

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



This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under Assistance Agreement CE01J97401 to Puget Sound Partnership. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Oct 2023 - Sept 2024



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.



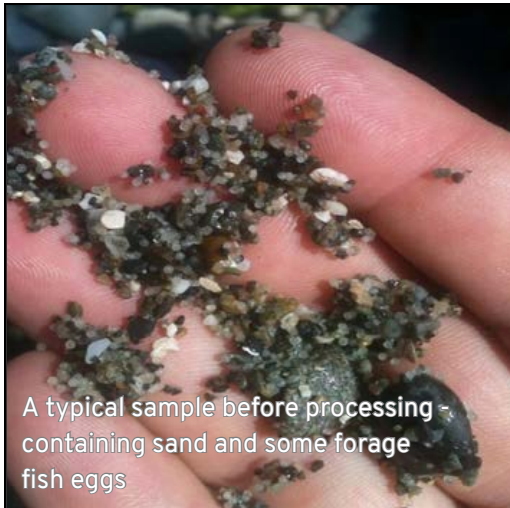
MRC MEMBERS

- 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 ----- *ex officio*, 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 sampled monthly for forage fish eggs across four locations: Ediz Hook, Cline Spit, and Elwha Beaches east and west - finding a total of 194 eggs.



A typical sample before processing - containing sand and some forage fish eggs



The "blue bowl" setup used to process the samples - eggs float, sand sinks.



MRC project lead Tim Cochnauer sampling at Cline Spit

EDIZ HOOK

6 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

1 0

surf smelt egg sand lance eggs

The MRC first sampled east of the Elwha River's mouth, 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.

