

County: Clallam

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PROJECT TITLE: West Elwha Beach Stewardship Summary Report

DELIVERABLES FOR TASK NO: 2.5 year Two Summary Report

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## **West Elwha Beach Stewardship**

### **Introduction**

The Clallam MRC became involved with maintaining the West Elwha Beach through removal of marine debris. The marine debris removal was initiated after the City of Port Angeles banned the Fourth of July fireworks in the city in 2015. Beach cleanups were conducted in 2016-18 but discontinued in 2019 as no firework debris was found in 2018.

In 2016-18 the Clallam MRC members selected the West Elwha Beach Stewardship as a project for the summer intern program and asked the interns to conduct usage surveys at the beach and estuary. In 2017 an intern was alarmed by seeing 50 dog poops on the dike access path (approximately 1,000 ft) and reports of human waste in the vegetation along the beach. This led to the installation of a Sanikan, dog waste bins and a bag dispenser. At the same time the Clallam MRC sponsored a large informative sign at the trail head along with a smaller sign advising people not to park in the fire lane. In spring of 2019 the Clallam MRC members decided not to include the stewardship as an intern project. The primary reason for this was that the members felt that enough information on beach usage had been collected by the previous interns and, if continued, the survey effort should be “taken to the next level” which would be beyond what could be expected on a “running start” or undergraduate college student. Clallam MRC has continued to sponsor and maintain the Sanikan and dog waste facility through the 2021-23 grant period. The signs that Clallam MRC installed in winter 2017 are still displayed at the entrance to the beach.

In spring of 2023 while discussing projects for the 2023-25 funding period and due to the lack of an MRC champion for this project the MRC suggested looking into the possibility of handing off the project or sharing the responsibilities and cost with another entity such as Clallam County or Surfriders. Ultimately, an MRC alternate volunteered to champion this project through the rest of 2021-23 grant cycle and 2023-25 cycle.

This report summarizes the surveys and other efforts initiated in summer 2023 as a response to the discussion at the MRC meeting and the stewardship efforts conducted by MRC at the West Elwha Beach from October 2022 through September 2023.

### **Background Information**

The Elwha Beach is not a State or County Park; instead, the beach and estuary are owned by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and private landowners. The access trail runs on top of a dike (Figure 1) with private ownership to the west and tribal ownership to the east (Figure 2). The access road “Elwha Dike Road” is maintained by Clallam County.



**Figure 1.** Access trail on top of the dike with the river and estuary on the right (tribal owned) and Dudley Pond on the left (private owned).



**Figure 2.** Public access to Elwha Beach and landownership. Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe owns the land shaded yellow. Private ownerships are depicted by the individual lots.

### Summer 2023 People Usage Surveys

The survey effort was conducted with the possibility of using a car counter in mind. Each survey was initiated by counting the cars in the parking lot followed by counting all people and dogs along the access trail and on the beach along with information about the weather, tide and surf conditions. The surveys usually lasted about ½ hour. Survey date and time were selected using three different methods: randomly, targeted (good surf days) and as an additional task during forage fish spawning surveys (when MRC members were at the beach anyway).

The random survey method will enable the MRC to extrapolate the data to give an estimate of total usage in a year, when these surveys have been conducted throughout a year. The targeted method will capture high usage during good surf days based on local knowledge and online information. Surf conditions are best in the winter and generally poor during the summer, so only two targeted surveys were conducted. Table 1 summarizes the data collected during 12 surveys between June 12 and September 19.

The total number of people on the beach during the ½ hour surveys ranged from 6 to 54, the highest numbers were observed on good surf days. An average of 2 people per car was calculated based on the 12 surveys. People were mostly walking the beach, but on surf days activities included surfing (22-38% of all observed people), walking (12-72%) and sitting (0-34%). During three surveys people, mostly kids, were observed playing (4-36%) and one couple was bird watching (25% of all people observed that day). Other possible beach activities such as kayaking, fishing, swimming or kite flying were not observed during the 12 surveys. Figures 3 and 4 show the river mouth, beach and people activities.



