner will be on April 27th in Quilcene

Past Events/Meetings

March 5 – MRC monthly meeting

March 6 – Joint Clallam-Jefferson MRC meeting

April 2 – MRC monthly meeting

Upcoming Events/Meetings

May 7 – MRC monthly meeting

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

1. Monitoring:

- **Forage fish - Fort Townsend:** Nothing reported.
- **Forage fish - Dabob Bay (Index):** The Project Lead (Sarah) plans to survey in April.
- **Kelp:** Chris has been mapping aerial images from drones and fixed wing aircraft. Matches the decline in kelp in the middle bed at North Beach that is in the satellite images. Emily is working with ReefCheck to see if they can add the middle bed to their annual monitoring.
- **Storm surge monitoring:** Jeff reformatted the index and Suzanne Schull upload all storm surge monitoring data reports dating back to 2016 into Sound IQ for public access. The Jefferson MRC project page has instructions for how to access the index and reports.

2. Rain Gardens:

- The MRC Coordinator and Project Lead, Janette, has partnered with the Master Gardeners through WSU. During the week of April 7th they did assessments of some of the gardens in Port Townsend. Working with them to help develop our Adopt A Rain Garden program.

3. Education & Outreach:

- Digging for Dinner will be on April 27th at Linger Longer beach in Quilcene.
- Several MRC members attended the Port Townsend school district science night.
- Sea Grant, the Port Townsend Marine Science Center and the MRC are going to jointly sponsor a Science Stage at the Wooden Boat Festival.

4. Olympia Oysters:

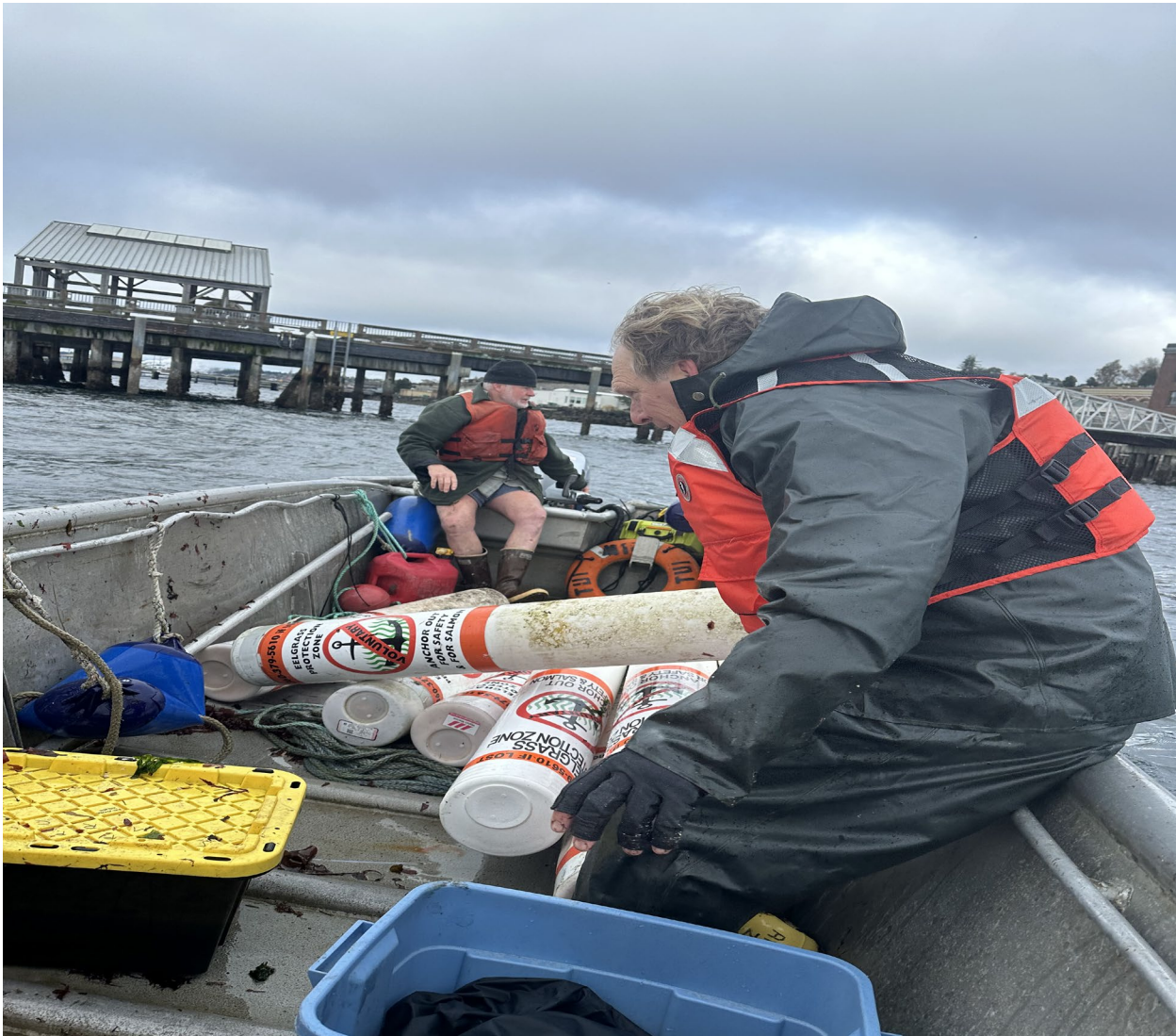
- Ten volunteers, including county commissioner Heidi Eisenhower, spread 2 yards of shell at the Discovery Bay lagoon site on April 15th.

