|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MRC Members Present Natasha Coumou, Chair  Tim Ellis, Co-Vice Chair,  NWSC and LIO Rep  Julie Schlenger, Co-Vice Chair  Franchesca Perez  Sara Maxwell  Allan Hicks  Andrew Gobin  Richard Strickland  Dawn Presler  Phil Salditt  Cory Champagne (Sara Maxwell Alternate)  **Absent**  Brie Townsend, Co-Vice Chair  Sara Maxwell | **Staff**  Elisa Dawson, SWM Senior Planner and MRC Staff  Joycelyn Blue, SWM Planner and MRC Staff  **MRC Ex-Officio Members**  David Bain, MRC Ex-Officio Member  **Others**  Jonathan Robinson – WSU Beach Watchers  Laura Gurley, Port of Everett  Mike Ehlebracht, Citizen |
| **Summary of Decisions**   * The MRC approved the January 2024 meeting summary. | |
| **Upcoming Events**   * Forage fish monitoring January 29th * MRC Strategic Plan Retreat March 20th, in-person at Snohomish County Campus | |

**Welcome and Introductions**

MRC Chair Natasha Coumou opened the Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting at 6:30PM.

Natasha introduced herself and asked for self-introductions of the meeting participants. After introductions, she read the Snohomish County Tribal Acknowledgement.

*“We acknowledge the original inhabitants of this place, the Sah ku mehu* (Sauk-*Suiattle Tribe), the stuləgʷábš (Stillaguamish Tribe), and the sduhubš (Snohomish) Skykomish, Snoqualmie and their successors the Tulalip Tribes. Since time immemorial, they have hunted, fished, gathered on, and taken care of these lands and waters. We respect their sovereignty, their right to self-determination and honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water. We will strive to be honest about our past mistakes and bring about a future that includes their people, stories, and voices to form a more just and equitable society.*

*With this tribal acknowledgement, we open our time together by honoring the ancestors whose feet first knew these lands, and whose paddles still know the waters of what we now call Snohomish County.”*

**Approval of MRC Meeting Summary**

Phil Salditt made a motion to approve the January 17, 2024, meeting summary. Tim Ellis seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

MRC 2023 Annual Report Draft Review

The MRC reviewed the 2023 Annual Report draft which had been sent prior to the meeting for review. The MRC Annual Report is created each year, and overviews all the projects the MRC works on and highlights from the year. The intended audience is meant to be grant funders, public officials, and Snohomish County Management, and is also posted online for the public. Once the Annual Report is complete it is turned into the NWSC as a grant requirement and is also used to give the Snohomish MRC Annual Report to Snohomish County Council.

The MRC reviewed the pages and some of the highlights from 2023. These highlights included 961 volunteer hours donated by MRC Members, conducting outreach to outline actionable steps for meeting conservation targets at Port Susan, expanding our Derelict Vessel Removal efforts by forging a unique partnership with the Tulalip Tribes to remove seven owner abandoned derelict vessels, and partnering with the Ocean Research College academy (ORCA) to explore the potential use of invaluable multiyear data on Possession Sound health.

The MRC reviewed all the project pages and made final edits. Any additional edits were asked to be turned in by February 23. Elisa will forward all final edits to another Snohomish County staff who does graphic design, and the final report is expected to be complete in early March. Once the final Annual Report is ready, we will schedule our report to Council for late March or early April.

MRC Strategic Plan Updates

Natasha Coumou and Franchesca Perez provided updates on the status of the MRC Strategic Plan.

First, MRC Member interview questions were reviewed and approved by the MRC, and interviews with Peak Consulting began in February. All members are expected to complete their interviews by end of February. Next, the MRC needs to decide on a date for the 2nd Strategic Plan Retreat that is expected to happen in late June or early July. Natasha will send out a Doodle Poll for everyone to fill out their availability. We will have a date decided on by the March 20th retreat.

Elisa reported that the MRC will hold the first of two retreats for the Strategic Plan on March 20th 5:30-8:30 at Snohomish County Campus: 3000 Rockefeller Ave Everett, 98201. We will be on the 7th floor of Admin East. Free street parking is available, and dinner will be provided. This Retreat will focus on reviewing the summary of MRC input from the interviews and identifying next steps of the strategic planning process. The consultant is responsible for planning and facilitating this retreat.

