

SNOHOMISH COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE



2008 ANNUAL REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS



Background

The Snohomish County Marine Resource Advisory Committee (MRC) was established in 1999 to advise Snohomish County approaches to conserve the local marine The MRC is authorized by environment. Chapter 2.800 of the Snohomish County Code to advise the County Council and Executive on marine resource issues. This report outlines the MRC's accomplishments for the period of July 2007 - June 2008, and includes a description of current projects and recommendations for the Snohomish County Executive and Council.

The MRC is composed of eleven citizen members representing economic, recreational, conservation, and environmental interests along with local and tribal governments. The MRC participates in the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative, a non-partisan regional effort to protect and restore marine resources in northern Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Staff support for the Snohomish County MRC is provided by the Surface Water Management Division of the Public Works Department.

Since its inception, the MRC has developed an effective citizen-based process for examining local marine resource issues, engaging and

educating the public and initiating small-scale efforts to address established priorities. Additionally, the MRC has developed a wide variety of partnerships with agencies, non-profit organizations and citizen groups to share resources and improve our chances for long-term success. Public education and involvement, including the training and use of volunteers, is an integral part of the MRC's work. Without the help of volunteers, the MRC would not be able to successfully complete many of its important projects.

The MRC's initial efforts have provided a strong foundation of tools and knowledge to fulfill their mission. With a strong emphasis on accountability, the MRC strives to maximize results, build stakeholder confidence and leverage external funds and partnerships.

The MRC is now implementing a number of marine conservation outreach, research and on-the-ground projects focused to leverage funds and expand partnerships throughout the county. The MRC is proud of its accomplishments over the past year, and looks forward to continuing its efforts to benefit the marine resources and the citizens of Snohomish County in 2008.



Above: Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee Members

Work Planning 2007-2009 and Beyond

2007-2009 Work Plan

The MRC prepared a two year Work Plan for the period between July 2007 and June 2009. This Work Plan defines strategic goals and projects to achieve on-the-ground results in four priority areas:

Priority Work Areas for 2007 - 2009

- Public Education, Outreach, and Community Empowerment
- Dungeness Crab Stewardship
- Nearshore Habitat Protection
- Marine Water Quality

The targeted priorities are supported by subcommittees appointed by the MRC to increase public awareness, improve the best available marine science in Snohomish County, make recommendations, and implement successful on-the-ground restoration, monitoring, and protection projects.

Highlights of the MRC's 2007-2008 achievements are summarized in this report. In addition, selected projects in the 2007-2009 Work Plan are also included. The 2007-2009 Work Plan & Funding Source Summary Chart is included in the Attachments section.



Above: 2008 Strategic Planning Retreat

Strategic Planning

The MRC conducted a comprehensive strategic planning process in 2008 under the direction of Pacifica Blue Consulting. An assessment of current conceptions and priorities was completed using a detailed MRC member questionnaire and key stakeholder interviews. Throughout several evening meetings and a day-long retreat the MRC updated the priority work areas and determined objectives and goals for each.

Priority Areas for 2009 and Beyond

- Advance the Health of the Marine Ecosystem
- Protect and Restore Water Quality
- Research, Evaluate, and Monitor to Inform and Guide
- Integrate the Community in Actions

The final strategic planning document is due to be released by the close of 2008. This document will be used to guide work planning and ensure focused, priority projects. The MRC determined four principles to guide its programs:

Guiding Principles

- Visibility
- Credibility
- Effective & Informed Guidance
- Evaluation & Feedback

The MRC extends thanks to WSU Beach Watchers, MRC members, our consultant, and other key stakeholders for their hard work throughout this process.