5. Voluntary No-Anchor Zones:

- Summer spar buoys deployed on April 7th along the Port Townsend waterfront.

Photos

April 7 – Gordon and Brad installing eel grass protection buoys. Photo by Troy McKilvey.



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: San Juan County

Month/Year: April 2024

Submitted by: Sam Whitridge & Katie Johnson

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

- The Free Vessel Turn-In Event has been a smashing success – literally! Thanks to the strong partnership with the NWSC, DNR, and Port of Friday Harbor at least 14 vessels have been removed and deconstructed from county waters. Watching long-time, dilapidated boats make the transition from potential marine debris to safely surrendered and dismantled makes all the difference for local marine waters!
- The Spring Great Islands Clean up will happen on April 20th with planned activities on all four ferry serviced islands and independent cleanups coordinated on several outer islands including Waldron, Yellow, Stuart, and Decatur. The remaining debris will be picked-up via boat and taken to the transfer station on April 22. MRC members diligently spread the word, including outreach to marinas and hanging fliers for boaters to participate as well.

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

No changes currently.

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

- MRC/CAG/LIO Meeting – April 4th
- Free Vessel Turn-In Event – April 1- 15th
- Spring Great Islands Cleanup – April 20th
- Salmon Recovery Site Visits – May 1-2nd (NO MAY MRC MEETING)
- Next MRC Meeting – In person, June 6th

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

No new funding to report for this month.

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

The State of the Marine Stewardship Area Report has been out for peer review until the end of April. Once all comments have been returned, we will finalize the document and begin to plan for distribution.

The MRC took a field trip to watch part of the Free Vessel Turn-in Event in early April. Members of the MRC, county staff, DNR, the Port, and NWSC were in attendance to watch the deconstruction of several vessels. As we arrived, we were greeted by the Metaphor, a well-known derelict vessel, sitting on stilts waiting for her turn. For many, it was a long-standing relief to see this vessel included in the program and finally removed from the Orcas waterfront. In total, 15 vessels were included in the event and removed from local waterways and marinas. Vessels varied between 12' skiffs and over 30' sailboats. Many were known to the prevention program including a few on our vessel of concern database. It was truly rewarding to see so many boats cleared in such a short time and adds greatly to the health of the Salish Sea.

The Spring Great Islands Cleanup happened on April 20 with activities scheduled on Orcas, Shaw, Lopez and San Juan. Outreach to some of the outer islands has been successful too with independent cleanup efforts on Decatur, Stuart, Yellow, and Waldron Islands. In years past the spring event has been well attended and we anticipate even more participation this year. MRC members were instrumental in spreading the word by hanging fliers, connecting with local marinas, and sharing news of the upcoming event. Final numbers from San Juan include over 120 volunteers who collected 1,213 lbs of trash from 115 miles of roads and beaches. Over 1,000 lbs of debris was removed from the outer islands. We are still waiting to hear from final numbers from Shaw, Orcas, and Lopez but the whole of San Juan County has benefitted greatly from all this trash being removed!

