

Snohomish County Marine Resources Advisory Committee Meeting

Meeting Summary

February 16, 2022 6:30-8:30PM

Meeting conducted via conference call/video

<p>MRC Members Present Natasha Coumou, Co-Vice Chair Tom Doerge, Co-Vice Chair Mike Ehlebracht, Chair Tim Ellis, NWSC and LIO Rep. Julie Schlenger Andrew Gobin Laura Gurley Sara Maxwell Brie Townsend Michael Kundu</p> <p>MRC Members Recommended for Appointment Franchesca Perez Allan Hicks Bob Margulis</p>	<p>Staff Elisa Dawson, SWM Senior Planner and MRC Staff Alex Pittman, SWM Planner and MRC Staff</p> <p>MRC Ex-Officio Members David Bain, Citizen Susan Tarpley, Citizen</p> <p>Others Bart Christiaen, Washington Department of Natural Resources Jonathan Robinson, WSU Beach Watchers Jeff Whitty, Northwest Straits Commission Richard Strickland, Citizen Traci Sanderson, Citizen Kendall Norcott, Citizen</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Summary of Decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The MRC approved the January meeting minutes.• The MRC approved comments on the Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan Update and Chair Mike Ehlebracht will submit the comments on behalf of the MRC.	
<p style="text-align: center;">Upcoming Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MRC Virtual Symposium with the NWSC February 17 at 3:30PM.• MRC SMP learning group February 24.• Beach Cleanup with WSU Beach Watchers at Howarth Park on March 3, 10AM.• Next MRC Meeting: March 16.• MRC forage fish monitoring March 22 and 23.	

Welcome and Introductions

MRC Chair Mike Ehlebracht 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.

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

Approval of MRC Meeting Summary

Tim Ellis made a motion to approve the January 19, 2022 Meeting Summary. Brie Townsend seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

South Snohomish County Marine Vegetation Survey Presentation

Elisa Dawson introduced Bart Christiaen. Bart Christiaen is a Natural Resource Scientist with the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Bart conducted the MRC's marine vegetation monitoring in 2020 of the Snohomish Estuary area, and in 2021 he led the team that collected the same data for South Snohomish County. Bart gave a presentation with an overview of the 2021 project and findings.

In 2021, Snohomish County signed an agreement with DNR to conduct a comprehensive survey of marine vegetation (eelgrass, understory kelp and other macroalgae) at 22 sites along the shoreline of Snohomish County, between Edmonds and Everett, using methods developed for DNR's monitoring programs. Four additional sites were surveyed for eelgrass in 2019 and 2020. This effort supplements existing and planned future sampling by DNR, and significantly increases the certainty in local estimates of eelgrass area and depth distribution over existing data from the SVMP. It also serves as a baseline for classification of other marine vegetation types.

Main findings include:

1. The intertidal and shallow subtidal were colonized by a variety of marine vegetation types, which often displayed different zonation at individual sites.
2. The depth distribution of marine vegetation was similar to other sites in the Central Basin of Puget Sound.
3. We were able to assess change in eelgrass area at 8 out of the 26 sites in the study area. At 7 of these sites, there was no significant trend in eelgrass area over time. At one site (swh1649) there was a small increase over time between 2005 and 2019.

Bart then opened up the conversation to discussion with the MRC. MRC Members asked several questions related to the findings and locations of projects within the focus area. Finally, the group discussed marine vegetation mapping for 2022 in north Snohomish County, Port Susan area and Hat Island. Once the MRC and DNR complete the mapping of Port Susan and Hat Island in 2022, marine vegetation along the entire Snohomish County shoreline will be mapped. The goal of the Marine Vegetation Subcommittee is then to be able to compare this data to the 2007 dataset to understand change over time. That study would be done in 2023.