**Figure 3.** Dudley Pond and Elwha River estuary





**Figure 4.** Elwha River mouth and beach



**Figure 5.** Surfers at the beach

**Table 1.** People usage surveys conducted at Elwha Beach between June 12 and September 19, 2023.

Survey Type <sup>1</sup>	Date	Day	Weather	Wind (knts)	Time	Temp (F)	Total Cars	O-of-S Cars <sup>2</sup>	Tide <sup>3</sup>	Adults	Youth	Total People	Walkers	Sitting	Surfers	Bird Watchers	Playing
R	12-Jun	M	Partly overcast	7	2:30 - 3:30 pm	63	26	2	F	-	-	41	5	14	12	0	10
FF	21-Jun	T	Partly overcast	7	12:00 - 12:30 pm	61	8	-	R	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-
R	29-Jun	Th	Foggy/partly overcast	8 gust 13	8:50 - 9:15 am	57	5	1	R	5	1	6	6	0	0	0	0
R	12-Jul	W	Cloudy after shower	10 gust 13	1:00-1:30 pm	58	2	0	R	11	0	11	11	0	0	0	0
FF	18-Jul	T	Clear	5	12:55 - 1:30 pm	62	6	1	R	18	2	20	20	0	0	0	0
R	1-Aug	T	Clear, sunny	2	10:30-11:10 am	65	5	1	R	7	1	8	8	8	0	2	0
R	7-Aug	M	Sunny with clouds	10	3:00-3:30 pm	66	4	1	R	8	4	12	8	4	0	0	0
R	8-Aug	T	Sunny with clouds	2	10:35-11:12 am	64	5	0	F	8	1	9	9	0	0	0	0
FF & T	14-Aug	M	Sunny hot	5	11:10 - 12:05 pm	81	28	2	R	45	9	54	17	20	15	0	2
R	3-Sep	Su	Cloudy and light rain	5	1:00 - 1:30 pm	61	12	2	R	17	1	18	13	1	4	0	0
R	7-Sep	Th	Foggy low visibility	3	12:00 - 12:30 pm	55	5	1	F	7	4	11	5	2	0	0	4
T	19-Sep	T	Cloudy with rain	1	4:10 – 4:30 pm	59	8	1	R	13	0	13	8	0	5	0	0

<sup>1</sup>: R = random; FF = forage fish sampling; T = targeted<sup>2</sup>: O-of-S = out of state cars<sup>3</sup>: F = falling tide; R = rising tide

## Internet Information

The low but steady presence of out-of-state cars (7-25% of all cars observed in 9 surveys) raised the question where these visitors found the information about the Elwha Beach. A search online identified three websites recommending visiting the beach. These websites are the Olympic National Park ([Mouth of the Elwha Beach Trailhead \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/elwha/learn/management/management.htm)), Alltrails ([Elwha Beach Trail: 97 Reviews, Map - Washington | AllTrails](https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/washington/elwha-beach-trail)), and Olympic Hiking Co. ([Elwha Beach | Olympic Hiking Co. \(hikeolympic.com\)](https://www.hikeolympic.com/elwha-beach)). Two of the three websites had incorrect information about the facilities at the trailhead; Olympic Hiking Co. did not mention them. Outreach to the Olympic National Park made them revise the information and adding the following sentence "While there are not trash/litter receptacles, there is a designated dog waste disposal bin and porta potty available. These services are sponsored by Clallam Marine Resources Committee." In the fall and winter 2023 the two other websites will be contacted and hopefully they will be willing to also mention that the Clallam MRC is sponsoring the Sanikan and dog waste facility on the dike.

## Questionnaire Test Run

Based on the discussion for the 2023-25 funding period of handing off the project or sharing the responsibilities and cost with another entity, a questionnaire was made to be used during the 2023-25 grant cycle to assess beach-goers' knowledge about the Sanikan, the dog waste facility, ownership of the access trail and their activities on the beach. A small test run using the questionnaire was performed between August 1 and August 14, 2023; the preliminary results are presented below and copies of the completed questionnaires are included in the appendix.

