

Project Title/Task: 1.8 Annual Report Year 2

Period covered: October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024

Date: April 15, 2025

Grant No: SEANWS-2023-CICoCD-00005



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ANNUAL REPORT

2024



Oct 2023 - Sept 2024



PUGET SOUND
PARTNERSHIP



Northwest
Straits
INITIATIVE
partners in marine conservation

ABOUT THE CLALLAM MRC

The Clallam County Marine Resources Committee (Clallam MRC) was established in 1998 as part of the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative to involve citizens in protecting and restoring marine resources. We work on improving shellfish harvest areas, habitat protection, salmon recovery, and reducing impacts on marine resources. The committee also engages in environmental monitoring, manages projects like marine debris removal and oil spill response training, restores Olympia oysters, educates the community on environmental issues, and sponsors student interns. The MRC is working toward benchmarks for marine habitats, marine life, water quality, community engagement, and climate change.



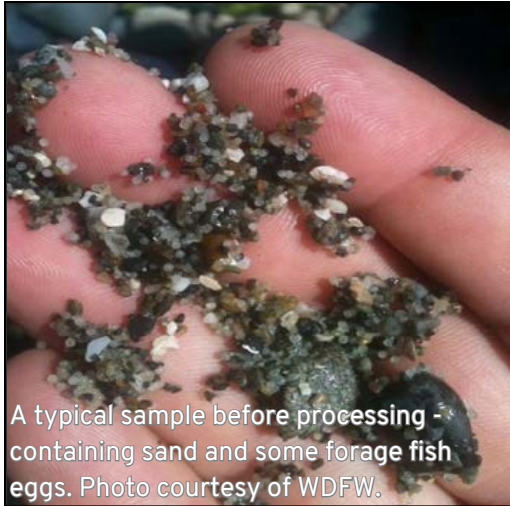
MRC MEMBERS

Tim Cochnauer ----- Chair Oct-May and representing the Community At-Large
LaTrisha Suggs ----- Chair May-Sept, Representing the City of Port Angeles
Ann Soule ----- Vice Chair and representing Commissioner District II
Alan Clark ----- NWSC Representative and representing the Community At-Large
Mary Sue Brancato ----- Alternate representing the Community At-Large
Ray Kirk ----- Alternate representing the Community At-Large
Chris Burns ----- Representing the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe
Robert Knapp ----- Alternate representing the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe
Justin Stapleton ----- Representing the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
Allyce Miller ----- Alternate representing the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
Ed Bowlby ----- Representing the Academic Community
Ioana Bociu ----- Alternate representing the Academic Community
Bob Vreeland ----- Representing Conservation & Environmental Interests
Nancy Stephanz ----- Alternate representing Conservation & Environmental Interests
Jeff Ward ----- Representing Commissioner District I
Lance Vail ----- Alternate representing Commissioner District I
Lyn Muench ----- Alternate representing Commissioner District II
Mike Doherty ----- Representing Commissioner District III
Jesse Waknitz ----- Representing the Port of Port Angeles
Katharine Frazier ----- Alternate representing the Port of Port Angeles
Ann Stafford ----- Representing Marine Recreation & Tourism Interests
Helle Andersen ----- Alternate representing Marine Recreation & Tourism Interests
Christopher Rumble ----- Representing the Development Community
Lisa Law ----- Alternate representing the Development Community
Navarra Carr ----- Alternate representing the City of Port Angeles
Meggan Uecker ----- Representing the City of Sequim
Harmony Rutter ----- Alternate representing the City of Sequim
Cathy Lear ----- *ex officio*, Clallam County Habitat Biologist
Rebecca Mahan ----- MRC Coordinator & Clallam County Habitat Biologist

FORAGE FISH MONITORING

GOAL: To 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.

HIGHLIGHTS: MRC members assisted WDFW with capacity to survey forage fish spawning. Members sampled monthly for forage fish eggs across four locations: Ediz Hook, Cline Spit, and Elwha Beaches east and west - finding a total of 763 eggs.



EDIZ HOOK

32 20

surf smelt eggs sand lance eggs

In April 2017, the MRC began sampling for forage fish eggs at two restored sites on Ediz Hook, in partnership with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. The sampling is now focused on Tesoro Beach, where forage fish eggs were found during October and December.