With the summer boating season looming, opportunistic vessel counts will resume in the coming months. Volunteers have been discussing which sites would be the most valuable to gather data from. Concurrent with the opportunistic counts, aerial surveys will be flown this summer to help analyze vessel density relative to sensitive kelp and eelgrass sites.

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, operating as the CAG, has salmon recovery stie visits planned for the beginning of May. The first day of site visits will be focused on three projects proposed for San Juan Island. The second day will be a field trip to Orcas and Lopez Islands to look at three other potential project sites.

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



Vessels to be dismantled. Photo credit: Kari Koski



San Juan MRC field trip to the deconstruction. Photo Credit: Katie Johnson



Great Islands Cleanup. Photos by Jess Newly



Great Islands Cleanup! Photos by Katie Flemming

Outer Islands Cleanup. Photo by Katie Johnson



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Skagit

Month/Year: April/2024

Submitted by: Tracy/Lynne

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

- **Kids on the Beach- Concrete High School (April 10):** Two classes of 10th grade Physical Science students and one class of 11th grade Environmental Science students participated in the Kids on the Beach program at Padilla Bay. Every student was involved in data collection including density and diversity of intertidal organisms at three locations along a transect line. They also collected weather, water temps, and substrate composition data. We had a great group of volunteers with one adult to four students.
- **Pinto Abalone Restoration:** The Puget Sound Restoration Fund partnered with the Seattle Aquarium and Samish Tribe to help with surveys and outplanting this year. Surveys took place February-March. Outplanting will take place in April and June. It is anticipated that more than 10,000 juvenile abalone will be outplanted to at least 10 different recovery sites, 4 of which will be in Skagit County.

Membership/Leadership changes (new/departing members, changes to chair/vice-chair, NWSC representative/alternate, staff): Skagit MRC voted by consensus to make the recommendation to the Skagit Board of County Commissioners to appoint Elizabeth Drozda to the MRC.

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

- **April 11-** Monthly MRC meeting. Staff from the Skagit County Planning Department presented the Skagit County Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update and how the MRC can get involved in the process.
- **April 18-** Mount Vernon High School Science Night. MRC forage fish survey volunteers hosted a booth with microscopes and surf smelt eggs. The MRC and NWSC also co-hosted a European Green Crab outreach table with outreach materials crab molts and the EGC plinko game.
- **April 19-** Bowman Bay Beach Seining(1-2pm). No need for additional volunteers but observers are welcome.
- **April 19-** Skagit Shorelines Needs Assessment Kick Off Meeting via Teams with Confluence Environmental (1-2:30pm).
- **April 25-** Skagit Vessel Turn-In Event Meeting via Zoom (2-3pm).
- **April 30-** Salish Sea Stewards Last Class and Graduation at Padilla Bay (1-5pm).
- **May 1-** Kelp Kayak Kickoff at Padilla Bay (10am-2pm).
- **May 7-9-** Kids on the Beach at Padilla Bay (Evergreen Elementary 6th grade).
- **May 9-** MRC Meeting, Microsoft Teams (9-11am).
- **May 9-** Bowman Bay Outreach Event Meeting (2-3pm).
- **May 22-23-** Kids on the Beach at Padilla Bay (Allen Elementary 4-5th grade).
- **June 28-** Bowman Bay Outreach Event

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 – Darla Gay Smith:
 - Training held Tuesdays from 1-5pm, Feb 6-April 30 at Padilla Bay.
 - 25 trainees slated to graduate and join the ranks of 365 trained Stewards.
 - Graduation will be held April 30th at Padilla Bay at 4pm. All MRC members and SSS alumni are welcome to attend.

