

Clallam County Marine Resources Committee 2020 Annual Report



Prepared by
Clallam County Marine Resources Committee



About the Clallam MRC

The Clallam County Marine Resources Committee (Clallam MRC) was established by a resolution of Clallam County as a result of the 1998 Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative. The Initiative combines data-driven science with grassroots involvement by citizens in an effort to promote local solutions that protect and restore marine resources in Clallam County.



We work to discover collaborative ways to improve shellfish harvest areas, protect marine habitat, support salmon and forage fish recovery and explore resource management alternatives to reduce impacts on marine resources. We also provide input to Clallam County Board of Commissioners, when appropriate, to ensure the protection and restoration of marine resources. In addition to participating in a variety of environmental monitoring programs, we manage and support projects focused on removing marine debris and derelict fishing gear, training citizens to safely respond to an oil spill, restoring Olympia oysters, and educating the community on emerging environmental issues. We also sponsor student interns to work on Clallam MRC projects to foster their interest in natural resource careers. Early on the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC) developed several benchmarks for the Initiative including marine habitats, marine life, water quality and engagement of the local community through citizen science and educational outreach. In 2019 the members added climate change as a benchmark. The table below shows how the MRC tasks support the benchmarks.

In 2019-20 The Clallam MRC received funding from Washington State and US EPA through the Puget Sound Partnership and NWSC.

Clallam MRC Grant Tasks	NWSC Benchmarks					
	Marine Habitats	Marine Life	Marine Water Quality	Citizen Science	Education & Outreach	Climate Change
Operations						
Educational Outreach					❖	❖
Oil Spill Response	❖	❖	❖		❖	
Marine Debris/Derelict Gear	❖	❖			❖	
Olympia Oyster Restoration	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
Forage Fish Survey	❖	❖		❖	❖	❖
Kelp Monitoring	❖	❖		❖	❖	❖
Pigeon Guillemot Survey	❖	❖		❖	❖	❖
Shellfish Biotoxin Monitoring	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	

Membership

The Clallam MRC is a balanced team of members comprised of local citizens representing academia, the development community, conservation and environmental interests as well as Makah, Lower Elwha Klallam and Jamestown S'Klallam tribes, City of Port Angeles and City of Sequim, the Port of Port Angeles and the county districts.

Member	Interest/Representation
Current Members: October 2020	
Bob Vreeland, Chair	Conservation & Environmental Interests
Robert Knapp, Vice-Chair	Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
Alan Clark, NWSC Representative	At-Large
LaTrisha Suggs	Port Angeles City Council
Lyn Muench	Commissioner District II
Mike Doherty	Commissioner District III
Jesse Waknitz	Port of Port Angeles
Ann Stafford	Marine Related Recreation & Tourism
Ann Soule	Sequim City Council
Arnold Schouten	Development Community
Tim Cochnauer	At-Large
Jeff Ward	Commissioner District I
Ed Bowlby	Academia
Open position	Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
Open position	Makah Tribe
Alternates	
Chris Burns	Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
Navarra Carr	Port Angeles City Council
Harold Kline	Commissioner District III
Ioana Bociu	Academia
Alisa Hasbrouck	Sequim City Council
Ex-Officio Members	
Mary Ellen Winborn	Director, Clallam County Dept. Community Development
Cathy Lear	CMRC Coordinator
Helle Andersen	CMRC Project Coordinator

Operations

Goal: ✧ To carry out administrative functions in support of the mission, including work plan preparation, developing and preparing grant proposals, programmatic staff support, project monitoring and performance tracking, coordinating education and internship programs, planning, and participating in training opportunities.

Clallam MRC Meetings and Communication – The Clallam MRC met monthly to discuss project items and listen to informative presentations from two invited guests. All meetings since April were held online because of Covid-19. Clallam MRC staff prepared and distributed meeting agendas and minutes.

Grant Administration – Clallam MRC staff wrote regular progress reports, tracked and administered the budget, and ensured projects were supported and reaching their stated goals.

Website Maintenance – The Clallam MRC maintained its website containing information on past and upcoming meetings, and current and completed projects (<http://www.clallamcountymrc.org/>). The website was regularly updated with meeting agendas and approved minutes, as well as current news. In February Clallam MRC initiated their Facebook page to post weekly information about MRC projects and activities. By end of 2020 the Facebook page had 138 followers.

Annual Workplan Development – The Clallam MRC developed a work plan to guide the work and priorities of the Clallam MRC for the 2019-2020 grant year.

Strategic Plan – The Clallam MRC adhered to the [2019-24 Strategic Plan](#).