ELWHA BEACH

2 0

surf smelt egg sand lance eggs

The MRC first sampled east of the Elwha River's mouth in 2017, and in 2021 expanded to a site west of the river's mouth after WDFW's surveys there ended. The eggs found at these sites in 2023-2024 were west of the river's mouth, as in the previous year.

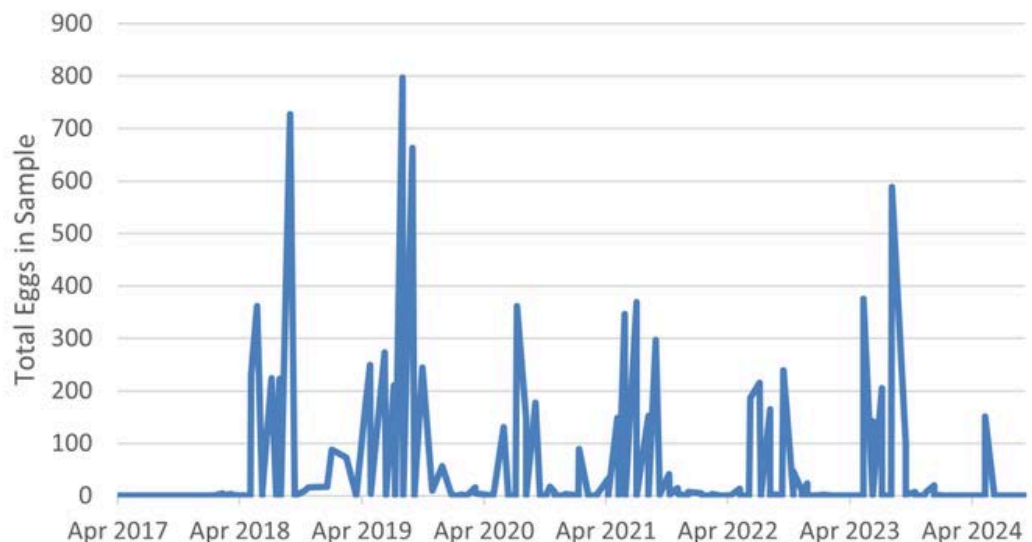
CLINE SPIT

687 22

surf smelt eggs sand lance eggs

Since 2018, Cline Spit has been surveyed monthly as a "reference site", as survey efforts reliably find surf smelt eggs here - particularly during summer. In 2024, eggs were found in October, November, December, and May.

Forage fish data are both processed by and shared with WDFW, as part of a [regional long-term dataset](#).



KELP MONITORING

GOAL: To monitor the size and density of kelp canopies during summer low-tide events, and develop a georeferenced database of kelp abundance and distribution for the SoundIQ database and sharing with WDNR.