- Salish Sea Stewards Advisory Committee meeting held April 5th.
 - To date, SSS have recorded over 50,000 volunteer hours since 2015.
- Forage Fish Surveys – Pete Haase:
 - Monthly sampling continues at 4 Index sites: Guemes Channel, E. Similk Bay (Swinomish Reservation), Samish Island, and west of marina towards Skyline.
 - Monthly sampling continues at 3 Restoration Sites: Bowman Bay, W. Similk Bay (private property), and Clayton Beach (Skagit volunteers alternate monthly sampling with Whatcom County).
 - Monthly surveys at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve for DNR continue.
 - Forage Fish Outreach Activities:
 - Pete was one of the presenters leading a forage fish survey on April 2nd for the Salish Sea Stewards class.
 - Volunteers hosted an outreach table at Mount Vernon Science Night on April 18th with forage fish eggs and microscopes and educational information.
 - WADNR presented forage fish data results collected over the last ten years at the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve. The presentation was held at Padilla Bay on April 16.
 - May- Forage fish volunteers will assist 1st and 2nd graders from Island View Middle School on the Fidalgo Bay beach in learning about forage fish.
 - June 28- Big outreach event at Bowman Bay will include forage fish surveys & interpretive station, beach seining, and plant maintenance.
- Kids on the Beach – Jude Apple:
 - 10 classes, 250 students from 3 schools participating in the spring program with classroom and field data collecting and analysis components: mudflats, forage fish, and beach seining. Volunteers will lead a group of 4-5 students through data collection. PBNERR staff will be on-hand rotating between groups to check-in and offer assistance as needed. Many students have never been to the beach before:
 - April 10: **Concrete 10th-11th grade (3 classes)**. Collected lots of mudflat biodiversity and abundance data at Padilla Bay with the help of MRC members and other volunteers.
 - May 6 - May 10: **Evergreen Elementary in Sedro Woolley** 4th grade, 75 students.
 - May 20 - May 24: **Allen Elementary in Mount Vernon** 4th and 5th grade, 84-100 students (English 2nd language for many of the students).
 - 4th graders will get to participate in the mudflat safari and 5th grade students will get to participate in beach seining at Padilla Bay. The idea is to create a different field experience for students for each grade level.
- School Rain Gardens – Tracy Alker and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - Working on a maintenance plan for the Mount Erie School Rain Garden which will likely be led by interns with the NWSF and the County Natural Resources Division.
 - Diane and Tracy are planning a site visit to the La Conner School rain garden on April 27th to assess the site and test the soil for infiltration.
 - Planting at the La Conner School rain garden is targeted for the fall of 2024.
 - MRC grant funding would be used to purchase plants, mulch, and interpretive signage. Funding expires December 31, 2024.
- Fidalgo Bay Day –Tracy Alker:
 - Date has been set for Saturday, August 24, 2024, at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.
 - Samish Indian Nation will be supporting Fialgo Bay Day this year with some additional funding.

- Save the Date notices will be sent out to past participating organizations and volunteers by the end of this month.
- Pinto Abalone Restoration – Paul Dinne!
 - Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF) began field work in February.
 - Monitoring abalone outplant sites at 7 locations (3 in Skagit).
 - The two new sites near Deception Pass that were outplanted for the first-time last year were surveyed in February. Survival was low at both sites. One of the sites will not be seeded again. But the other site had enough abalone to justify an overseeding again this season.
 - Recovered oceanographic sensor arrays from 6 outplant sites (2 in Skagit).
 - Surveyed 10 historic index sites (2 in Skagit).
 - Scouted/set up 7 new outplant sites (2 in Skagit).
 - PSRF has been working with and training the Seattle Aquarium dive team for the past several years in outplant site scouting, set up and post-seeding monitoring. The Seattle Aquarium is also one of their satellite nursery partners and have been successful in culture efforts. They will help with outplants and monitoring at several sites in Skagit.
 - The Samish Tribe is another new partner with a dive team that will take on one of the original Burrows Island outplant sites along with a new site on Sinclair Island. PSRF will be training their dive team in abalone survey and outplant methods later this month.
 - Hatchery production and juvenile culture at both the Manchester Chew Center and the Seattle Aquarium's ACC has gone well since last summer's spawning efforts, and abalone that are larger than 5 mm at these facilities have been sorted into outplant groups.
 - During the week of April 15th and during a second outplant week in early June, teams from PSRF, WDFW, the Seattle Aquarium and Samish Tribe anticipate outplanting more than 10,000 juvenile abalone to at least 10 different recovery sites. It is anticipated that 4 of these sites will be in Skagit County.
- Olympia Oyster Restoration – Paul Dinne!
 - Annual monitoring of Olympia oyster recruitment in Fidalgo Bay will start up again in May to continue monitoring the annual variabilities of oyster densities and post larval settlement and setting out new shell bags for monitoring larval settlement next year. Paul and his son will be doing all the field work. No need for additional volunteers until the next 5-year assessment in 2028.
 - Paul presented on the Olympia oyster restoration work to the Salish Sea Stewards class and the Kiwanis Club of Anacortes in March.
- Fidalgo Bay Trestle – Tracy Alker:
 - Skagit MRC's Grant Funding from NOAA (\$58k) for this project expires December 31, 2024.
 - The City of Anacortes has a contract with Hanson Professional Services for the Fidalgo Bay trestle project that is expected to get signed in April.
 - MRC staff and 4 MRC members briefly met with the City of Anacortes staff on March 21 to discuss the project and how the MRC grant funds will be used to make sure we will meet our grant deliverables, timeline, and funding requirements including:
 - Develop Outreach Strategy and Messaging Plan with the help of scientists and communications team to include.
 - Design and fabrication of interpretive signage along the Tommy Thompson trail.
 - Providing outreach materials at the Fidalgo Bay Day event along with a guided walk along the Tommy Thompson Trail and/or a short presentation.