Elisa reported that the Northwest Straits Commission’s proposal to the UW Evans School Student Consulting Labs was selected by students for a capstone project. The proposal was created by Commission and Marine Resources Committee staff to create a Community Needs Assessment framework that all MRCs can use. The needs assessment will build on work Island Marine Resources Committee developed to better understand community priorities related to marine resources to inform strategic planning and project prioritization. The first round of the project will be from January - May 2024, and Snohomish MRC has been chosen as the MRC for the students to work with. The scope of work for the Evans School work was in the meeting packet.

**Project Updates and Announcements**

* **LIO –Tim Ellis**
  + No Updates.
* **NWSC – Tim Ellis**
  + Caitlyn is looking to establish the 2024 NW Straits Initiative conference planning committee. MRC members can contact Caitlyn Blair to volunteer or gather more information (blair@nwstraits.org).
    - Phil Salditt offered to assist with the Planning Committee.
  + The NW Straits Commission scheduled a virtual Commission meeting for March 29, 2024. This will take the place of the previously scheduled March NWS Initiative retreat. The retreat will be rescheduled for a later date.
  + Puget Sound Day on the Hill is scheduled for May 13th through May 17th. This is an annual event in Washington DC aimed at highlighting Puget Sound issues. Please contact Lucas for more information (hart@nwstraits.org)
  + The Partnership has launched the Puget Sound Partnership Nearshore Conservation Credit Program. If MRCs have nearshore conservation projects in need of funding, they are encouraged to submit proposals.
* **Marine Vegetation – Julie Schlenger**
  + Currently working on contracting to bring the consultant on board.
  + A kickoff meeting is expected in March.
* **Oil Spill Preparedness and Prevention Update – Julie Schlenger**
  + The most recent LEPC meeting was cancelled.
* **Forage Fish Monitoring –Joycelyn Blue**
  + January monitoring was completed on January 29 at Meadowdale and Picnic Point
  + February monitoring will occur on February 26
  + 2023 egg detections: Sand Lance – Jan (Howarth S); Surf Smelt – Oct (Howarth S) and Nov (Howarth S)
    - Sep – Nov have been processed. Surf Smelt – Sep (Howarth S), Oct (Howarth S), Nov (Howarth S)
  + The forage fish subcommittee met on January 30 to discuss if there are any MRC members or partner organizations that would want to take over planning, organizing, and conducting the forage fish monitoring at Howarth Park. The group determined that Julie’s proposal of a member lead, weekend sampling effort would require a commitment of at least 3 people for a minimum of a year. In this scenario a second sampling kit would be created.
  + On behalf of the subcommittee, Julie would like to propose a subgroup of committed forage fish volunteers to do sampling of Howarth Park on the weekends.
    - Julie will be the lead and care for the kit.
    - WDFW supports continuing the sampling at Howarth.
    - Julie had 6 folks offer to help.
    - Staff will work on ordering a second set of materials for forage fish monitoring.
* **Mussel Cage Retrieval – Elisa Dawson**
  + The date chosen for mussel retrieval was February 7. However, WDFW has had a stand-down for all water-based field work and mussel cage retrieval has been delayed. We expect to hear next steps from WDFW by end of February.
* **Derelict Vessels – Elisa Dawson**
  + MRC staff will be doing derelict vessel recon in early March. Please reach out if you have any vessels in mind you would like for us to assess.
* **Starlight Beach Walk February 6 – Jonathan Robinson** 
  + The 2024 beach walk at Edmonds Olympic Beach was held on Feb 6th from 7-8:30. Over 175 attendees and a reporter from the Everett Herald attended. MRC brought hot drinks which were very popular. We will need to refresh our supply of hot drinks prior the event next year.
* **Other Announcements/Upcoming Events** 
  + Joycelyn Blue reported that the NW Straits Commission has hired a DEI consultant, Athena Group. The consultant will help us assess diversity, equity, and inclusion within the NW Straits Initiative. Our overall DEI goals are:
    - Achieve NWSI membership and engagement that is representative of the diverse communities within each county.
    - Deliver projects that are meaningful to and benefit the diverse communities within each county.
    - Create equitable and inclusive career opportunities in marine conservation through NWSI staff, internships, and staff support (consultants, etc.) positions. Have inclusive and relevant messaging for the diverse communities in the Northwest.
  + The NWSC is seeking an MRC staff member or MRC volunteer who might be interested in being part of the project team. Dawn and Julie volunteered to assist with the effort along with Joycelyn who is the staff representative.
  + Laura Gurley reported that there is an ongoing dredge material discussion and there will be an April workshop to discuss beneficial use of dredge material in the Snohomish River. She reported that the work the MRC did to create the 1-pager has successfully helped start these discussions.

**The meeting adjourned at 8:39pm.**