Training – Clallam MRC members and staff were encouraged to participate in trainings relevant to the Clallam MRC's goals and projects. Because of Covid-19 the annual MRC conference was cancelled. Ed Bowlby led the online pigeon guillemot survey training. In October Lisa Hillier gave an in-person training in sampling for the forage fish project to six MRC volunteers and staff.

Representation at NWSC Meetings – Alan Clark served as the Clallam MRC representative to the NWSC. Alan is also the Chair of the NWSC. The Representative attended the monthly meetings which were held online since February because of Covid-19. In his capacity as NWSC Chair Alan also participated in the executive meetings and the external affairs meetings.

Presentations to Local Government Officials: The Climate Change Subcommittee met with the three county commissioners on June 2nd (Mark Ozias), August 14th (Randy Johnson), and September 4th (Bill Peach). The subcommittee members are Ann Soule, Ed Bowlby, Bob Vreeland, Lyn Muench, Alan Clark and Jeff Ward.

Participation in Local Integrating Organization Meetings – As a member of the steering group Cathy Lear, Clallam MRC Coordinator, attended the quarterly steering group meetings and the ERN/LIO quarterly meetings.

Education and Outreach

Goal: ✧ Successful engagement of the public, students, and citizen scientists in emerging issues including climate change, toxics including marine debris, fossil fuel transportation and shoreline development within Clallam County that have the potential to adversely affect marine life.

Covid-19: ✧ Clallam MRC's education and outreach events were severely impacted by Covid-19. All festivals and the Ocean Science event in Clallam County were cancelled. All other events or programs were adapted to Covid restrictions on social engagement.

Intern Program

Since 2010 Clallam MRC has provided paid internships to high school and college students to work with scientists and other professionals on current environmental projects.

For the last five years, the internships have been tied into the four major categories of Clallam MRC's projects: nearshore, water quality, marine species, and education & outreach.

In 2020 the Clallam MRC sponsored five internships associated with the following projects 1) green crab capture and removal in Neah Bay led by the Makah Tribe, 2) smolt trap on Tumwater Creek and 3) video production.

Community Events

2020 community events included:

- MRC symposium – topic “the MRC’s advisory role”
- SoundIQ webinar
- Boys & Girls Club in Port Angeles and Sequim
- West Elwha Beach stewardship.



The internships culminate in the Intern Celebration – a public event that showcases the interns and the work done by Clallam MRC. Because of Covid-19 the event at the Feiro Marine Life Center was cancelled and the celebration was moved to an online platform. During the public event three of the interns presented their projects and the two video interns showed the draft video about the Clallam MRC to 34 local residents.

Fellow Program

In 2020 the Clallam MRC expanded their educational outreach to college students by offering a fellowship. The decision was made partly because of Covid-19 impacts, but also because the leaders on the kelp monitoring project expressed interest in hiring a more mature student to avoid having to retrain an intern and thereby be able to accomplish more on the project. The fellowship focused on the kelp and the pigeon guillemot monitoring projects but the fellow was also tasked with administrative tasks such as writing Facebook posts, running online meetings and assisting with other projects on an as needed basis.



MRC Symposium

The Clallam MRC and the NWSC co-hosted an online symposium about “the MRC’s Advisory Role.” The symposium included an introduction to the Clallam MRC, a presentation on Clallam MRC’s advisory role to the county and a question & answer session focused on the following seven questions: How important is an advisory role for County/City elected officials OR senior staff to your MRC? Does your MRC have tools that have been effective? Have you tried anything that was not successful? Do they seek your input/assistance regularly or sporadically, and if so how often? Does an individual MRC member conduct the liaison work or is it a group effort? Do other community groups assist with the effectiveness of your advisory role? Any other advices? The audience included 50 people from the seven MRCs, the Northwest Straits Initiative, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and Washington Conservation Crew/AmeriCorps.



SoundIQ Webinar

The Clallam MRC in partnership with NWSC hosted a webinar about Sound IQ, a georeferenced database, managed by NWSC’s GIS Specialist Suzanne Shull. Suzanne showed how to access the environmental data in Sound IQ and how it can be used to support regulatory oversight of nearshore development and Shoreline Master Plan updates. The audience included 17 participants consisting of planners and engineers from Clallam County, City of Sequim, and City of Port Angeles, Clallam County Commissioner, and MRC members.