- Creating website content with science- based messaging to help answer the “why”.
 - Creating short educational video clips with links that will be posted on the website.
 - Collect additional scientific data to support the conceptual design and outreach messaging.
- Kayak Kelp Surveys – Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - There are 3 sites surveyed monthly in Skagit County between June and September each year by experienced kayak volunteer leads (Biz Point-John Fritto, Coffin Rocks-Steve Olsen, Shannon Point (2 kelp beds)-Lynne Wenberg-Davidson).
 - According to the Department of Natural Resources, there is insignificant kelp data in Skagit County. To help address that issue, the kelp team has been looking for new kelp beds to potentially add to our surveys. They found a huge healthy kelp bed near Lone Tree Point that might be a good option. The ecological significance of the kelp bed site is that it has freshwater inputs which could be helpful in better understanding how freshwater can affect kelp growth and vitality. The kelp bed has been observed at that location even during the colder winter months! Lynne and Steve are working with the Swinomish to access the site by launching from the Thousand Trails Campground. They plan to do a reconnaissance in May to see if it might be feasible. If the new kelp bed is added, it will be a 5-year commitment. They also plan to check out another kelp bed near the Swinomish clam garden and Kiket Island that was recommended by the Swinomish staff. The Swinomish already has a monitoring buoy out there that collects water quality data near the clam garden. It would be interesting to see if there is a correlation between water quality, healthy kelp, and shellfish. Lynne talked to one of the property owners on Similk Bay about using the boat launch next to his property to access the kelp bed near Kiket Island. He seemed very supportive and excited to hear about the kelp monitoring work.
 - Jeff Whitty established a MRC Kelp Kayak Advisory Committee to act as an advisory body to help advance and improve the kayak kelp monitoring program. This committee is composed of 1-2 reps from each MRC/MRC’s kayak group. Steve Olsen, the kayak lead for Bowman Bay kelp surveys, is Skagit MRC’s rep. Lynne is Steve’s backup. They recently held their first meeting. They talked about the use of drones, water quality monitoring (including ocean acidification), and other data collection that other MRCs are involved in or are interested in. There will be at least 2 or 3 more meetings this year.
 - Jeff presented on the NWSC kelp program at the April 16 Salish Sea Stewards class. There are a lot of experienced kayakers in the group.
 - Jeff will be hosting the kelp kayak kick-off meeting at Padilla Bay on May 1st. First half will be hybrid and include presentations on the protocol, related safety, and preseason preparation. The remainder of the meeting will be in person only and include hands-on activities to practice skills needed for data collection and management.
 - Skagit Kelp Survey Team will schedule a pre-season shake down paddle and a kick-off BBQ at Steve Olsen’s home.
- Bowman Bay Plant Maintenance and Beach Seining– Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - **Beach Seining:** Jason Morgan with the NWSF is leading the beach seining effort for Skagit MRC with the help of volunteers from January 2024 through December 2025. Beach seining currently takes place twice a month through June. It will be reduced to once a month starting in July through the end of 2025. We’ve been seeing Chum salmon, Pink salmon, and Chinook. Last month we saw newly hatched surf smelt, a sharp-nosed sculpin, and a northern lanternfish. Around 7 volunteers help with seining each week, including MRC members (Paul Dinnel and Lynne Wenberg-Davidson) and 10

to 14 hours of volunteerism. Forage fish surveys have been coordinated with beach seining activities.