Above: Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee's poster highlighting MRC projects for 2007-2009

Public Education and Outreach

2007-2008 Accomplishments

- Publicity Generated publicity for the summer beach expo events, including an article in Everett Herald about Picnic Point. Received publicity regarding the derelict gear removal efforts in Port Gardner on May 7, 2008 with KOMO-4 TV.
- Beach Expos Conducted Beach Expos with local partners at Picnic Point, Kayak Point, and Mukilteo Lighthouse Parks. Participants learned about local organizations, assisted with beach clean-ups and restoration activities, and explored the low-tide with WSU Beach Watchers.
- Starlight Beach Walks Coordinated with local organizations to hold two starlight evening low-tide public beach walks at Edmonds Beach in January, and Kayak Point in February.
- Educational Booths- Participated in the Marysville Earth Day Walk at Ebey Waterfront Park in April 2008 and the Stillaguamish Festival of the River in August 2008.
- Educational Booths- Participated in the Stillaguamish Festival of the River in August 2007.
- Presentations- Provided marine resource presentations to interested groups.



Above: Day of Caring participants at Meadowdale Beach Park



Above: Beach Expo displays at Kayak Point Park

2007-2009 Work Plan Highlights

Sound Stewardship Program Support

The MRC partnered with People For Puget Sound on their Sound Stewardship Program. This program trains citizen volunteers in restoration and monitoring techniques in return for at least 40 hours of volunteer service on four sites: Jetty Island, Picnic Point, Kayak Point, and Union Slough. The MRC led efforts at the Picnic Point County Park by developing a management plan, coordinating 5 invasive ivy removal work parties and recruiting over 100 volunteers.

Day of Caring

In partnership with the Snohomish-Camano Nearshore Cooperative the MRC hosted a volunteer event at Snohomish County's Meadowdale Beach Park on September 28, 2007. Over 70 volunteers from local businesses planted 550 plants in nearshore habitat, installed a protective fence, and removed several truckloads of invasive plant species.

Beach Watchers Program Support

The MRC continued partnership and partial funding of the Washington State University Beach Watchers Program. In spring of 2008 14 new Beach Watchers were trained, adding to a robust group of dedicated, long-term volunteers.

Key Beach Watcher accomplishments for 07-08:

- Provided naturalist skills at four summer Beach Expo events and two Starlight Beach Walks.
- Collected data for the MRC Mussel Watch program.
- Participated in the Escape Cord Outreach Program, geared toward reducing Dungeness crab mortality from abandoned crab pots.
- Provided assistance at beach restoration events and staffing of educational booths.
- Initiated countless learning experiences in Beach Watchers share their knowledge with the public.

Dungeness Crab Stewardship

2007-2008 Accomplishments

- Gravid Female Dungeness Crab Habitat Survey- This study will identify gravid female crab habitat areas in Snohomish County. Collected data will be analyzed and used to promote appropriate means of protection for productive gravid female crab habitat. The study protocols and preliminary maps were completed June 2007, and field mapping, which was delayed in 2008, is now anticipated for completion by February 2009.
- Escape Cord Project Update-This program has proven its success by expanding to six other NW Straits Counties. In 2008, WSU Beach Watchers of Snohomish County distributed 1670 escape cord education cards and an additional 600 escape cord samples. Almost 50% of those have been distributed at boat launches directly to recreational crabbers. The Port of Edmonds and a local bait shop has also distributed 25% to new tenants and with each crab pot sold. The remaining cards have been distributed at community events such as the Everett Boat Show, Festival of the River and beach educational events.



Above: Gravid female Dungeness crab holding up to 2.5 million fertilized eggs



Above: Approximately 10,000 crabs are lost each year in Port Gardner due to derelict gear

2007-2009 Work Plan Highlights

Derelict Gear Removal Project

Abandoned, lost, and discarded crab pots present harmful economic and environmental impacts on marine waters. In 2008, the MRC coordinated efforts with the Northwest Straits Commission to survey and remove derelict fishing gear in Port Gardner. A total of 145 derelict crab pots were removed this year, for a total of 86% of the derelict gear targets identified in the survey. This project generated generous publicity and received a spot on KOMO-4 TV News on May 7, 2008. With additional grant funds, the MRC will continue to work with the Northwest Straits Commission to expand the inventory of derelict gear and locate traps in 100-250 foot depths from Mukilteo to Tulalip Bay.