MRC Kelp Update

Tom Doerge reported on the MRC Kayak Kelp Survey Update held on January 26. This event included a review of 2021 MRC Kelp Kayak Survey Data and the following presentations and discussed how MRC data is being incorporated into their work:

- Preparing the MRC data for inclusion in the Floating Kelp Vital Sign and other observations – Julia Ledbetter, WA DNR
- The Kelp Wave: An expedition to add cohesion and momentum to regional kelp research and restoration efforts – Jodie Toft, Puget Sound Restoration Fund
- Kelp Forest Canopy Surveys with Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and Fixed-Wing Aircraft – Tyler Cowdrey, WA DNR

Next, Alex Pittman briefly discussed his involvement with the Kelp Management Advisory Team, led by NWSC. The Northwest Straits Commission is leading a follow up effort to support implementation of the [Puget Sound Kelp Conservation and Recovery Plan](#) (Kelp Plan) by working to help bridge available and needed science with policy and management practices to more effectively conserve kelp forests in Puget Sound.

This effort included a stakeholder survey conducted in the Summer of 2021, and is currently planning to host workshops in 2022 with the goal of *strengthening connections between science and policy within the existing policy and regulatory framework*:

1. Gain a common understanding of current kelp protection and associated recovery practices via existing policy and regulations in Puget Sound.
2. Identify and reach common understanding regarding priority challenges, gaps, hurdles, and opportunities.

3. Map a path forward for addressing priority challenges, gaps, hurdles and opportunities.
4. Develop a strategy for communicating the workshop findings to all stakeholders involved in kelp protection and recovery.

WSU Beach Watchers Projects

Jonathan Robinson provided an overview of recent and upcoming WSU Beach Watchers projects for 2022, including:

- Starlight Beach Walk Review
 - Alex, Elisa, Tim and Susan attended. About 50 people from the public attended and we had about 15 volunteers. The MRC provided hot chocolate and apple cider.
- Shoreline Cleanup Opportunities in 2022
 - Thursday March 3rd Beach Cleanup at Howarth Park at 10 AM.
 - Also planning international coastal cleanup day event for Saturday September 17. Location and time are to-be-determined.
 - MRC staff will bring coffee and snacks.
- Earth Day 2022
 - We are planning for Saturday April 23rd for a beach cleanup event, likely at Picnic Point Park.
 - MRC staff will bring coffee and snacks.
 - Jonathan is reaching out to Zero Waste Washington to see if they would be able to attend and help us use the ETAP protocol again similar to our event last fall.
- 2022 Beach Watchers Training
 - MRC Members are encouraged to become Beach Watchers or Beach Naturalists. Training for becoming a Beach Watcher starts on March 10 and is an 80-hour commitment. There is also a shorter 16-hour Beach Naturalist training anyone is welcome to take. Info can be found on the WSU Beach Watchers page: [Beach Watchers | Snohomish County | Washington State University \(wsu.edu\)](#).

MRC Comments on Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan

Mike opened a discussion of the MRC's draft comments related to Snohomish County's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update visioning process. Mike developed draft text and sent it out to the MRC for review on January 10. This text has been revised per the comments received by MRC members and also received some edits after being reviewed by SWM Management. A current draft of the comments was provided to the MRC in their meeting packet. Mike reviewed the changes with the MRC.

The comments identify four key themes for the County to consider through the update process:

- Managing Growth While Preserving the Natural Environment
- Implementing Environmental Restoration as part of Infrastructure Improvements
- Reducing Climate Impacts by Utilizing Clean Energy and Sustainable Practices
- Adapting to Climate Change using Resilient Technologies that Protect Natural Environment

Mike asked for any comments on the text. There were none. Mike asked the MRC to vote on approval of comments.

Tim Ellis made a motion to approve the MRC's comments. Tom Doerge seconded the motion. All MRC Members voted to approve the comments as written and the motion passed by consensus.

Project Updates and Announcements

- **LIO:** Tim Ellis and Bob Margulis attended the LIO meeting on January 26 from 1PM-6PM. This meeting was a joint meeting with the Stillaguamish Watershed Council, which is also the Stillaguamish Implementation Committee. The first portion of the meeting was dedicated to SWC and LIO announcements, public comment, and then a presentation and discussion on the draft LIO Barriers Project Themes.
- **Northwest Straits Commission:** Tim Ellis reported the Key Highlights from January 28 NWSC Meeting:
 - A tentative in-person Northwest Straits conference for all MRC members is scheduled for November 18-19, 2022 at Maple Hall in La Conner.
 - NWSF has issued its first call for applications for the Caroline Gibson Scholarship in Marine Studies. Applications are being accepted through February 19.
 - Clallam MRC shared information about marine critter outreach cards that they have distributed at community locations with a link back to the MRC website. Contact Rebecca Mahan (rparadis@co.clallam.wa.us) if your MRC is interested in getting copies.