- **Plant Maintenance:** Lisa Kaufman with the NWSF is leading the plant maintenance effort for Skagit MRC. It was determined that weekly plant maintenance was too much for volunteers, so we decided to go back to monthly plant maintenance work parties. The events will be held May 30th, June 28th, July 25th, and August 22nd from 9am-11am. Foundation staff will continue to do weekly plant maintenance at the site to make sure the plants get watered on a regular basis during the hot and dry summer months.
- **Additional Shoreline Restoration:** Recent winter storms have caused a lot of erosion and damage along the shoreline. The boat ramp is broken and unusable now. Lisa found some grant funding for a feasibility study to replace the broken concrete boat launch with a soft beach launch for kayaks, remove additional riprap, and restore the shoreline. The state no longer has funding to replace the damaged fishing pier as originally planned. The interpretive signage that is near the pier is eroding away. We are looking into options for moving it or stabilizing it before it washes away. Can't move it upland without doing another cultural survey.
- **Bowman Bay Outreach Event- June 28th**- In partnership with NWSF, SFEG, State Parks, and Skagit MRC. Details are still being work out. Will include beach seining demos, plant maintenance, forage fish survey demos, outreach tables, etc.
- Skagit Shoreline Needs Assessment- Lynne Wenberg-Davidson:
 - The Request for Quotes and Qualifications notice was sent to over 235 environmental firms.
 - The Advisory Team reviewed and rigorously evaluated proposals from 5 different firms. They were all excellent proposals. The top 3 candidates were selected to interview. Confluence Environmental was offered the contract. Phil Bloch with Confluence was heavily involved in the Skagit Bays Blueprint project for the Skagit MRC when he worked for People for Puget Sound.
 - We held a kick-off meeting with Confluence Environmental on April 19.
 - Confluence Environmental will be responsible for: designing a new geodatabase, performing literature review, developing a prioritization process, analysis, and identifying geospatial focus areas, and developing a list of proposed shoreline protection and restoration projects. Data will be uploaded and housed in SoundIQ with the help and support of Suzanne Shull.
- Vessel Turn-In Event- Melissa Ciesielski: Swinomish in partnership with NWSC, Skagit MRC, Port of Skagit, La Conner Marina, DNR, and Skagit County will be co-hosting a turn-in event towards the end July with NWSC and DNR funding. We are still working out details regarding the handling of hazardous materials and the different waste streams. We will start promoting the event in May. It will be posted in the Swinomish newsletter so that people can start registering. Registration will close the end of June. The event flyers will be shared on websites and social media and will also be printed and posted at marinas and yacht clubs. There are several vessel owners that have already expressed interest in participating. The Turn-In Event could last a few days to a few weeks depending on how many vessels register. There will likely be a media day with the partners and press present.

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- Concrete High School at Padilla Bay- April 10
Photo Credit: Annie England



Bowman Bay Beach Seining
Photo Credit: Jason Morgan



Mount Vernon High School Science Night- April 18th.
Forage Fish Outreach. Photo Credit: Pete Haase



Salish Sea Stewards Training- Forage Fish Surveys. Photo Credit: Pete Haase



Salish Sea Stewards Training - Marchs Point



Salish Sea Stewards Training- Bowman Bay Beach Restoration & Monitoring



MRC Monthly Report to the Northwest Straits Commission

County: Snohomish

Month/Year: April 2024

Submitted by: Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue

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

- The MRC, WSU Beach Watchers, and Tulalip Tribes are hosting an Earth Day beach clean up at Mission beach on April 22 from 10am - 12pm.
- A subset of the MRC is planning to resume monthly forage fish sampling at Howarth Park on April 27.

