

MRC, CAG and LIO Committee Members in Attendance: Matt Arata, David Checkley, Brian Goodremont, Megan Dethier, Jeff Dyer, Kailey Genther, Patti Gobin, Christina Koons, Kari Koski, Lovel Pratt, Karin Roemers-Kleven, Craig Smith, Beth Tate, Sandy Wyllie-Echeverria

Ex-officio, County support staff and members of the public: Lucas Hart, Katie Johnson, Frances Robertson, Kendra Smith, Sam Whitridge, Cindy Wolf

9:09 AM **Convene Meeting**

Christina Koons

Nice to see everyone in person at the Friday Harbor Labs. *Let us acknowledge we reside on the ancestral lands and waters of the Coast Salish people who have called this place home since time immemorial and let us honor inherent, aboriginal and treaty rights that have been passed down from generation to generation.*

9:10 AM Introductions around the room & logistics

9:14 AM **Member Updates and Public Comment**

none

9:15 AM **Approve November Meeting Minutes**

MRC members

All in favor of approving the November meeting minutes, no edits, none opposed, the November minutes are approved.

9:16 AM **MRC Business Items**

Christina Koons

• Update on sinking of El Capitan

Kari Koski

El Capitan in West Sound Marina since at least 2014, sold but previous owner never completed lease agreement with marina nor left proof of insurance. It's a private marina. Boat began taking on water and required response. Marta and IOSA got involved, hired Global Salvage to pump out fuel and stabilized, then back to process of County taking custody and seeking funding to tow and demolish. Notice of activity is out but pending funding. Started State contract bidding.

Kari reviews costs, State may not be able to reimburse total actual cost. This started November 17, 2020, then three years later boat begins taking on water again, listing, and capsizes. Global already removed fuel and hazardous materials. So, this isn't a spill event triggering action by Coast Guard, more of a sinking. Now the vessel is on the ground since November 17-18, 2023, not in a navigable channel. Owner unresponsive.

QUESTION: how much cost to bring boat up the to the surface?

Kari: initial Global diving work estimate was over a million, just to bring it up— not for transport to demolition point. The Islander at the FH breakwater is different – it hasn't been emptied of fuel and it's at a public entity, DNR took custody and it will be transported away. County can't be the lead entity on El Capitan. Coast Guard hired Global to maintain and boom it, they'll continue to work with the Marina. Meanwhile DNR and other agencies are evaluating lease agreement. Coast Guard waiting for legal determination of liability. Kari shared a history of past actions with MRC via email. Brendan has been great at synthesizing and communicating information to Council, looking at ways to do this.

Frankie: It's good to hear about coordination between agencies. Once boat is up, what will be costs of transport?

Kari: like previous bids, estimated before was \$420, but that entity in PT wanted to salvage and resale, still possible?

Lovel: there were volunteers available in the marina that responded with boom, that was a critical piece.

Opportunity here for Oil spill liability trust fund to pay for costs associated with the sinking of the boat

Cindy: why is public liable for something at a private marina? Isn't it their responsibility to ensure insurance?

Kari: there have been lawsuits. there are some programs aimed at prevention, don't want to set a precedent. Need to ensure boat owners know about the responsibilities of maintenance, promote a culture of responsible boat ownership.

Craig: Doesn't matter whether abandoned boat is at private or public marina, same problem with funding. No analysis being done of costs for when boat sinks. Should be some mechanism/legislation for anticipated sinking.

Kari: This is a good topic for the Derelict Vessel workgroup to take up

Frankie: volunteers that helped with boom at sinking were untrained? IOSA was there too within an hour

Lovel: yes, these weren't from IOSA, boat owners on the scene. Not criticizing IOSA, we were lucky there was more help. And even if hazardous materials are removed, there's always some junk – it's still a problem

Kari: and this is winter with less traffic, in 30' depth, partially blocking entrance, area must be boomed

9:49 AM • Spring Derelict Vessel Turn in Event

Kari Koski

April 2024 – partnership with the Port at Jensen's. County-wide opportunity for a State-sponsored turn in program. Outreach starting in January/February. Get applications notarized and turned in. Then 10-day window in April when boats will be moved into the area. Removing fuels, crushing, and moving. Discussed with Katie Fleming maybe some boating-specific collection of marine debris and take advantage of crushing in containers.