Volunteer Diver Recovery of Derelict Crab Gear

The NWSC and MRC have identified dense concentrations of derelict crab traps in shallow water of Port Gardner. Because nets have taken higher priority in the NWSC derelict gear removal effort, the traps are in jeopardy of remaining at the In partnership with NWSC, the sea floor. Washington SCUBA Alliance. and Natural Resources Consultants, the MRC resolved to fund a pilot program to determine if recovery of derelict crab traps could be conducted at a reduced cost from the standard method. Initial scoping for the project was done, including county legal review. Before the pilot could be completed, however, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife permit was rescinded due to a technicality. The MRC urges Snohomish County officials to work with the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife assist in finding a resolution that would enable the project to move forward.

Nearshore Habitat Protection & Restoration

2007-2008 Accomplishments

- Jetty Island Expansion Project-The MRC is partnering with the Port of Everett to evaluate the effectiveness of using dredged river sand to restore shoreline functions on hardened shorelines and for nourishment of small stream deltas in Puget Sound. Monitoring sessions at the Jetty Island expansion project were conducted by volunteers from the MRC, People For Puget Sound, and Edmonds Community College LEAF School in January, April, May and July 2008.
- Creosote Piling Removal and Osprey Nest Relocation- Port Gardner holds claim to the largest osprey nest colony on the west coast. The MRC is currently drawing up an interlocal agreement with the Washington Dept. of Natural Resources and Pilchuck Audobon society to assist in the installation of 5 concrete osprey nest poles to replace those removed during ongoing creosote piling removal efforts.



Above: Kayak Point Regional Park, located in Stanwood, is a draw for beachgoers and nature-lovers alike

2007-2009 Work Plan Highlights

Kayak Point Regional Park Backshore Restoration

In partnership with Snohomish County Parks and Recreation, the MRC is working to relocate the loop road and restore backshore habitat and sediment transport processes at Kayak Point Regional Park. The MRC hired a consultant to assess emerging threats from an existing bulkhead and develop a feasibility and design study for a "soft" armoring design intended to enhance long-term ecosystem function while protecting existing park infrastructure. The consultant is currently updating this feasibility study with sea level rise analysis. The MRC and Snohomish County Parks and Recreation will select a final design and work to secure funding for this important nearshore project during the coming year. Other partners include People For Puget Sound, Northwest Straits Foundation, WSU Beach Watchers, and many others.

Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area

The Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area Working Group includes the Northwest Straits Commission, Tulalip Tribes, Stillaguamish Tribe, the Snohomish and Island County Marine Resource Committees and others. The Working Group is scoping the feasibility of establishing a Marine Stewardship Area in Port Susan, focused on improving sustainable fisheries practices. bolstering nearshore habitat restoration & protection efforts, and coordinating effective public outreach for Port Susan landowners. The Working Group plans create a coordinated communication network among Tribes, conservation groups, stakeholders, and government agencies to obtain on-the-ground results that benefit Port Susan's marine resources.

2007-2008 Accomplishments

- Mussel Watch Program-Sampling areas have been expanded from two to six sites.
- PH:ARM Pharmaceutical Take Back Program-Identified major stakeholders and hosted a one-day workshop for 85 individuals.
- Water Quality Data Compilation-The MRC is initiating an investigation and collection of data on human and wildlife heath issues associated with marine water quality. The MRC will compile and evaluate data from existing marine water quality monitoring programs to assess local marine water quality conditions. In addition, the information will be used to identify data gaps and to identify the next steps to improve local marine water quality.



Above: Volunteers collect data for the Mussel Watch Program

2007-2009 Work Plan Highlights

Snohomish County Mussel Watch

The MRC expanded its participation in NOAA's nationwide water quality Mussel Watch Program from two to six sites in Snohomish County. Every winter and summer, mussels are collected, processed and analyzed for more than 100 chemicals including PCBs, PAHs, and trace metals to better understand the relative concentrations of chemical contaminants in waters of Snohomish nearshore Preliminary results indicate that all Snohomish County sites have PAH levels anywhere from 4-20 times higher than the national average. Results from summer 2007 sampling indicate that contaminant levels differ seasonally and from urban and rural sites. Subsequent sampling events must occur before results are determined to be significant. Partners for this project include NOAA, Stillaguamish Tribe, and WSU Beach Watchers. Volunteers were recruited from local organizations and trained in NOAA's collection methods.

