

# Snohomish County Marine Resources Advisory Committee Meeting

## Meeting Summary

September 15, 2021 6:30-8:30PM

\*Meeting conducted via conference call/video\*

<b>MRC Members Present</b> Tom Doerge, Co-Vice Chair Tim Ellis, NWSC and LIO Rep. Julie Schlenger Brienne Townsend Michael Kundu Andrew Gobin Laura Gurley	<b>Staff</b> Elisa Dawson, SWM Senior Planner and MRC Staff Alex Pittman, SWM Planner and MRC Staff
<b>Absent</b> Natasha Coumou, Co-Vice Chair (excused) Mike Ehlebracht, Chair (excused) Sara Maxwell (excused) Kip Killebrew (excused)	<b>MRC Ex-Officio Members</b> David Bain, Citizen Susan Tarpley, Citizen
<b>Others</b> Sasha Horst, Northwest Straits Commission Mariko Langness, WDFW Jonathan Robinson, WSU Beach Watchers Dawn Presler, Snohomish PUD	
<b>Summary of Decisions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None. The MRC will vote on the July MRC meeting minutes in October.</li></ul>	
<b>Upcoming Events</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MRC Presentation to Stillaguamish Watershed Council on Port Susan September 22.</li><li>• SMP Learning Group September 23</li><li>• Penn Cove Mussel Preparation October 18-20</li><li>• MRC Presentation to the Island County Salmon Recovery Technical and Citizen Committee on Port Susan on October 20</li><li>• Next MRC meeting October 20</li></ul>	

### Welcome and Introductions

MRC Co-Vice Chair Tom Doerge opened the Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting at 6:30PM. Due to COVID-19 related stay-at-home orders, the meeting was held via conference call/video.

Tom introduced himself and asked for self-introductions of the meeting participants.

### Approval of MRC Meeting Summary

The MRC did not have a quorum and therefore did not vote on approval of the July meeting minutes. The July meeting minutes will be reviewed and voted on for approval at the October MRC meeting.

### Mussel Watch Program Presentation

Tom Doerge introduced Mariko Langness. Mariko Langness is a biologist with the WDFW TBIOS team. Her work with the team began in 2015 and involves supporting monitoring

programs to determine the extent and magnitude of toxic contaminants in marine and salmonid species living in Puget Sound and Washington's Pacific coast. Her primary work is focused on conducting the Washington State Mussel Monitoring (aka Mussel Watch) program which performs a biennial survey to assess the status and trends of contaminants in nearshore biota using transplanted native bay mussels.

Mariko gave a presentation on the Mussel Watch Program and plan for 2021-22 monitoring. The Mussel Watch Program involves using citizen science volunteers like the MRC to monitor nearshore contamination in Puget Sound. Cages of mussels are placed at dozens of monitoring locations scattered across Puget Sound, allowed to feed for several months, and then are retrieved for contaminant analysis. Results of the mussel collection and testing program are used to determine hot spots for certain contaminants and whether efforts to reduce them work overtime. Mariko showed data that indicated that the Snohomish County data show spatial differences between the more rural Port Susan area to the north and the more urban developed area to the south of the Snohomish River. Generally, contaminants are lower to the north and higher to the south in Snohomish County.

WDFW will be doing another round of mussel monitoring in the greater Puget Sound area in the fall/winter of 2021-22. Deployment is expected in November, and we will retrieve in January or February 2022. Tulalip Bay is the only site that must be done in Snohomish County this round, but WDFW is willing to sponsor some of the other Snohomish County sites if the MRC volunteers can put out and retrieve the cages. Other locations include Kayak Point, Everett, Mukilteo, and Edmonds. MRC staff will follow up with the mussel watch subcommittee and WSU Beach Watchers to gather a list of volunteers to see if we can staff additional locations.

### **Forage Fish Monitoring Program Update**

Alex Pittman, MRC Staff, gave a presentation on the MRC's Forage Fish Monitoring Program, including an overview of the program, goals, monitoring locations and protocols, recent findings, and recognition for the partnerships and volunteer support that make the program possible. Forage fish are small, schooling fish common in the Puget Sound. Forage fish are not a phylogenetic group, but rather an ecological group. They are considered forage fish because they feed, or forage, on marine plankton. Forage fish are extremely important links in the marine ecological food web. Forage fish are best described as the middle link in the marine food web. These small fish feed on microscopic, primary-producers like phytoplankton. In turn, forage fish and their eggs are key menu items for birds, seals, fish (including salmon), and other animals. In fact, forage fish are indicators of health and productivity of marine ecosystems.

Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) participates in monthly forage fish spawning surveys along the Snohomish County shoreline. Forage fish spawning surveys use Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's ([WDFW](#)) protocols and focus on two species, surf smelt and Pacific sand lance, which lay eggs on intertidal sand-gravel beaches in the nearshore environment. In order to sample for the presence or absence of eggs, sediment samples are taken along a 100 foot pre-defined transect location. Volunteers collect sand from the top 1/2 inch of the beach, where egg would be deposited. In total, about 1.5-2 liters of sand is collected along the transect.