Boys & Girls Club in Port Angeles and Sequim

Similar to previous years, Clallam MRC had planned to do educational outreach to K-12 students, but because of Covid-19 everything was cancelled. Instead the Clallam MRC reached out to the Boys & Girls Club lunchbox program to connect with K-12 students. In partnership with the SeaDoc Society, Clallam MRC compiled 275 educational outreach packages focused on the book Explore the Salish Sea, a Nature Guide for Kids. In the week of August 17th, 200 packages were handed out to students through the Port Angeles Club and another 75 to students through the Sequim Club. The package included the book, an activity book compiled by Clallam MRC, crayons, stickers of sea creatures, temporary tattoos depicting sea creatures, and a competition for the best story and drawing.



West Elwha Beach Stewardship

The Stewardship Program of West Elwha Beach was initiated in summer 2015 and it quickly became apparent that the main issue was dog and human waste. In winter 2017 the Clallam MRC decided to fund a Sanikan, dog waste disposal bins and a dog waste bag dispenser to encourage the visitors to use the facilities instead of leaving waste on the beach and in the bushes. The Clallam MRC continued to maintain the Sanikan and dog waste facility in 2020. Twice a month the bag dispenser was checked and refilled with bags. A total of approximately 4,000 bags are dispensed every year.

What's Next?

Clallam MRC will continue to conduct educational outreach through the intern program and online events as long as Covid-19 restrictions are in effect. When possible, Clallam MRC will resume the educational outreach through the Ocean Science program, forums, workshops, and participation in festivals. For 2021 high-priority topics include climate change, toxins in the marine environment, fossil fuel transport, shoreline development and “get to know you MRC.”

Derelict Fishing Gear

Goal: ✧ Educate recreational crabbers about the impacts of lost crab pots and how to catch crabs correctly.

Since its inception the Clallam MRC has been involved in removing debris from our marine waters. In the early 2000s the focus was on derelict fishing gear, but as that effort was taken over by the NWSF the Clallam MRC focused on marine debris removal along the shores of the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

In 2017, as part of the "Catch More Crab" program led by Snohomish MRC, the Clallam MRC started conducting educational outreach to recreational crabbers about how to correctly set your crab pot so not to lose it and thereby catch more crab. Our goal is zero lost crab pots in Puget Sound and for everyone to have a successful day on the water.

Outreach to recreational crabbers in 2020 through the NWSF and their NOAA Marine Debris grant was cancelled because of Covid-19. Because the Clallam MRC places great importance in the educational outreach to recreational crabbers the members decided to conduct a very limited outreach by placing educational kits in retail stores such as Costco and Big-5 in Sequim and Swains in Port Angeles and posting information on our website and Facebook page.

Accomplishments

- ✧ A total of 86 educational kits were distributed to recreational crabbers.
- ✧ Removed 53 derelict crab pots from Dungeness Bay.
- ✧ Clallam MRC's Facebook posts promoting proper crabbing techniques reached 200 people and 30 people engaged.



What's Next?

Clallam MRC will continue educational outreach to recreational crabbers.

Forage Fish Monitoring

Goals: ✧ Provide a better understanding of the forage fish populations within the Salish Sea by performing citizen science monitoring and raising awareness about the ecological importance of forage fish.

Accomplishments

- ✧ Conducted 11 monthly surveys at Cline Spit, a WDFW index site.
- ✧ Conducted 11 monthly surveys at two restoration sites on Ediz Hook.
- ✧ Six MRC volunteers and staff participated in forage fish sampling training provided by Lisa Hillier from WDFW.



In 2020 Clallam MRC continued collaborating with Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) on the forage fish spawning project. Monthly samples were collected at the index site Cline Spit and at the two restoration sites on Ediz Hook. Sampling events were missed in April 2020 because of Covid-19.

Unlike previous years the intensive annual sampling event was cancelled by the WDFW because of Covid-19.

Covid-19 also impacted the WDFW laboratory which was closed for several months. For the duration of the closure either WDFW or Clallam MRC stored the samples. In August the laboratory started working on the backlog of samples. Because of the closure Clallam MRC received no laboratory data from the WDFW in 2020.

WDFW is the lead agency analyzing the data to improve the understanding of the ecology of forage fish and their importance in the food web. All the forage fish data collected by WDFW, the MRCs and other organizations is available online.

What's Next?

The Clallam MRC will continue to monitor forage fish at numerous sites along the Strait of Juan de Fuca and participate in the intensive annual sampling event to better understand this important component to the marine food web.

Olympia Oyster Restoration

Goal: ✧ Contribute to the Puget Sound-wide effort to restore 100 acres of sustainable Olympia oyster habitat by restoring 2 acres in Sequim Bay by 2020.