Right: The Mussel Watch Program expanded from 2 to 6 sites in 2008

Pharmaceutical Take Back Program

The MRC partnered with the Washington PH:ARM (Pharmaceuticals from Households: A Return Mechanism) Coalition to implement a first-in-the-nation pilot take-back program aimed to decrease the threat pharmaceutical contamination. safeguard and create sustainable public health approaches to problematic waste streams. MRC funding was used identify stakeholders, and assist in coordinating an educational one-day medicine return workshop. Eighty-five individuals attended the workshop on April 18, 2008, representing a diverse set of interests, including environmental legislators. aroups. state pharmaceutical manufacturer lobbyists, and healthcare professionals. It was the first opportunity for all the stakeholders to come together and share ideas, concerns, and updates on the PH:ARM Pilot Project. The workshop received a lot of positive feedback. Most participants were willing to assist with outreach and education to the public, drug companies, legislators, etc, and some were also willing to support legislation and researching funding sources for a long-term program.

Recommendations to Snohomish County Executive & Council

The following recommendations are presented for consideration by the Snohomish County Council and Executive. These include actions that Council and/or the Executive could take, in addition to general support of the current MRC work program. The MRC welcomes further discussion of these recommendations.

Primary Recommendations

- 1. Continue current level of General Fund investment in the MRC, which is critical to the programs' success.
- 2. Provide continued staff support for the MRC.
- 3. Endorse the MRC's role in the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area (MSA) Working Group, which will identify goals and actions involved in establishing a community-supported MSA that results in policy actions and on-the-ground activities.
- Prioritize marine resource stewardship in departmental work plans, budget development, and local and regional initiatives, such as transportation and economic development.
- 5. Adopt the Snohomish County Shoreline Management Program.
- 6. Ensure that marine shoreline development projects in Snohomish County are coordinated with respect to mitigation of comprehensive and cumulative effects on our shoreline and marine resources.
- 7. Support partner and agency efforts to protect and restore marine shoreline habitat.

Additional Recommendations Public Involvement and Education

- Encourage citizen involvement in marine resource monitoring and protection opportunities.
- 2. Expand partnerships with agencies, tribes, municipalities, universities, community colleges, non-profit organizations and citizen groups.

Dungeness Crab Stewardship

 Expand partnerships with agencies, tribes, municipalities, universities, community colleges, non-profit organizations and citizen groups to

- protect and restore Dungeness crab habitat and develop appropriate harvest regulations.
- Support statewide development of a Priority Habitat & Species designation for Dungeness crab habitat

Nearshore Habitat Protection and Restoration

- Support partnerships targeted to protect and restore marine shoreline habitat.
- Design and implement nearshore habitat restoration capital projects, especially soft shore protection demonstration projects.
- 3. Support efforts to address the impact of climate change and anticipated sea level rise on marine resources, in addition to landowners living along the marine shoreline.

Marine Water Quality

- 1. Examine the threat of oil spills to Snohomish County marine resources.
- 2. Monitor the development of Washington's administrative rules that will implement new legislation for on-water fuel spill prevention.

Regional Puget Sound Conservation Efforts

1. Participate in the Puget Sound Partnership's Ecosystem Coordination Board and serve a leadership role in the Whidbey Island Action Area to improve Puget Sound's health and enhance Snohomish County citizens' quality of life.



Acknowledgements

The accomplishments and current activities of the Snohomish County MRC depend on contributions from volunteers, Snohomish County staff members, and people from other organizations. Many of our MRC partners are listed below. Their interest and participation in MRC activities is greatly appreciated. We apologize for any omissions.

Snohomish County MRC Members

Mary Cunningham, MRC Chair, City of Everett Planning and Community Development, Senior Planner

Dawn Lawrence, MRC Vice Chair, Cascade High School, Biology Teacher

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Dungeness Crab Stewardship

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Nearshore Habitat Protection and Restoration

All 23 Snohomish Camano Nearshore
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United Way Day of Caring Volunteers
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