The people in the test run included an older couple, an adult daughter with her mother and dog, a surfer with his girlfriend, three adults walking the beach, and three women with dogs. As summarized in Table 2 most of the people came to the beach a couple of times a year; the majority were walking or walking their dogs; everybody thought that the Sanikan on the dike was important or even critical; nobody knew that Clallam MRC is sponsoring the Sanikan and dog waste facility on the dike; only one of the groups knew that the access trail is

co-owned by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and private residents; the majority of the people either had always known about the beach access or had heard about it from other people; and most people visiting the beach lived either in Clallam County or in Washington State.

**Table 2.** Results of the questionnaire test run performed between August 1-14, 2023.

# People in the Group	1. How often do you come to the Elwha Estuary?	2. What do you usually do at the estuary?	3. How important are the Sanikan and dog waste station on the dike?	4. Who do you think maintains /pay for the Sanikan and dog waste station on the dike?	5. Who do you think owns the access to the estuary?	6. How did you hear about the Elwha Estuary?	7. Where do you live?
2	2	1, 5	4	7	6	3	2
2	4	2	4	4	2	1	1
2	2	3	4	1,2	4	2	2
3	1	1, 4	3	1	1	2	3
3	2	1	5	7	3	1	1

Q 1. First time - 1, a few times a year - 2, often in the summer - 3, every month - 4, every

week - 5 Q 2. Walk - 1, walk the dog - 2, surf - 3, picnic - 4, birding - 5, others - 6

Q 3. Not important - 1, somewhat important - 2, important - 3, very important - 4,

critical - 5 Q 4. State - 1, County - 2, Tribe - 3, Surfriders - 4, Clallam MRC - 5, private - 6, don't know - 7

Q 5. State - 1, County - 2, Tribe - 3, Tribe/Private - 4, Private - 5, don't

know - 6 Q 6. Always known (local) - 1, word of mouth - 2, online - 3, travel agency - 4

Q 7. Clallam Co. - 1, Washington - 2, Out-of-State - 3, other country - 4

### Summer 2023 Dog Usage Surveys

Dogs were observed during all surveys except one. A dog accompanied an average of 14% of all people observed on the beach and 26% of the cars observed in the parking lot had transported a dog (Table 2). The majority of the dogs were leashed (58%) versus 27% unleashed (one survey noted number of dogs but not whether they were leashed or unleashed). This is an improvement compared with the data collected in 2016-18 where 46% of the dogs were leashed and 53% unleashed. In general, the dogs were leashed on the dike access trail and unleashed on the beach. The high rate of leashed dogs on the dike may be attributed to large clean signage at the trailhead stating that the dike cuts through a sensitive wildlife habitat and to please keep dogs on a leash (Figure 6).

**Table 2.** Dog usage surveys conducted at Elwha Beach between June 12 and September 19, 2023.

Survey Type <sup>1</sup>	Date	Day	Time	Total Cars	Total People	Dog Leashed	Dog Unleashed	Total Dogs
R	12-Jun	M	2:30 - 3:30 pm	26	41	1	2	3
FF	21-Jun	T	12:00 - 12:30 pm	8	11	-	-	3
R	29-Jun	Th	8:50 - 9:15 am	5	6	0	0	0
R	12-Jul	W	1:00-1:30 pm	2	11	0	0	0
FF	18-Jul	T	12:55 - 1:30 pm	6	20	3	0	3
R	1-Aug	T	10:30-11:10 am	5	8	4	1	4
R	7-Aug	M	3:00-3:30 pm	4	12	0	1	1
R	8-Aug	T	10:35-11:12 am	5	9	1	0	1
FF & T	14-Aug	M	11:10 - 12:05 pm	28	54	2	3	5
R	3-Sep	Su	1:00 - 1:30 pm	12	18	3	2	5
R	7-Sep	Th	12:00 - 12:30 pm	5	11	1	0	1
T	19-Sep	M	4:10 – 4:30 pm	8	13	1	0	1