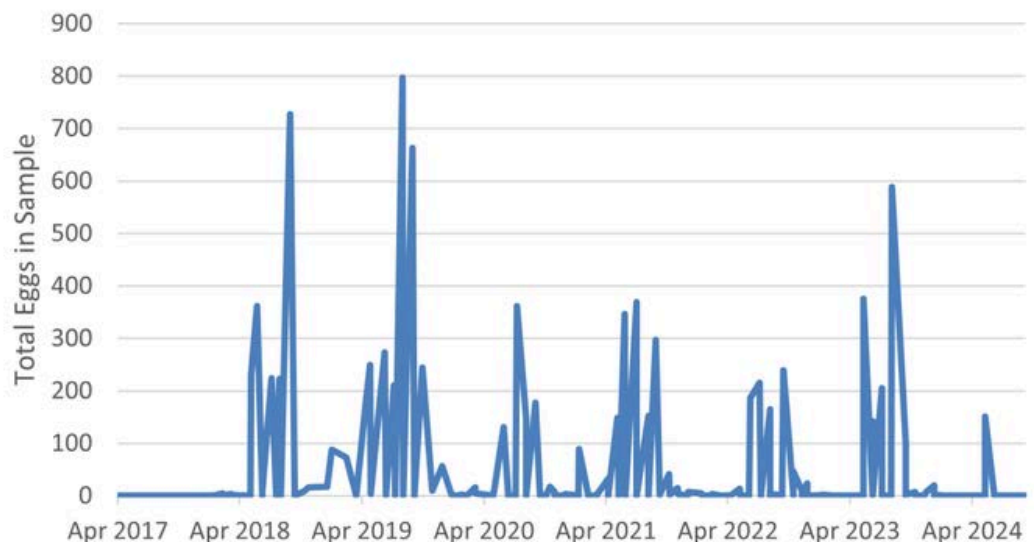
CLINE SPIT

165 2

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



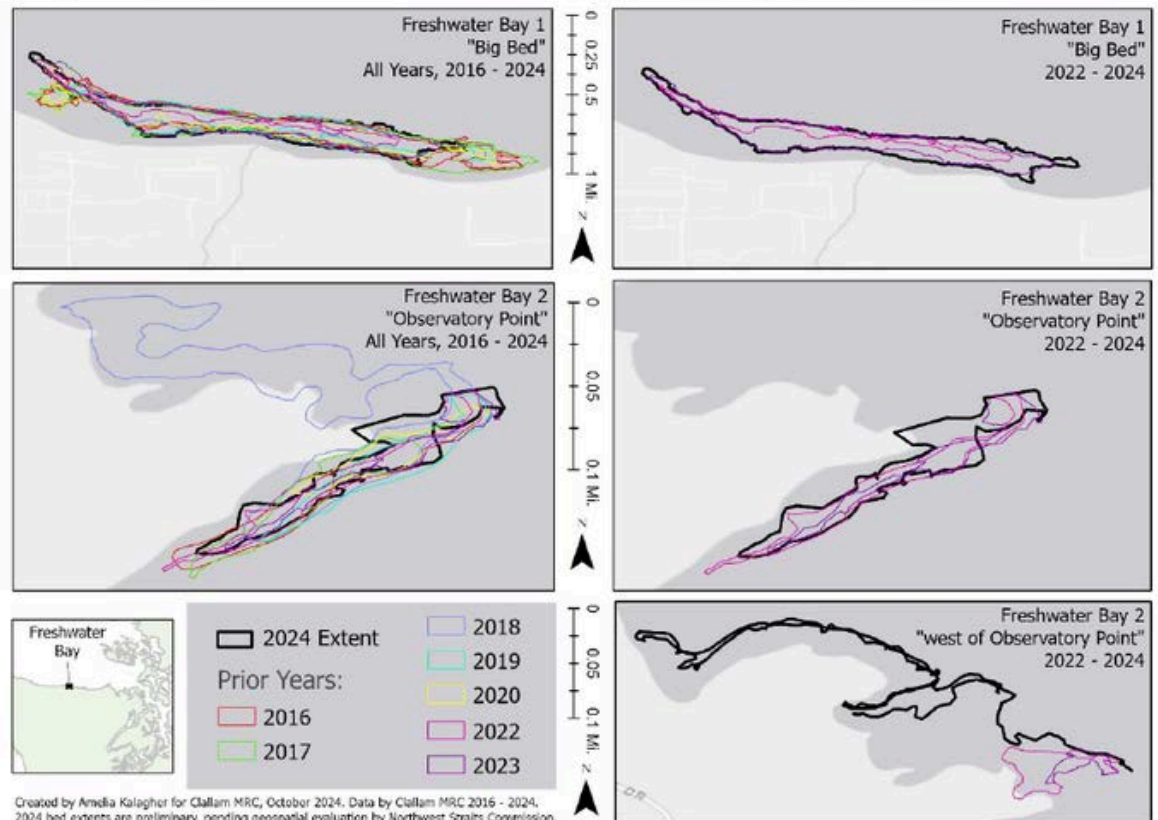
Volunteer Joanne LaBaw taking in the lead line to sample depth along the edge of the Freshwater Bay 2 bed (Sept 1).



A photo of the large Freshwater Bay bed, taken looking towards shore as a formal survey component (Aug 22).

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

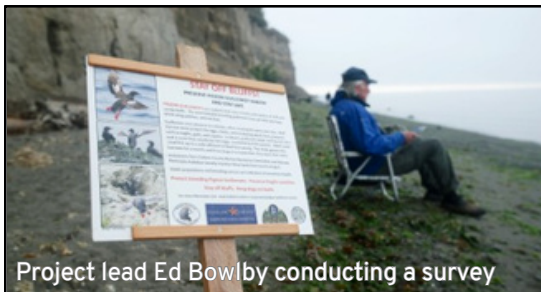
GOAL: Document pigeon guillemot breeding colonies on Clallam County beaches using established protocols, involving citizen scientist volunteers to expand the monitoring area in the Salish Sea for this indicator species.

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 gunnels 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



Project lead Ed Bowlby conducting a survey



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. All data are provided to the regional Salish Sea Guillemot Network, and the project is a collaboration with the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society.