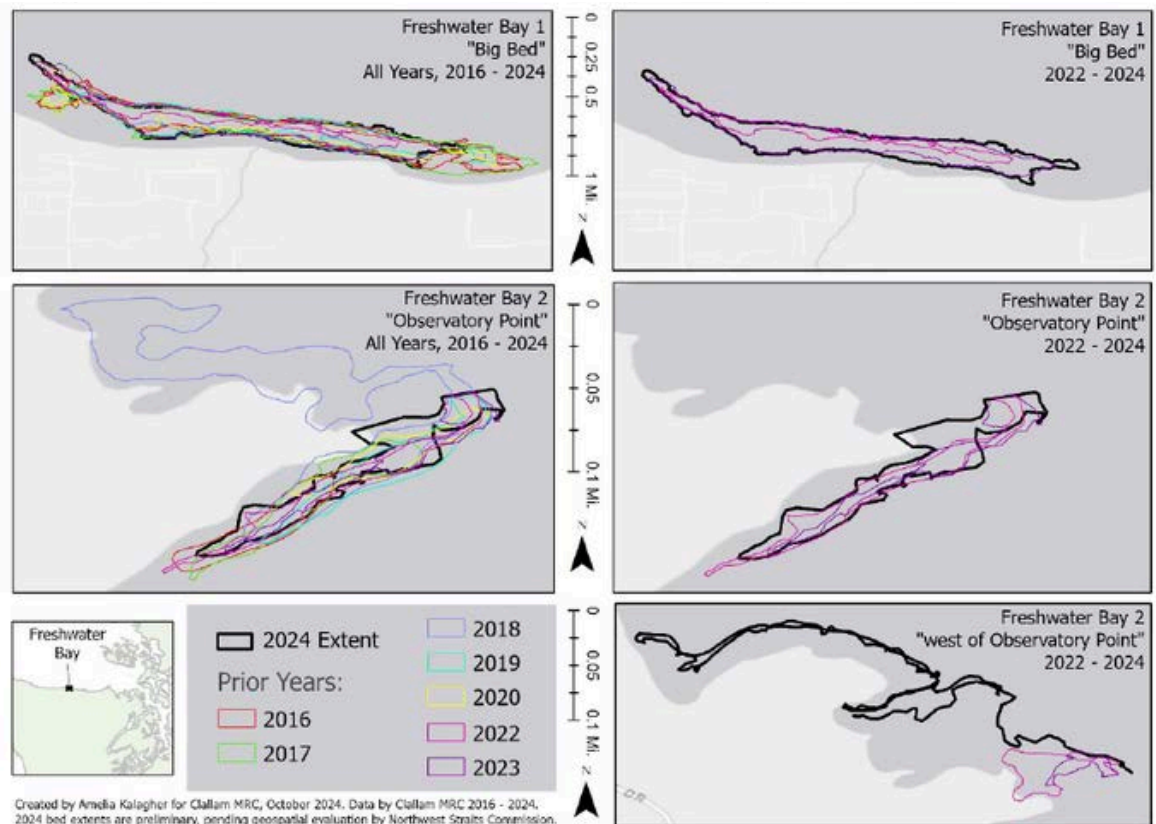
HIGHLIGHTS: Three kelp surveys were conducted at Freshwater Bay, showing healthy beds overall and improved density since the prior season.

FRESHWATER BAY



MRC members and volunteers conducted three kelp surveys at Freshwater Bay in August and September 2024. The entirety of the kelp beds -- Southeast of Bachelor Rock as well as Northwest of the Rock -- were dominated by bull kelp (*Nereocystis leutkeana*), while some giant kelp was also present. The kelp bed was well connected around the outer edge of Bachelor Rock. This made for a larger kelp bed area than what is included in just the main surveyed bed, continuous with the bed of bull kelp present in the bay North of the Rock. The Clallam Bay bed could not be surveyed this year due to time and tidal constraints. Monitoring this bed will be a priority for the 2025 summer season.

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



PIGEON GUILLEMOT MONITORING

GOAL: Document pigeon guillemot breeding colonies on Clallam County beaches using established protocols, involving citizen scientist volunteers to expand the monitoring area in the Salish Sea for this indicator species.

HIGHLIGHTS: A total of nine pigeon guillemot colonies were monitored by 42 volunteers. Nesting continued well into September, somewhat later into the season than usual.

The pigeon guillemot is considered an indicator species of nearshore health, since it feeds primarily on forage fish such as gunnells and sculpins, and other small marine creatures which it catches by diving beneath the surface. Clallam MRC initiated pigeon guillemot breeding surveys in the county in 2016, in collaboration with Island MRC and Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society. Pigeon guillemots lay eggs in the early summer, and the burrows are monitored from June to approximately September as the adults forage for food and the chicks mature.



Volunteers meeting at Port Williams Beach.
Photo by Silas Crews.



Project lead Ed Bowlby conducting a survey.
Photo by Silas Crews.



Pigeon guillemots at Port Williams Beach.

MRC members and a large crew of volunteers continued their efforts to survey pigeon guillemot populations in 2024. Monitoring began in June, and continued at each site until nesting was over in late August or September. In 2024, nesting continued somewhat later into the season than usual, with multiple colonies still nesting in September. This project is a collaboration with the Salish Sea Guillemot Network, which provides volunteer training, protocols, and data analysis, as well as with the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, which co-leads the management of monitoring volunteers.