9:53 AM • Discussion regarding proposed updates to San Juan MRC Operating Resolution *Sam, Christina, Kailey*

Christina: previous resolution passed in 2001. Started reviewing, but need more clarification from County legal team and a few other entities. Linking this to the Marine Stewardship Area (MSA plan)

Sam: The Resolution lists a requirement for a planning director etc. and other items that need updating

ACTION ITEM: let's put this on the agenda for our meeting in January

9:56 AM • Review/approve timeline for Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) work in 2024

Sam Whitridge

The CAG timeline sent out by Sam over email must be approved as part of our role in the grant round. Site visits will occur May 1-2, 2024 (1-2 days depending on number of proposals). The Salmon Recovery lead entity has a technical group (the TAG) and MRC functions as the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) for our lead entity. The CAG plays a role in evaluating proposals, members encouraged to attend site visits, and members review and score proposals. TAG does the bulk of scoring; CAG looks at proposals through a socioeconomic lens.

Sam will provide score sheets, etc. Large allocation this year close to \$2million, including PSAR grant funding.

David: how is the input from the TAG used, is it sent to the CAG?

Sam: I'll share evaluation criteria. TAG is responsible for 85% of scoring, CAG 15%. Scores are combined. The TAG is a 10-member entity with folks involved for many years, former fish biologists, etc. e.g., Beth Tate is on the TAG

ACTION ITEM: Sam will send around a roster of TAG members to the MRC/CAG

Sam: our focus is largely salmon, nearshore habitat protection and restoration, some freshwater projects. Two PIAT (Pulling it all Together) studies identifying priorities, our Salmon recover chapter update, it's a strategy driven process

- discussion of forage fish, eelgrass, etc. Salmon biology is very complex, five spp. etc. Would be good to have a talk on general salmon biology, especially if we're making decisions based on it, especially with recent turnover

ACTION ITEM: maybe we can have a talk like that in winter, at an MRC meeting or outside of a meeting

Frankie: focus on adult/returning salmon but also important to restore native habitat to out-migrating juveniles

Brian: Brad Hanson has data on native Blackmouth published in 2016. Paper on salmon whales are encountering

ACTION ITEM: Frankie has that paper and can share it with the MRC

MOTION: Lovel moves to approve the timeline and process for the CAG, Brian seconds, the timeline is approved

10:13 AM • ERTV (Emergency Response Tow Vessel) update

Sam Whitridge

Islands Trust Council meeting yesterday, discussed work around an ERTV. Shared Ecology data (graphs presented, not original report) –risk reduction with a locally posted ERTV. Significant reduction for Strait of Georgia and Gulf Islands.

Cindy: Islands Trust discussed the new Gulf Islands oil response stations, also Point Roberts Terminal and the tug on west coast of Vancouver Island – serious talk about whether response time from there was adequate. Islands Trust Council is a form of Canadian government, not a province but a land use government entity, like the Land

Bank. We've had a historical relationship working on transboundary issues like the Roberts Bank Terminal and how its development will affect Fraser River salmon. They expressed frustration about it but don't have jurisdiction

Sam: in early 2022 County Council and Island Trust sent joint letter regarding the reposition of ERTV's

Christina: our resolution obligates us as MRC to have a relationship with Islands Trust

-Discussion of Ecology's report; the data are in it but it requires interpretation, as in their slide presentation

Kelsey: if data are there, let's form a subcommittee, write abstract pointing out relevance of data to this region

-More discussion; should we ask Legislature to compel Ecology to re-write and/or write our own abstract?

Lovel: we should pursue both paths. Marta found substantial errors in the Ecology report

Patti: must involve Tribes who have Treaty rights. I can commit from Tulalip. What about Lummi? Need to get Tribes together on this, maybe NW Fish commission, anything happening here will affect our lifeways

Craig: how many Tribes are fishing in zone area 7?