<sup>1</sup>: R = random; FF = forage fish sampling; T = targeted

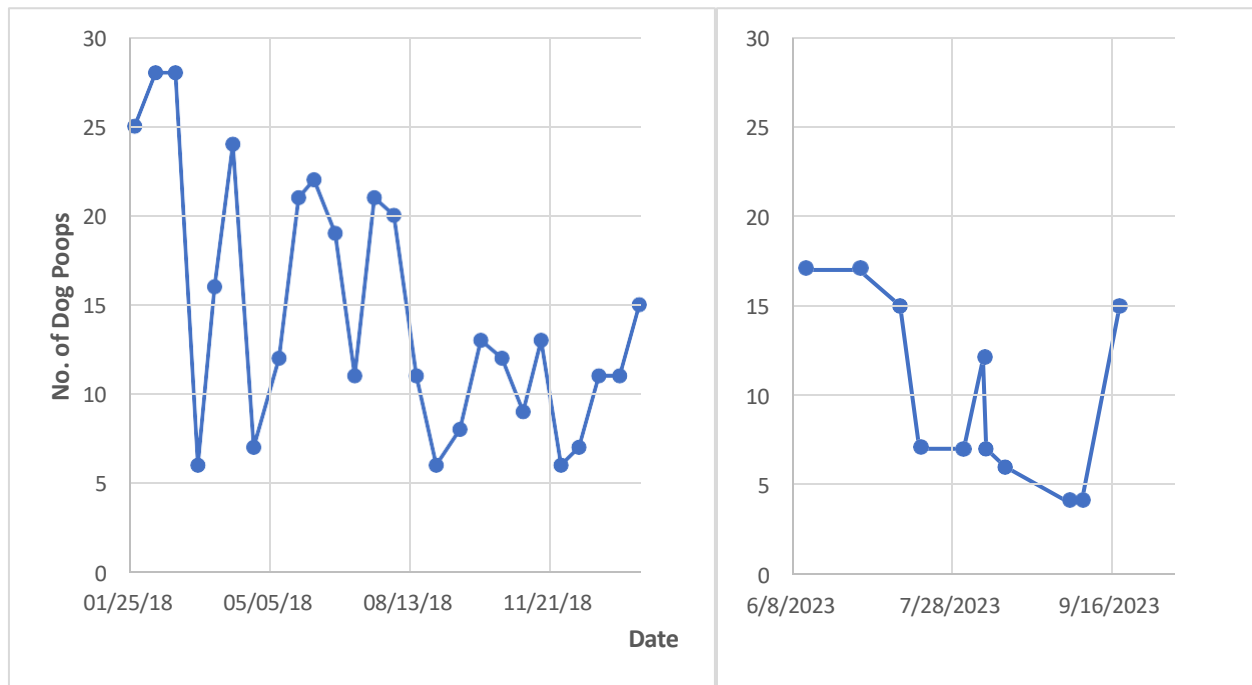




**Figure 6.** Signage at the trailhead encouraging visitors to respect the sensitive wildlife habitat.

During the one year approximately 3,800 bags were distributed and assumed used by dog owners. Replacing the dog waste bags was part of the responsibilities of an internship and MRC Coordinator until an MRC member stepped up to champion the project.