258

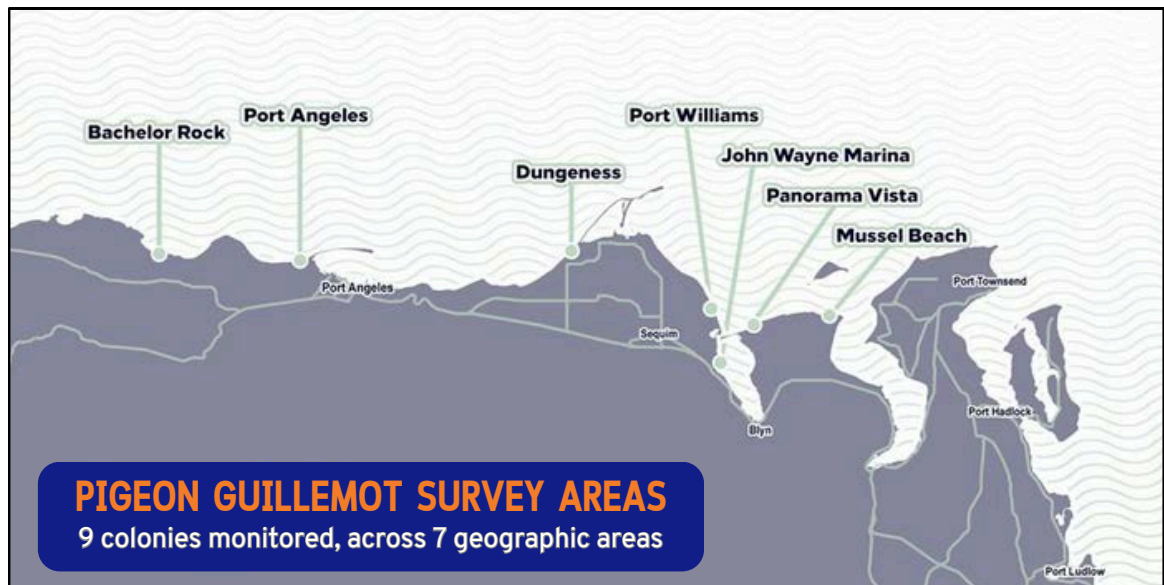
total estimated guillemot
population across 9 colonies

42

number of volunteers for
guillemot surveys in 2024

705

volunteer hours contributed in
2024 - across 110 surveys



OLYMPIA OYSTER RESTORATION

GOAL: To contribute to the Puget Sound wide effort to restore self-sustaining Olympia oyster populations in Puget Sound.

HIGHLIGHTS: Population surveys were conducted at the restoration sites in Sequim Bay, in partnership with Jamestown S’Klallam Tribal biologists. The surveys showed population growth and increased recruitment in 2024.

The Clallam MRC is part of a regional effort to restore the native Olympia oyster. The Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe established 1.5 acres of tidelands in Sequim Bay as a restoration site in 2012, with a .3 acre DNR restoration site following in 2018. In partnership with the Tribe, the MRC has conducted population surveys of both sites. In 2024, surveys showed population growth and higher recruitment versus prior years. The MRC also spread 47 tons of clean Pacific oyster shell, which served as substrate for the spat (baby oysters) raised from collected broodstock. The MRC will continue to focus on monitoring this restored habitat through population surveys.



MRC member Nancy Stephanz recording data for Olympia Oyster survey.



Close up of Olympia oyster spat - baby oysters - growing on a Pacific oyster shell. Photo by Amelia Kalagher.



Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe staff member Jarrett Burns spreading Pacific oyster shell as substrate. Photo by Amelia Kalagher.

47

Tons of shell substrate spread in 2024 - about 7 dump trucks worth!