The 4th and final webinar of the climate change series is February 17, 2022, at 3:30PM. The next NWSC meeting is February 25.

- **Mussel Watch Retrieval:** Mike Ehlebracht reported that mussel cages were successfully retrieved from Snohomish County monitoring sites on January 31. The mussel cage at Kayak Point was washed down beach during stormy weather shortly after deployment, but cages at the other 6 Snohomish sites were successful, and the cages have been delivered to WDFW.
- **Tribal Lands Acknowledgement:** Elisa Dawson reminded the MRC that at the January meeting there was a request from our Tribal Representatives to learn more about how the Snohomish County and the NWSC Land Acknowledgement statements were vetted by the Tribal Governments. Elisa followed up with Snohomish County and received the following reply from Lacey Harper on how the language was vetted for the Snohomish County Lands Acknowledgement statement: *For the Tulalip Tribes we consulted with Ryan Miller, the Director of Treaty Rights and Government Affairs, and for the Stillaguamish Tribe we consulted with Sam Barr, Cultural Resources/THPO Supervisor. The language was recommended, reviewed and agreed upon through our Government to Government consultation. Please let me know if you have any other questions.*

The NWSC has provided a one-pager on their process for creating their Tribal Acknowledgement statement. This information is provided in the meeting packet. This information is for continued consideration and the MRC will continue with a larger discussion at a later meeting.

- **Port Susan:** Sara reported that Port Susan Stakeholder Survey was launched on February 9 and will remain open until March 2. We are already receiving responses to the survey with helpful information as well as several requests for phone call conversations. The next Joint Island-Snohomish Port Susan Team Meeting is scheduled for March 3 from 1:00 – 2:30PM.

- **Forage Fish Monitoring:** Alex reported that January Forage Fish Monitoring was completed on January 19 (Picnic Point & Meadowdale) and January 20 (Howarth Park). February Forage Fish Monitoring is underway, with Picnic Point & Meadowdale completed today (February 16) and Howarth Park planned for tomorrow (February 17). Alex is putting dates together for March and April and will send those to the subcommittee members later this week.
- **Nearshore Restoration:** Laura reported the Nearshore Restoration subcommittee met on February 3 to discuss the draft one-pager on the beneficial re-use of dredged material from the Snohomish River to help facilitate discussions about this prospective opportunity for nearshore projects. Through this discussion, the team decided that we should re-draft this document with more of an emphasis on a potential future project, highlighting the lessons learned and efficiencies and cost-savings that would benefit future restoration projects. The team decided to focus on discussing a second phase of nourishment at Howarth Park. The team will meet again in early March to discuss the next iteration of the draft one-pager.
- **Derelict Vessels:** Elisa reported that Snohomish County staff completed reconnaissance of potential 2022 vessels for removal on January 26. There are 4 boats currently suggested for removal, and information on the vessels was included in the MRC meeting packet. Elisa is working on receiving feedback on 2022 vessel removal plan from SWM management and stakeholders. Mike Ehlebracht brought up a fifth vessel for possible removal in Ebey Slough, and Elisa will add this vessel to the list of candidates for removal.
- **Oil Spills:** Julie Schlenger provided subcommittee members information via email and is working on setting up a meeting for the Oil Spills Subcommittee in March.
- **DNR Watershed Resilience Plan for the Snohomish Basin:** Laura reported that DNR has posted their new plan for the Snohomish Basin that highlights a lot of the MRC's work, including efforts on derelict vessels, pilings and marine debris, and marine vegetation mapping. Elisa is working with DNR to have someone from the agency come speak to the MRC about the plan. The plan can be seen here: [DNR's Watershed Resilience Action Plan by Washington State Department of Natural Resources](#)

The meeting adjourned at 8:26.