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

Interviews for the Marine Ecology Intern position were completed in the second week of April. The Marine Ecology Intern will support MRC projects including forage fish, kelp monitoring, and the ORCA program. The intern will also focus on creating a shoreline monitoring framework for the MRC and conduct a shoreline audit. The intern is expected to start in June 2024.

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

Elisa Dawson attended a Derelict Vessel response meeting on March 22.

Elisa Dawson continued discussions of beneficial dredge use at a meeting on March 26.

Natasha Coumou presented to Snohomish County Council about the activities of the MRC in 2023 on April 2. Elisa Dawson and Joycelyn Blue attended and assisted in answering questions.

Elisa Dawson attended the PSP Land Use Indicator Showcase on April 4.

Elisa Dawson attended the Beneficial Use of Dredge Material group meeting on April 10.

Joycelyn Blue is participating in the WSU Beach Watchers Beach Naturalist training and attended the first meeting on April 11.

The April MRC meeting was held on April 17.

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

None.

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

Strategic Planning (MRC grant project for 2024 – 2025): On March 20 the MRC participated in the first of two in-person workshops. The second in-person workshop is scheduled for July 10. The survey regarding the strategic plan of the MRC was sent to the contact list the subcommittee generated on April 17.

Evan’s School interviews were completed throughout March and early April. The Evan’s School students will present to the MRC at the May 15 MRC Meeting.

Marine Vegetation Outreach (MRC grant project for 2024 – 2025): The subcommittee held out kick-off meeting on April 1. The consultant is creating a summary of conservation, policy, and environmental data/conditions for marine vegetation in the Edmonds area. The subcommittee is generating a beginning list of known community groups in the Edmonds area and beginning the initial scoping of an in-person event.

Derelict Vessels (NWSF funds): Vessel reconnaissance occurred on March 26 and two vessels were identified for removal.

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

Forage Fish Monitoring: March sampling of Picnic Point and Meadowdale occurred on March 25. April sampling of these sites is scheduled for April 24. A second kit for the Howarth sampling group has been built and they will sample monthly starting with April 27.

Nearshore Restoration: The Meadowdale Monitoring workgroup met on April 10. The group confirmed monitoring tasks per organization and updated one another on any observations in the first quarter.

Outreach: Beach cleanups in partnership with WSU Beach Watchers continue to be held quarterly. The second quarter clean up was an Earth Day event on April 22 at Mission Beach in partnership with Tulalip Tribes.

Crabber Outreach/Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention: A Crabber Outreach meeting is scheduled for April 30 to discuss outreach for summer of 2024.

Marine Water Quality: Snohomish County staff have finalized the contract with ORCA for 2024. ORCA will continue to take data and analyze it for 2024 and will also analyze data from 2020-2022. Altogether, there will be 5 years of data available and analyzed by the end of this year

(2020-2024). Snohomish County Staff and ORCA Staff will meet on April 29 to discuss progress on the contract so far.

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area: None

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 – April 24

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 2024

Submitted by: Dana Flerchinger and Austin Rose

Key items (two or three) for verbal report-out by MRC rep: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•

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

- Andrew Shelton was appointed to the MRC on April 9 to fill an Economic seat. Growing up playing in the ocean led him to a career as an Alaska commercial fisherman. During his fishing career his reverence for and love of the ocean grew deeper and he chose to put down roots in Bellingham to remain connected to it.
- There is currently a vacancy for a Citizen-at-Large position for which a community member has applied. That application is currently under review with the MRC Exec. Committee.
- Rick Beauregard was elected MRC Vice-Chair.

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

- The April MRC meeting was held on April 4. Highlights include:
 - The City of Bellingham issued a Notice of Application for a 38-plot plat on the north side of N. Chuckanut Bay. This opened a public comment period, which closes on April 24. MRC staff referenced the comment letter the MRC drafted in late 2022. MRC staff will add the letter into Google docs for members to suggest edits or additions via track changes. A deadline will be set for members to approve via e-mail and staff will submit before the 24th.
 - Staff informed the committee of the NWSI's effort to develop and implement a comprehensive DEI assessment framework
 - The MRC/WWIN Climate Adaptation Speaker Series began on April 17, 6-7pm, via zoom, featuring climate and water supply. This series of events will focus on how the changing climate impacts our natural resources and what measures are being taken at a local level to adapt our plans and actions. The second presentation is scheduled for Monday, April 29, 5:30-6:30 via zoom, featuring flood risk and shoreline impacts. A third presentation will feature salmon habitat (habitat restoration and design adaptation) with representatives from Nooksack and Lummi Tribes, and City of Bellingham.
- MRC staff presented the MRC's 2023 Annual Report to County Council members at the Surface Water Work Session on April 16.