Frankie: all but one of the 12 Treaty Tribes have rights here, but not all use them

ACTION ITEM: Patti will find out that information

Christina: we have an Oil Spill Response and Prevention subcommittee – Lovel, Christina, Jeff, Matt, Phil, Craig

Frankie: this could be more powerful NW Straits-wide, maybe a focus on northern counties, Snohomish and Skagit

David: a heat map of the response time data showing the reduction would help

ACTION ITEM: Sam will help schedule a meeting soon for subcommittee for reinterpretation of ERTV data: Kailey

Marta, Craig, David, Sandy, Patti

Cindy: I'll be going back to DC next month, we want it to be easily interpretable but provide more information

ACTION ITEM: Sam will send out corrected Ecology report

10:54 AM Break

11:07 AM **MSA Report Working Session**

Frances Robertson

Frankie provides some background for the plan, original passed in 2004 resolution by SJ County, plan in 2007. It included Biodiversity targets, threats, stressors (Frankie reviews these). All stressors remain of concern today. Came up with six strategies for protecting our MSA. Monitoring plans were written in 2009 and updated in 2011. Recently, 2019, MSA subcommittee initiated review, March 2020 Marine Managers Workshop (MMW), brought together experts to review biodiversity targets, then updating at retreats and MRC meetings 2021-2022. April 2023 MMW to review and prioritize recommendations, distilled to 9 themes. The Management Strategy Review from 2007 showed significant progress on 3 of the strategies, no progress on 10 strategies

Graph shows the number of species of concern in the Salish Sea is growing (from State of Salish Sea report)

Frankie reviews Conservation Biodiversity Targets, there's comprehensive background and status for each. The MSA document includes list of map resources (could be an interactive map). Agencies will keep updating links

Identified threat themes. Lists relevant management efforts, plans, references for other Tribal and agency efforts

2023 Recommendations: includes all the objectives from the Salmon Recovery Chapter Update

Frankie reviews: 60 recommendations in 7 Objective areas (outreach, protection, etc.), 9 key objectives

Frankie thanks those involved: MRC members, MSA subcommittee, local scientists, agencies, Tribal reps, etc.

NEXT: MRC Approval – address edits, send out for peer review to those who participated. Address comments. Then going into the Comprehensive Plan update, opportunity to ensure that marine protection is incorporated.

Kendra: In the Comp (Comprehensive) plan, there are elements specifically associated with Marine issues. We're starting a new element on climate, required by growth management act, we'll draw from MSA plan a great deal

Lovel: question about the process going forward, how will MSA update be adopted by Council?

Kendra: After peer review is done on this, it may get rolled into the Comp Plan

Craig: do we mention intersections with the visitor management plan in terms of some recommendations?

Kendra: still sorting through over 900 comments, we'll discuss that feedback with Council end of January. We want to make sure to incorporate pieces that the public supported in the Comp plan. There was a lot of thoughtful feedback and a lot of concern around mobility and housing – associated with tourism but not entirely. Interplay with the marine program is relevant and ties into the climate element. It'll be a big lift for 2025.

Kendra reviews staff in the marine program, the Clean Water Utility and Solid Waste Coordinator, etc.

Megan: Will the MSA plan now be referred to and used differently? We avoided completely revamping the plan

Frankie: Now calling it the State of the MSA rather than a 'plan', encompasses status and recommendations

Kendra: it's a foundational body of work we can use on various fronts (capital planning/programming, etc.), it's a guiding document for our work. We're on a tight timeline for Comp plan which needs to be updated by 2024

Frankie: 75% of recommendations in the MSA are nearly complete, started or ongoing

Lovel: unlike the Comp plan which has requirements to be updated, there was no requirement with this plan.

Kendra: that's something to consider with all our implementing plans (salmon recovery etc.), they can be updated as needed over time. Comp plan won't have same level of detail needed for implementation of planning.

I encourage everyone to read the Comp plan and become familiar with it

Beth: What is the timeline for peer review of the State of the MSA?

-Frankie wants edits back from MRC by end of first week of January,

Other reviewers are agency managers and scientists and community members who were at the MMW's

Opportunity to provide peer review and appendices with comments gives the document more credibility

Christina: has County committed to continuing MMW's every two years?

Frankie: they don't always need to be dedicated to this particular effort, they can be subject-specific/ theme

Opportunity for them to look at specific areas of concern, bring in experts i.e., sea level rise, mooring buoys, etc.