18%

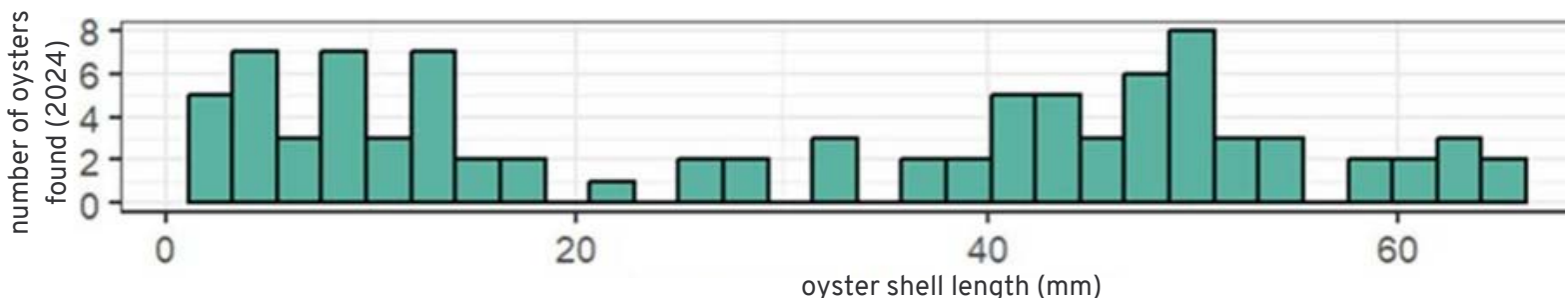
estimated growth in Olympia oyster population at the Jamestown restoration site since additional shell substrate was added in 2019

29,023

+/- 18,709

estimated Olympia oyster population at the Jamestown restoration site

Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe biologists analyze this data to determine population and recruitment trends. The estimated population of oysters in the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe restoration site nearly doubled this year, from 16,506 to 29,023. This reflects high recruitment - lots of small baby oysters - and bodes well for the population at this site. In 2025 and beyond, annual population surveys will continue to assess population health and any future restoration needs.



ELWHA BEACH STEWARDSHIP

GOAL: To protect and improve water quality, contribute to nearshore habitat and species protection, and encourage community stewardship.

HIGHLIGHTS: 3,400 dog waste bags were distributed, a beach cleanup was held in October, and new signage links facility users to an online survey option.

The West Elwha Beach Stewardship project started as an intern project in 2016-18, where usage surveys conducted as an intern project observed excessive dog and human waste entering the nearshore at this popular local beach. This waste carries a risk for fecal coliform bacteria and nutrient overload – much more so than waste from wildlife, because of the supplemented diet of domestic dogs. Due to these water quality concerns, the Clallam MRC (CCMRC) sponsors a SaniKan, dog waste bag dispenser and dog waste trash container, along with documenting the usage of these facilities and the beach. The goal of the effort is to protect and improve water quality, contribute to nearshore habitat and species protection, and encourage community stewardship. The CCMRC has conducted surveys on foot as well as implementing a QR code survey option this year. In October 2023, the MRC collaborated with Clallam Conservation District for an Orca Week beach cleanup that removed 50 pounds of trash. Going forward, we intend to continue the QR code surveys, random on foot surveys and counts of people and dogs using this beach.



25

Total survey responses from beach users October 2023 - September 2024

3,400

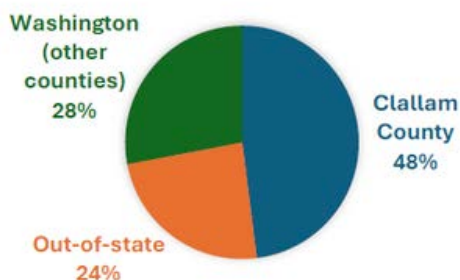
Dog waste bags distributed October 2023 - September 2024

96%

Survey respondents that marked the importance of the facilities as “important” or higher

Surveys showed, unsurprisingly, that the beach remains popular with both locals and visitors for a variety of activities.

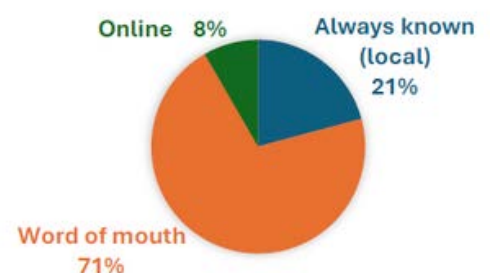
Where do you live?



What activities do you usually do at the Elwha estuary? # of people:

Walking	46
Birdwatching	20
Picnicking	19
Walking the dog	19
Surfing	7

How did you hear about the Elwha estuary?



PINTO ABALONE

GOAL: Rebuild the iconic pinto abalone populations along the Strait of Juan de Fuca. In phase one, identify remnant abalone populations and determine optimum locations for potential captive-bred juvenile reintroductions.

HIGHLIGHTS: The MRC collaborated with Puget Sound Restoration Fund to plan initial survey dives for late 2024.