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):

- Beach Seine with Kids
All field events and pre and post event classroom visits have been scheduled. Extra help would be much appreciated. The Northwest Straits Foundation will be offering interns, and WCC crew members will also help when available. 4 schools are participating this year including, the Lummi Nation School, two county schools, and one school in the Bellingham School District. The Northwest Straits Foundation will be offering interns to help with field events, and WCC crew members will also help when available.

- Social Marketing at Wildcat Cove

MRC staff met with WA State Parks staff to discuss the roll out of the social marketing materials developed by Shew Designs. Posters and rack cards will be given to the park in early June, just before the crabbing season. Staff are also working to secure interns that can engage with boaters at the dock and talk about best practices to preserve eelgrass – such as launching at a higher tide. Members discussed also distributing materials at fishing and shell fishing licensing locations.

- Olympia Oysters

The MRC has secured 24 cubic feet of seasoned shell from the Drayton Harbor Oyster Company to place in the N. Chuckanut Bay plots. BTC students will be helping with the population survey, shell disbursement, and tile placement in N. Chuckanut Bay on May 8. The MRC lead is working with Ryan Crim, Puget Sound Restoration Fund, to complete a population survey in Drayton Harbor. Population survey methods by the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community will be incorporated into the projects this year, as suggested by Julie Barber.

Photos:

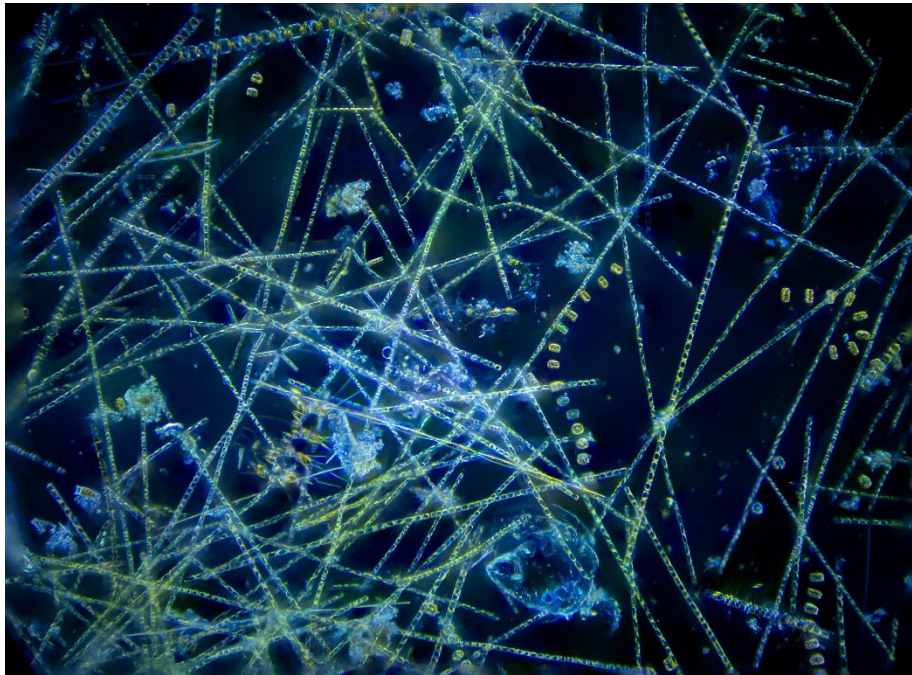


Photo credit: Rick Beauregard, MRC member. *Diatoms (Birch Bay Village). Spring bloom has sprung!*



Photo credit: Mike MacKay, MRC Member, *Dana Flerchinger visiting Lummi Nation classroom pre-field event for Beach Seine with Kids.*