But will be useful to revisit recommendations and progress –may be good to include in annual retreat(s)

12:08 PM Break for group photo

12:10 PM Resume discussion

Cindy: Bears thought how to present to Council, plans are getting more integrated into how business is done

Jeff: so what's your recommendation for the review of this process? This is a grassroots, non-mandated document, we're trying to foster stewardship of the Salish sea. But responsibility needs to be taken for policy

Cindy: this plan comes up for review at a time when we've hit a fracture, a transition where we've lost the ability to have civil discourse, angst and concern. Need to ensure people are heard but protecting health of the Salish Sea is

not up for debate. In face of the pushback we got on the destination management plan, need a policy that we

check within a certain number of years, and facing a larger question about public engagement and dialogue

David: sounds like you're saying the review process is important here and we need community buy-in

Craig: the MRC is an influential body, would be counterproductive to politicize what we do here

Cindy: yes, we're at a point in time at which we don't agree on reality. So for Council, how do we develop a process where we can come to an agreement on a shared reality? Or if not, then at least a majority consensus

Kendra: we're involving sociologists and facilitators. We lost the destination management plan in community angst.

Large goal to heal the community and make sure it gets what it wants to see for coming decades. Need to be

realistic about what these islands can support. Need to refer to these documents regularly in forming work plan and budget for the year. We're not engaged in rogue activity, we stay grounded in feedback from community

Q: when will county release sea-level maps for the county?

Kendra: we have draft maps that cover majority of the areas where we have inundation issues. Need to focus more on how to communicate it to people, so maybe that map will be available soon in new year

Cindy: but sooner to Eastsound water? Kendra: yes, in progress

MOTION: Lovel moves to authorize staff to send the State of the MSA out for peer review, Craig seconds, all in favor, the motion passes. Thanks Frankie, great work!

12:25 PM Adjourn MSA Working Session, break for working lunch (Networking and debrief)

1:20 PM Recap of 2023 MRC Accomplishments

Sam Whitridge

It was a busy productive year, -MMW April 4-5, 2023, great energy being together, instrumental to MSA report

-GICU (Great Island Clean Up) Spring event in April is usually the busier one, 301 volunteers, in the fall in September 164 volunteers, Sam breaks down stats for pounds of debris removed

-Derelict Vessel Prevention Program had some high-profile vessels e.g., the Morningstar in Blind Bay was our top priority. Marta worked with DNR to get it lifted and funded. Sam reviews a few other examples. Made a derelict vessel awareness video, some other outreach accomplished. Working with NWSC derelict vessel workgroup

-Eelgrass Protection, we hired an intern, vessel compliance monitoring at Odlin and other monitoring sites

-Jackson Beach Creosote removal, we had contingency in the budget because more pilings pulled than we realized

ACTION ITEM: Frankie will email link to 'engage' page on MRC site, describes piling removal and restoration plans

Other 2023 highlights: NWSC meeting on Lopez in June, NWSC conference in PT last month, Lovel presented on ERTV work, added 5 new MRC members (a third of committee is new as of last year), ongoing ERTV advocacy/oil spill prevention advocacy, another successful salmon recovery grant round including three shoreline armoring removal projects, outreach events (Seattle boat show, FHL open house, SJ county fair, etc.), finalized new logo

1:35 PM **MRC Work Plan for 2024**

MRC Staff/Subcommittee Leads

Let's review each of our core tasks identified for this year, match up with our subcommittee list to ensure people are linked, see if there are new ideas/projects we want to work on in 2024 (Sam shares spreadsheet of projects)

Task #1: MRC Admin and Promotion

Monthly meetings (May site visits and December retreat). July 4th is a Thursday this year so likely to reschedule

Other admin includes ongoing reporting, pursuing grant opportunities, etc.

Task #2: Derelict Vessel Prevention Program

By end of January, needs to finalize criteria for removal and list of vessels which are priorities for removal.

For Derelict Vessel subcommittee Adam, Kari, Jeff, Christina, Matt, and Craig.

ACTION ITEM: Can Phil Green stay on the subcommittee? Sam will ask Phil if he's happy to stay

We always need help with vessel surveys, there will also be a lot of work associated with vessel turn in

Task #3: Eelgrass Protection

Maintenance of Odlin buoys, vessel monitoring there and at Bell Point, Eastsound (Some overlap with task #6)

Subcommittee: Frankie & Katie, Beth, Sandy, Christina, and Jeff

Beth: still trying to connect with people about getting eelgrass survey data into charts, goal to sort that out

Frankie: I can help with that, it's getting it onto charts but also on to boater apps. Idea of geofencing

- Some discussion of types of charts, paper vs. online, Navionics, Canadian, NobelTec

Eelgrass zones would be voluntary, not required

Sandy: we also plan to talk more about the other seagrasses. Particularly in southern parts of SJ and Lopez

Frankie: app called seagrass spotter, it's a citizen science tool to report different types of seagrasses

And, Sandy and Megan sit on the working group to restore native eelgrasses

ACTION ITEM: Sandy will send that information to Frankie

-Discussion of seagrass information on ferries, can NWSC (North West Straits Commission) help with that?