Two pinto abalone with restoration tags. Photo by Josh Bouma, Puget Sound Restoration Fund.

The highly endangered pinto (northern) abalone, *Haliotis kamtschatkana*, is the only abalone species indigenous to Washington waters. This large gastropod plays a vital ecological role as an herbivorous grazer that maintains rocky reef habitat for settlement of other invertebrates and canopy kelp. Populations are severely depleted throughout their range in this state and considered functionally extinct. This is largely due to anthropogenic factors, including overharvesting during the legal recreational fishery and poaching during the 1980-90s.

The MRC, in collaboration with Puget Sound Restoration Fund, is embarking on a comprehensive survey initiative to assess the status of pinto abalone in Clallam County waters. During 2023-2024, planning took place for survey dives that would occur in November 2024 and beyond.

EDIZ HOOK REVEGETATION

GOAL: Work in partnership with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe to establish a native coastal plant community at a shoreline restoration site at Ediz Hook.

HIGHLIGHTS: In Spring 2024, 59 volunteers planted 3,000 plants over 2 days. Volunteers and partners also worked to sow additional seed and clean debris off the beach.

In March 2024, 59 volunteers worked together with staff to add 3,000 native nearshore plants and sow 5 pounds of seed. Plants included pearly everlasting, dune grass, mugwort, beach strawberries, and gumweed. This project is a collaboration with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Clallam Conservation District.



An example of the native plants chosen in March 2024. Photo by Tiffany Royal, NWIFC.

Volunteers work to plant an extra section of Ediz Hook managed by the City of Port Angeles. Photo by Tiffany Royal, NWIFC.



This planting project continues through spring 2025.



Young volunteers and their chaperones gather to listen to planting instructions. Photo by Helle Andersen.



Volunteers adding plants to areas of bare ground. Photo by Rebecca Mahan.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

GOAL: Successful engagement of the public, students, and citizen scientists in emerging issues including climate change, toxins including marine debris, fossil fuel transportation, and shoreline development within Clallam County.

HIGHLIGHTS: The MRC continued to distribute educational materials, attend local events, train the community for oil spill response, and support projects conducted in the community by partners and others.

OUTREACH CARDS



For the third year, MRC members distributed custom outreach cards to local eateries and community establishments. Five new designs were created in 2024. These can function as coasters, and include photos and critter information written collaboratively by MRC members, [linking users to the MRC website](#). Over 4,000 cards have been distributed to date in 11 designs. The MRC plans to continue distributing these to local establishments and at the outreach events it attends.

OIL SPILL RESPONSE TRAINING



HAZWOPER training. Photo by Rebecca Mahan.

The Clallam MRC, in collaboration with the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, organized a 24-hour HAZWOPER / oiled wildlife response training event in Sequim on February 13th and 14th, 2024, with training provided by International Bird Rescue. HAZWOPER is a nationally recognized certification program designed to give participants the skills to respond to hazardous waste crises, including oil spills. One day of the training focused on oiled wildlife response, and participants were able to practice bird gavage (tube feeding) with deceased marine birds provided by MRC member Arnold Schouten and his wife. February's event drew participants from five Tribes, and a total of 29 individuals received their 24-hour HAZWOPER / oiled wildlife certifications.

EVENTS



Nancy Stephanz at Dungeness River Festival. Photo by Rebecca Mahan.

The Clallam MRC engages in community outreach events, promoting marine stewardship and sharing information about the MRC itself. Outreach events in 2023-2024 included Forever Streamfest and Dungeness River Festival (pictured), which is attended by all 3rd-5th graders from the City of Sequim. The MRC also hosted a booth at the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary's anniversary film festival (and assisted WA Sea Grant with evaluating films), and assisted the Northwest Straits Foundation with a Shore Friendly event.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY PROJECTS



Sound Toxins program:
Dinophysis fortii, causes diarrhetic shellfish poisoning

King County



Shellfish biotoxin sampling

The MRC continues to support and volunteer on projects conducted by other entities in the community, including:

- Shellfish biotoxin sampling at Pillar Point (Dept of Health)
- Mussel Biotoxin Project in Port Angeles Harbor (WDFW)
- Sound Toxins harmful algal bloom monitoring (WA Sea Grant, Feiro Marine Life Center)
- "Catch More Crab" derelict crab pot prevention campaign (Northwest Straits Foundation)
- European Green Crab surveys and trapping (WA Sea Grant)

MRC 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 various invited guests. Meetings were held in a hybrid format, with the opportunity to attend either in-person or via Zoom. Clallam MRC staff prepared and distributed meeting agendas and minutes.