258

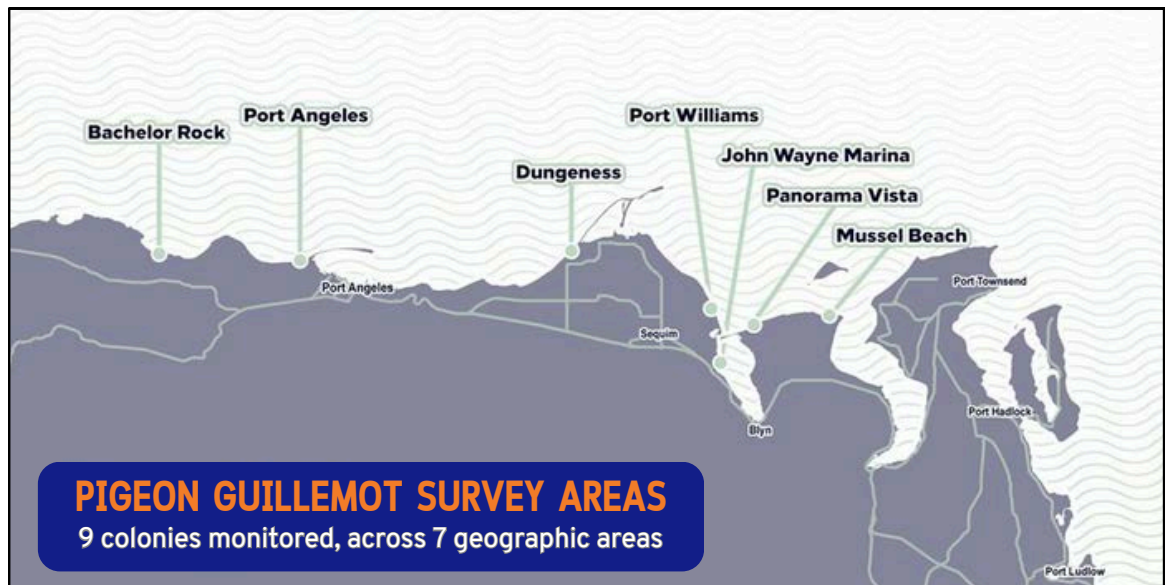
total estimated guillemot population across 9 colonies

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 sustainable Olympia oyster populations in Puget Sound.

HIGHLIGHTS: Population surveys of the two restoration sites in Sequim Bay, in partnership with Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe biologists. The surveys showed great recruitment and population growth in 2024.

The Clallam MRC is part of a regional effort to restore the native Olympia oyster. One acre of tidelands has been established in Sequim Bay as a restoration site, where the MRC has been focusing its efforts since 2018. In partnership with the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, the MRC conducted population surveys in 2024 that showed good recruitment and population growth versus prior years. In March 2024, the MRC also spread 47 tons of clean Pacific oyster shell as substrate for Olympia oysters. The MRC will continue to focus going forward on monitoring this restored habitat through annual 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



Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe staff member Jarrett Burns spreading Pacific oyster shell as substrate

47

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

29,023

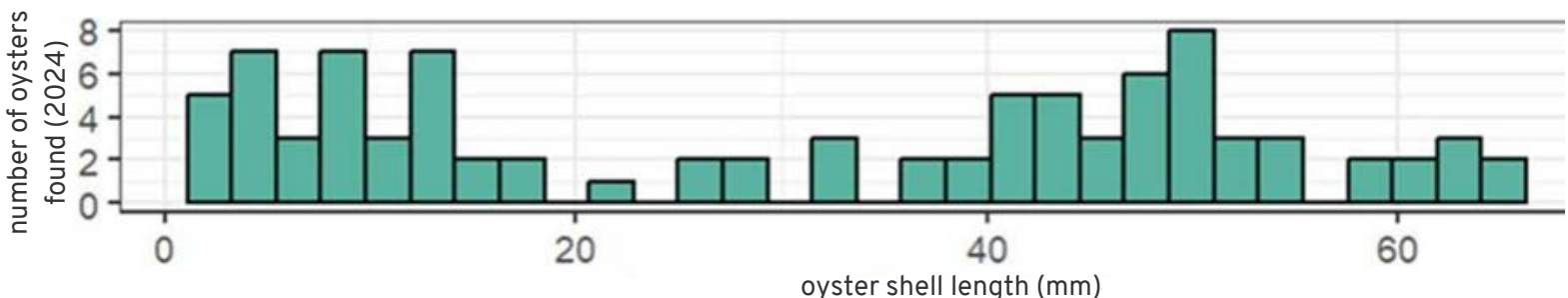
+/- 18,709

estimated Olympia oyster population at the Jamestown restoration site

18%

estimated growth in Olympia oyster population at the restoration site since 2019

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. The MRC may continue efforts to spread clean Pacific oyster shell as substrate if population surveys show a need.



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.

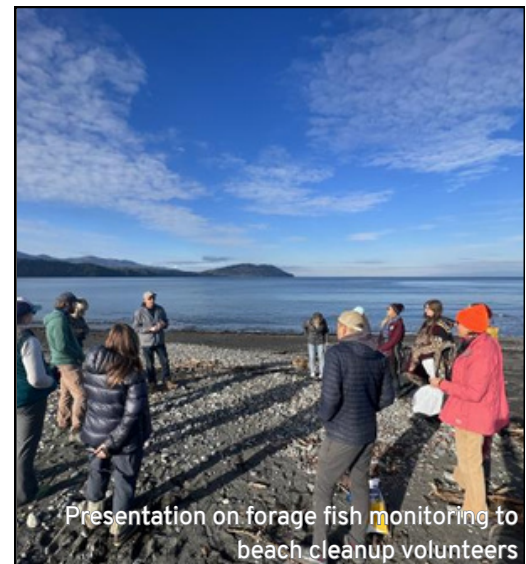
The West Elwha Beach Stewardship project started as an intern project in 2016-18, where usage surveys conducted as an intern project observed excessive dog and human waste entering the nearshore at this popular local beach. This waste carries a risk for fecal coliform bacteria and nutrient overload – 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) now sponsors an additional 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, a beach cleanup was conducted 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.