After the busy 2019 restoration season the 2020 season at the two restoration sites was quiet giving the Olympia oyster populations time to respond to the blank shells spread in 2019.

In August 2020 two population surveys were conducted at the restoration sites. This was the year to see if the restoration effort had met the goal of 2 acres by 2020. Unfortunately, Olympia oyster populations covered approximately 1.60 acres of tidelands – 0.4 acre short of the goal.



Accomplishments

- ✧ Conducted surveys at the two restoration sites to assess population abundance and size distribution of the Olympia oysters.
- ✧ Conducted large scale population survey at the head of Sequim Bay.

However, to investigate a notable increase in Olympia oysters observed by Jamestown’s Natural Resources staff throughout the Blyn tidelands, a large-scale survey of Olympia oysters throughout Jamestown’s tribal tidelands was conducted in summer of 2020. The purpose of this tideland-wide survey was to identify “hot spots” of Olympia oysters and their preferred habitat at the head of Sequim Bay.

The outcomes of the survey will be available this coming winter and it is very likely that the goal of 2 acres has been met based on Olympia oyster populations present throughout the tidelands at the head of Sequim Bay.

What's Next?

Clallam MRC and its partners will continue to monitor and enhance the two Olympia oyster restoration sites in Sequim Bay. .

Kelp Monitoring

Goal: ✧ Monitor the size and density of kelp canopies during low-tide events between July and September and develop a georeferenced database of kelp abundance and distribution that can be incorporated into the Sound IQ database and used by Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

Accomplishments

- ✧ Conducted surveys of three kelp beds in Freshwater and Clallam Bay.
- ✧ Conducted motorized surveys between Dungeness Bay and the mouth of Lyre River.
- ✧ For 2 months measured water temperature at two levels in a kelp bed.
- ✧ Took numerous underwater videos.
- ✧ Submitted three maps to NWSC to be incorporated into SoundIQ.

In 2015 Clallam MRC joined the NWSC kelp monitoring project and the effort was expanded in 2020 by conducting motorized surveys along with the kayak based surveys of one bed in Clallam Bay and two beds in Freshwater Bay. In addition, the surveyors deployed two Hobo temperature monitors for two months in Freshwater Bay and took numerous underwater videos.

The survey data will be incorporated into the NWSC SoundIQ database and used to track the size and extent of the kelp bed in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The information will be shared with WDNR.



What's Next?

The Clallam MRC will continue monitoring the kelp beds in Freshwater and Clallam Bay and the motorized surveys along the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Pigeon Guillemot

Goal: ✧ Monitor pigeon guillemots nesting success and foraging behavior in Clallam County.

The pigeon guillemot is considered an indicator species of nearshore health, since it feeds primarily on forage fish such as gunnells and pricklebacks and other small marine creatures it catches by diving beneath the surface.

In 2016 Clallam MRC initiated pigeon guillemot breeding surveys in the county in collaboration with Island MRC and Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society. Pigeon guillemots lay eggs in the early summer, and by end of June the birds are busy providing fish for the juveniles in the burrows. In 2020, volunteers surveyed 15 separate colonies between Freshwater Bay and Mussel Beach. A total of 32 volunteers surveyed the colonies once a week for one hour between June and September.



Accomplishments

- ✧ Partnered with Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society.
- ✧ Organized a team of 32 volunteers.
- ✧ Surveyed 15 pigeon guillemot colonies throughout the summer months.
- ✧ The data was incorporated into a regional database and made available to the public at <http://pigeonguillemotdata.org/clallam/2020/>

What's Next?

Clallam MRC will continue monitoring pigeon guillemot colonies in Clallam County. The number of colonies surveyed each year will depend on the number of volunteers.

Shellfish Biotoxin Monitoring

Goal: ✧ Monitor for shellfish biotoxin and the sanitary conditions at Pillar Point Park.

In 1942, three people died after eating shellfish contaminated with PSP. The shellfish were collected along the Strait of Juan de Fuca and because of the deaths WDFW closed the Strait to recreational shellfish harvest from April 1 to October 31 each year.

In 2002, WDFW and DOH worked to replace this regulatory closure with a management system based on actual biotoxin data. Clallam MRC collected shellfish samples every two weeks from several locations west of Dungeness Spit. Based on this effort recreational summertime shellfish harvesting in the Strait was opened up for the first time in more than 40 years.