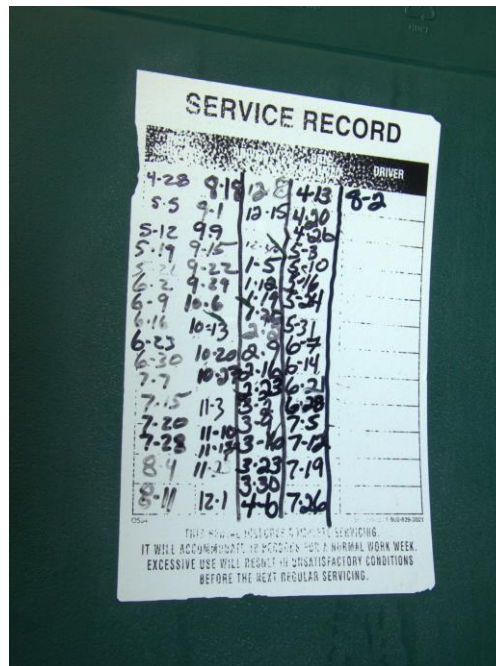
To document any changes in number of dog waste after installation of the dog waste facility in winter 2017 the numbers of dog poops were counted during usage surveys on the approximately 1000 ft dike access trail. As shown in Figure 7 the numbers varied greatly but was generally higher, round 20-25, in early 2018 and then dropped to a number ranging between 6 and 15 later in 2018. In summer 2023 the number of poops were generally similar to the numbers seen in the latter half of 2018.



**Figure 7.** Number of dog waste on the dike access trail between January 2018 – January 2019 and June – September 2023.

### Maintenance of the Sanikan and Dog Waste Facility

Bill's Plumbing has done a good job maintaining the Sanikan and dog waste bins since they were installed in winter 2017. The Sanikan and dog waste bins are serviced every 7 days (Figure 8). In late spring vandals tipped over the Sanikan and Bill's Plumbing erected the Sanikan for no extra cost. The statement from an employee at Bill's Plumbing still holds true "The Sanikan is well used, but not to the point of being unsanitary."



**Figure 8.** Bill's Plumbing's Service record placed inside the Sanikan.

Organized marine debris removal no longer occurs at the beach; however, over time people have taken debris off the beach and placed it next to the Sanikan. In the summer of 2023, the marine debris was taken to the Port Angeles transfer station for disposal (Figure 9).



**Figure 9.** Tires, metal and plastic debris removed from the beach and taken to Port Angeles transfer station.

## **Appendix**

7/1/23  
About couple

## Elwha Stewardship Questionnaire

1) How often do you come to the Elwha Estuary?

First time ☐ A few times a year ☒ Often – in the summer ☐ Every month ☐ Every week ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

2) What do you usually do at the estuary?

Walk ☒ Walk the dog ☐ Surf ☐ Picnic ☐ Birding ☒

Others \_\_\_\_\_

3) How important are the Sanikan and dog waste disposal station on the dike?

Not important ☐ Somewhat important ☐ Important ☐ Very important ☒ Critical ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

4) Who do you think maintains/pay for the Sanikan and dog waste station on the dike?

State ☐ County ☐ Tribe ☐ Surfriders ☐ Clallam MRC\* ☐ Private ☐

\*Marine Resources Committee

Comments \_\_\_\_\_ *no idea*

5) Who do you think owns the access to the estuary?

State ☐ County ☐ Tribe ☐ Tribe/Private ☐ Private ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_ *no idea*

6) How did you hear about Elwha Estuary?

Always known (local) ☐ Word of mouth ☐ Online ☒ Travel agency ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

7) Where do you live?

Clallam Co. ☐ Washington ☒ Out-of-State ☐ Other country ☐

2 women  
+ NOG

8/8/23

## Elwha Stewardship Questionnaire

1) How often do you come to the Elwha Estuary?

First time ☐ A few times a year ☐ Often – in the summer ☐ Every month ☒ Every week ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

2) What do you usually do at the estuary?

Walk ☐ Walk the dog ☒ Surf ☐ Picnic ☐ Birding ☐

Others \_\_\_\_\_

3) How important are the Sanikan and dog waste disposal station on the dike?

Not important ☐ Somewhat important ☐ Important ☐ Very important ☒ Critical ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

4) Who do you think maintains/pays for the Sanikan and dog waste station on the dike?

State ☐ County ☐ Tribe ☐ Surfriders ☒ Clallam MRC\* ☐ Private ☐

\*Marine Resources Committee

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

5) Who do you think owns the access to the estuary?