The beach at the mouth of the Elwha River



Signage placed in 2024, directing facility users to online survey



Presentation on forage fish monitoring to beach cleanup volunteers

25

Total survey responses from beach users October 2023 - September 2024

3,400

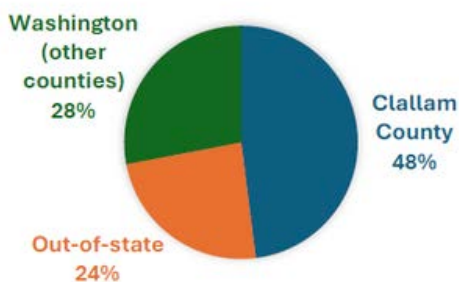
Dog waste bags distributed October 2023 - September 2024

96%

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

The surveys administered on the beach and through the QR code showed, unsurprisingly, that the beach remains popular with both locals and visitors for a variety of activities.

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?



HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE ELWHA ESTUARY?



of responses

Walking	19
Walking the dog	7
Surfing	6
Birdwatching	6
Picnicking	5

PINTO ABALONE

GOAL: Assess the status of highly endangered Pinto abalone in Clallam County waters, with the possible future intent to participate in restoration outplanting

HIGHLIGHTS: The MRC worked 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 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: Support the restoration effort on Ediz Hook conducted by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe through the addition of native beach plants for natural resilience and wildlife habitat.

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



Volunteers work to plant an extra section of Ediz Hook managed by the City of Port Angeles

This planting project continues through spring 2025.



Young volunteers and their chaperones gather to listen to planting instructions



Volunteers carefully adding plants to areas of bare ground

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.

EVENTS



The Clallam MRC engages in community outreach events and festivals, 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 participated in the scoring of films.

OIL SPILL RESPONSE TRAINING



The Clallam MRC, in collaboration with the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, organized a 24-hour HAZWOPER / oiled wildlife response training event in Sequim in February 2024. HAZWOPER is a nationally recognized certification program designed to give participants the skills to respond to hazardous waste crises, including oil spills. This February's event drew participants from five Tribes, and a total of 29 individuals were certified in hazardous waste response on the Olympic Peninsula.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY PROJECTS



Sound Toxins program:
Dinophysis fortii,
causes
diarrhetic
shellfish
poisoning

King County



Shellfish biotoxin sampling

The MRC continues to support 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, with a presentation on Tribal treaty rights.

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.
- The MRC hosted local marine engineer and roboticist Phil Parisi for a presentation and demonstration on BlueBoat and BlueROV technology, to assess suitability for future projects.

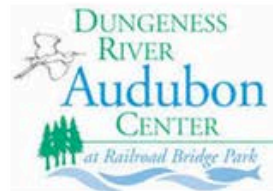
Representation at NWSC Meetings - Alan Clark served as the Clallam MRC representative to the Northwest Straits Commission. The Representative attended the monthly meetings, which were both online and in-person at various times.

Presentations to Local Government Officials - In July 2024, 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 the quarterly steering group meetings and the ERN/LIO quarterly meetings.

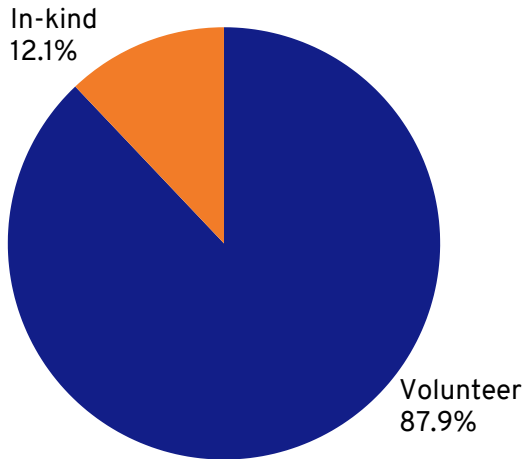
THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

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.



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](#)