In 2017, DOH and CCEH asked the Clallam MRC if the members would be interested in monitoring the public beach at Pillar Point west of Port Angeles. The monitoring included collecting shellfish for biotoxin analysis and reporting the sanitary conditions of the beach every two weeks. In 2012 the public beach had been downgraded from “approved” to “conditionally approved” because of poor water quality stemming from bacterial pollution. “Conditionally approved” meant that the beach was closed to shellfish harvest during high risk parts of the year.

The monitoring efforts contributed to reopening 27 acres of commercial shellfish harvest area near Pillar Point in December 2017. The Clallam MRC continued the monitoring efforts in 2020.



Accomplishments

- ✧ Partnered with Washington Department of Health and Clallam County Environmental Health.
- ✧ Collected shellfish samples for biotoxin analysis every two weeks between April and September.
- ✧ Monitored the sanitary conditions at Pillar Point Park every two weeks between April and September.
- ✧ The biotoxin data was made available to the public at DOH’s website <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/biotoxin/biotoxin.html>

What's Next?

Clallam MRC will continue collecting shellfish and monitoring the sanitary conditions at Pillar Point Park each year between April and September.

On the Horizon

In addition to the continuation and development of existing projects as highlighted throughout this report, the Clallam MRC is looking forward to focusing on the following efforts in 2021.

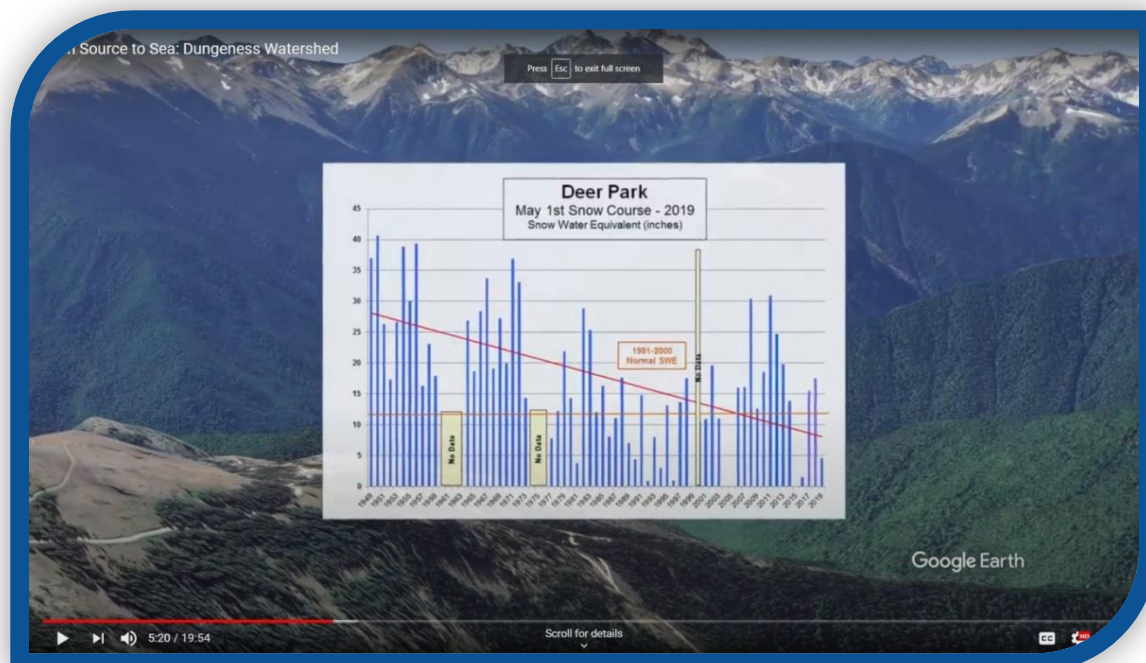
Climate Change

At a retreat in late 2019 the MRC members identified climate change as its biggest concern. The members created a subcommittee which in 2020 reached out to the three County Commissioners as a first step.

Because of Covid-19, in-person meetings with the commissioners were delayed until the summer of 2020. The following Next Steps rose to the top after the three meetings:

- Engage with the North Olympic Development Council regarding climate planning grant
- Review DNR's climate change proposal
- Connect with County staff to find and interpret local environmental data and continue to engage with the Commissioners
- Reach out to the local business community for their involvement and to keep them informed on upcoming issues such as kelp aquaculture
- Expand Clallam MRC's educational outreach to youth

The Clallam MRC will continue working on these topics in 2021.

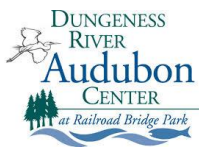


Partners

Through the years Clallam MRC has collaborated with numerous partners. The logos below list the organizations and agencies Clallam MRC partnered with in 2020.



Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe



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