State ☐ County ☒ Tribe ☐ Tribe/Private ☐ Private ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

6) How did you hear about Elwha Estuary?

Always known (local) ☒ Word of mouth ☐ Online ☐ Travel agency ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

7) Where do you live?

Clallam Co. ☒ Washington ☐ Out-of-State ☐ Other country ☐



8/19/20

## Elwha Stewardship Questionnaire

[Sup  
Glee

1) How often do you come to the Elwha Estuary?

First time ☐ A few times a year ☒ Often – in the summer ☐ Every month ☐ Every week ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

2) What do you usually do at the estuary?

Walk ☐ Walk the dog ☐ Surf ☒ Picnic ☐ Birding ☐

Others \_\_\_\_\_

3) How important are the Sanikan and dog waste disposal station on the dike?

Not important ☐ Somewhat important ☐ Important ☐ Very important ☒ Critical ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

4) Who do you think maintains/pay for the Sanikan and dog waste station on the dike?

State ☒ County ☒ Tribe ☐ Surfriders ☐ Clallam MRC\* ☐ Private ☐

\*Marine Resources Committee

Comments don't know

5) Who do you think owns the access to the estuary?

State ☐ County ☐ Tribe ☐ Tribe/Private ☒ Private ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

6) How did you hear about Elwha Estuary?

Always known (local) ☐ Word of mouth ☒ Online ☐ Travel agency ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

7) Where do you live?

Clallam Co. ☐ Washington ☒ Out-of-State ☐ Other country ☐



7/4/23

## Elwha Stewardship Questionnaire

3 ADI  
WALKIN

1) How often do you come to the Elwha Estuary?

First time ☒ A few times a year ☐ Often – in the summer ☐ Every month ☐ Every week ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

2) What do you usually do at the estuary?

Walk ☒ Walk the dog ☐ Surf ☐ Picnic ☒ Birding ☐

Others \_\_\_\_\_

3) How important are the Sanikan and dog waste disposal station on the dike?

Not important ☐ Somewhat important ☐ Important ☒ Very important ☐ Critical ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

4) Who do you think maintains/pay for the Sanikan and dog waste station on the dike?

State ☒ County ☐ Tribe ☐ Surfriders ☐ Clallam MRC\* ☐ Private ☐

\*Marine Resources Committee

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

5) Who do you think owns the access to the estuary?

State ☒ County ☐ Tribe ☐ Tribe/Private ☐ Private ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

6) How did you hear about Elwha Estuary?

Always known (local) ☐ Word of mouth ☒ Online ☐ Travel agency ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

7) Where do you live?

Clallam Co. ☐ Washington ☐ Out-of-State ☒ Other country ☐

4/23

3 women +

**Elwha Stewardship Questionnaire**

1) How often do you come to the Elwha Estuary?

First time ☐ A few times a year ☒ Often – in the summer ☐ Every month ☐ Every week ☐Comments Several times

2) What do you usually do at the estuary?

Walk ☒ Walk the dog ☐ Surf ☐ Picnic ☐ Birding ☐

Others \_\_\_\_\_

3) How important are the Sanikan and dog waste disposal station on the dike?

Not important ☐ Somewhat important ☐ Important ☐ Very important ☐ Critical ☒Comments Keep our beaches clean!

4) Who do you think maintains/pay for the Sanikan and dog waste station on the dike?

State ☐ County ☐ Tribe ☐ Surfriders ☐ Clallam MRC\* ☐ Private ☐

\*Marine Resources Committee

Comments Don't know

5) Who do you think owns the access to the estuary?

State ☐ County ☐ Tribe ☒ Tribe/Private ☐ Private ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

6) How did you hear about Elwha Estuary?

Always known (local) ☒ Word of mouth ☐ Online ☐ Travel agency ☐

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

7) Where do you live?

Clallam Co. ☒ Washington ☐ Out-of-State ☐ Other country ☐