The sand that is collected is then processed. The first step in processing the sample is to sieve the sample through progressively finer sieves (4 mm, 2 mm, and 0.5 mm mesh). Only the material

collected in the 0.5 mm sieve is retained for further processing. The condensed material collected in the 0.5 mm sieve is added to a hydrocyclone device consisting of a circular bowl and a recirculating electric water pump to create a vortex that concentrates the light material. This device is called the “blue vortex.” The light material is collected and retained for laboratory analysis (examination of material by microscope) to identify and count the eggs.

Since 2011, the MRC has helped take over 700 forage fish samples, and that number continues to grow every month as we take more samples! The results of the ongoing surveys provide up-to-date forage fish spawning information to Snohomish County and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Results from the MRC’s survey can be found on this [WDFW map](#), which displays sand lance, smelt, herring spawning areas, herring pre-spawner holding areas, and the forage fish spawning survey beaches in Washington State.

The MRC thanked Alex for his presentation. The next forage fish monitoring dates are August 25 and September 21.

### **Project Updates and Announcements**

- **LIO:** Tim reported that there are no current updates from the LOI and the next meeting is scheduled for November 4.
- **Northwest Straits Commission:** Tim reported that at the last NWSC meeting August 27<sup>th</sup>. The Commission discussed planning for the 2021 retreat, as well as ideas for options for the NWSC 2021 conference. The Northwest Straits Conference will be virtual this year, as a series starting on Thursday, November 19, 3:30pm-5:00pm, with a focus on climate change and local action. All MRC members are encouraged to attend, and invitations will be sent out shortly.
- **Kelp Monitoring:** Tom reported that Kelp Monitoring for 2022 is complete, and draft kelp maps made by Snohomish County GIS will be reviewed at the October MRC meeting. Data is being uploaded to the NWSC portal.
- **Piling Phase 2:** Elisa reported that ESA consultants provided the final products of the Pilings Phase 2 grant on August 31. Final documents are posted online on the MRC website, along with a web map of the pilings in the Snohomish Estuary [Creosote Pilings | Snohomish MRC \(snocomrc.org\)](#). The MRC is finalizing a press release on the project that will be released by SWM in late September. All final deliverables will be turned in by September 30<sup>th</sup>.
- **Meadowdale:** Elisa reported that this project is currently under construction. While there was some hope the bridge may be able to be installed this fall, BNSF has had to move some machinery to California in response to wildfire damage. Therefore, the bridge will be installed in 2022 as originally planned. Snohomish County Parks is currently assessing if construction will pause for the winter, and, if so, the beach may be opened to the public until construction resumes again in early spring 2022.
- **Derelict Vessels:** Elisa reported that in August SWM posted four derelict vessels for removal and will gain possession of the vessels on September 18. Additionally, SWM has submitted a letter of intent to apply for a NOAA marine debris grant. The focus will be on removing the Western Marine Construction vessel, which is approximated to cost \$300K for removal. \$150K would come from the grant, \$150K from SWM/DNR. The

letters of intent will be reviewed this fall, and if we are invited to apply for the grant the application will be due January 14, 2022.

- **Cleanup Event at Kayak Point Park on September 18<sup>th</sup>:** The MRC hosted a beach cleanup event on September 18, 2021 from 9AM-12PM at Kayak Point County Park for International Coastal Cleanup Day. This event was put on collaboratively by the Snohomish MRC with WSU Beach Watchers, WSU Waste Warriors, and Zero Waste Washington, and utilized the Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol developed by the EPA for cleaning up and assessing the impact of trash on the beach. Snohomish County Council Member Nate Nehring and Snohomish County Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Director Tom Teigen attended the event.

In total, nearly 40 volunteer citizen scientists carefully scanned 68,000 square feet at Kayak Point Beach for marine debris and primarily found and picked up small plastic fragments, cigarette butts, bottles and containers, charcoal from firepits, and fishing gear. Over 56 pounds of trash were collected. Using the protocol, the site was given a “C” and determined to be littered, meaning that trash was evenly distributed throughout the site and small accumulations of trash were visible. The citizen science data collected will be used for a region-wide effort to better understand trash loading and how trash is impacting the Puget Sound.

- **Port Susan:** Alex reported the joint Snohomish-Island subcommittee collaborated to finalize an application to the UW Evans School Student Consulting Lab, which was submitted at the end of August. We will find out if our proposal was accepted this fall, with work potentially beginning in December/January. The contractor procurement for the Snohomish MRC scope of work is also underway, with consultant interviews planned for September 29. Additionally, the team will be presenting to Stillaguamish Watershed Council in September and to Island Lead Entity in October to let them know about the upcoming work in Port Susan.
- **Oil Spill Workshops:** The oil spill subcommittee has been attending webinars on the Oil Spill Risk Model this summer and attended the Marine Mammal Management in Oil Spill Response Workshop on September 8. The September 8 workshop included presentations focusing on the various stages of marine mammal response during an oil spill and highlight new wildlife regulations recently adopted in Washington State.
- **Nearshore Restoration:** Laura reported that the Nearshore Restoration subcommittee met in late August to begin discussing and brainstorming potential project ideas for the MRC to begin working on or promoting. Several ideas were discussed, including further exploration of capitalizing on the beneficial re-use of dredged materials from the Snohomish River. The group will reconvene later this fall to continue discussions.
- **Volunteer Hours:** Alex reminded the MRC members to please turn in quarterly volunteer hours from July-September by 9/20.

**The meeting adjourned at 8:30.**