One special meeting was held in March - a joint meeting between Clallam and Jefferson MRCs. This meeting included a presentation on Tribal treaty rights by Cecelia Gobin, a Tulalip Tribal member and policy director for Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. Two Clallam County Commissioners and the Director of the Northwest Straits Commission joined for the meeting, which was held in space donated by the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe.

The Clallam MRC developed and approved a document guiding its advisory process.

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](#) with information on past and upcoming meetings, and current and completed projects. The website was regularly updated with meeting agendas and approved minutes, as well as current news. In February of 2020, Clallam MRC initiated their [Facebook page](#) to post weekly information about MRC projects and activities. By April 2025, the Facebook page had 528 followers, an increase of 80 over the last year.

Annual Workplan Development - The Clallam MRC developed a [work plan](#) to guide its work and priorities for the 2023-2024 grant year.

Strategic Plan - The Clallam MRC adhered to the [2019-24 Strategic Plan](#) and began developing the 2025-2029 strategic plan.

Training - Clallam MRC members and staff were encouraged to participate in trainings relevant to the Clallam MRC's goals and projects.

- Nancy Stephanz attended trainings for the Sound Toxins plankton monitoring program, including the 2-day regional meeting.
- MRC Coordinator Rebecca Mahan and Administrative Specialist Amelia Kalagher were trained in pigeon guillemot monitoring in May through the Salish Sea Guillemot Network.

Representation at NWSC Meetings - Alan Clark served as the Clallam MRC representative to the Northwest Straits Commission. The Representative attended the monthly meetings, which were both online and in-person at various times.

Presentations to Local Government Officials - In July 2024, Clallam MRC members gave an annual update to the Board of County Commissioners on the MRC's work, projects and plans.

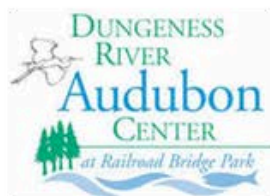
Participation in Local Integrating Organization Meetings - As a member of the steering group Rebecca Mahan, Clallam MRC Coordinator, attended quarterly meetings for the steering group and ERN/LIO.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

THANK YOU to all the following organizations, who have collaborated on the MRC's projects through funding, staff and volunteer support, project development, and logistical assistance.

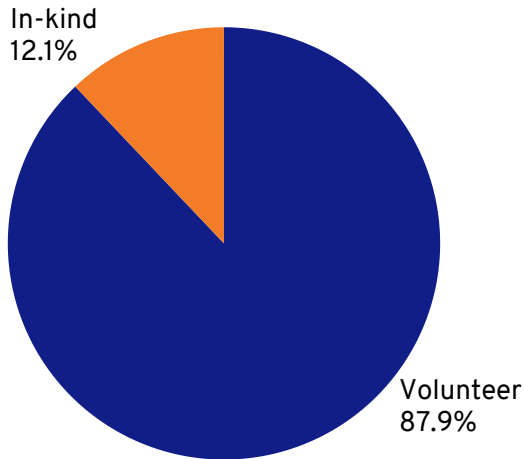


Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe



FUNDING AND SUPPORT

The Clallam MRC depends on its members and community volunteers. During the 2023-2024 grant year, Clallam County MRC members and community volunteers contributed 1,186.75 hours for a total value of \$47,802.29 (@40.28/hr). The MRC also received 163 hours of in-kind contributions from community and project partners, totaling \$6,565.64.



In the 2023-2024 grant year, the Clallam MRC received funding from Washington State, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) through grants administered by the Northwest Straits Commission (NWSC). Thank you to our funders!



GET INVOLVED

Resources for those who would like to learn more about the Clallam MRC or get involved in our work:

WEBSITE

clallamcountymrc.org

- Project information
- MRC news
- Event schedule
- Supporting documents

MEETINGS

3rd Monday each month

Always open to the public

[Details on MRC calendar](#)