Lucas: depends on budget and capacity. For a regional scale project, try to pull together multiple counties.

Frankie: it could be the 'catch more crab' campaign, PFSS, not projects specific to just one MRC.

-discussion of other information that could be provided on the ferry

Task #6: Understanding Vessel Impacts – opportunistic boat counts, aerial surveys

Sam refers to some other possible funding. Frankie and Lucas discuss specific criteria for funding projects.

Frankie: we're trying to assess boat density and areas of biggest impact, how those overlap with eelgrass, kelp, cultural areas, etc. to help decide where public mooring system would be, in conjunction with Tribal treaty rights.

This is just baseline boat use data to figure out other issues, like where to prioritize for certain things.

Task #7: Benthic Habitat Characterization, benthic habitat surveys

Craig Smith

Starting in Lopez Sound, shallower than 70' where boats anchor. Work with Gary Greene. They have side-scan sonar and vessel. Hope to begin surveys in June, will provide data on seagrass habitat and derelict fishing gear. Craig lists some other potential sites and describes more detail about how to use side scan sonar technology -Jeff and Craig discuss some specific sites around Lopez, shallow areas where boats anchor

Task #4: Marine Stewardship

Sam Whitridge

This was the MSA plan update; now this is where we have work for next Marine Managers' Workshops in 2025. Also small spills outreach which to local marinas. Initially, create a database around assessment of local marinas. We've also discussed a workshop of marina managers to connect them with resources, start a dialogue
Sam: when there's a deliverable, staff needs to be involved. Katie taking the lead on marina outreach
But for subcommittee work seems like this could be lumped in with Oil Spill Prevention, Lovel involved
Lovel: but then where's the ERTV advocacy and following through on that? It was my interest in the oil spill prevention subcommittee to keep that on the forefront while that's fresh
ACTION: Sam will add that in as a subtask, thanks Lovel
Sam: that's not exactly a deliverable, it's mentioned as a likely outcome
Frankie: want to bring marina managers together not just to talk about small spills but also challenges, barriers, form better communication so they have open lines to talk to each other. Other issues: pump-outs, gas, etc.
Christina: did you do surveys around marinas for what type of pump outs they're using?
Sam: there's the partnership with WA SeaGrant, they have a lot of resources
Frankie suggests a couple of contacts from Bellingham recommends inviting contacts met at SOBA conference
Lovel: and rope in the County parks that are on the water e.g., Odlin
Frankie: I suggest a meeting first with just marinas, provide a space to communicate, then bring in other partners
This connects back to the topic of transient moorage and understanding how much space is actually available.

Task #5: Plastic Free Salish Sea

Karin Roemers-Kleven

Still need beach and road stewards, need some updating on website. This is a Salish-sea wide issue. Want to meet with other MRC's maybe quarterly on this issue, so that we can come up with new and big projects together
Big places where plastic is generated are building (construction sites), businesses (packaging) –areas in our communities where we could target big plastic producers. Hope to collaborate on that with other MRC's
Subcommittee: Karin, Craig Sandy – Katie from staff

2:42 PM Other projects/areas of interest?

Frankie: for Be whale Wise, struggling with losing staff with partners at Whale Museum and Soundwatch. That leaves us covering the Boat Show on our own as MRC. It's end of January/early February, runs from 10am-8pm. Also, I have a small grant for a Killer Whale Deterrence workshop next week. And I'm on Orca advisory committee updating some materials. It's time for an independent Be Whale Wise coordinator separate from Soundwatch.
-some discussion of whale approach regulations, enforcement possibilities
-some discussion of data involving whale prey success rate in the presence of vessel noise and sufficient vessel distance, and how to communicate that to recreational boaters?
Frankie discusses issues of boaters' behavior around whales, issues of growing population/new boaters

3:02 pm

Adjourn Retreat