

Work Plan 2007

1. What are the NWSC benchmarks?

- Marine habitats
- Marine life
- Marine water quality
- Sound science
- Education and outreach

2. How does the MRC track benchmark progress?

- Each project is assigned to a board member or staff person
- Members report on their projects monthly

3. How do MRC grant-funded projects for 2007 address the benchmarks?

As is shown in detail below, all MRC grant-funded projects relate directly to NWSC benchmarks. In summary, the grant-funded initiatives cover a range of projects covering the spectrum from on the ground restorations to biological fish use surveys to landowner community forums to hosting community forums.

4. Work plan analysis by benchmarks

Benchmark	Project
Marine habitats	<p>Nearshore restoration projects – NFWF Grant Porter (Secondary Benchmark Benefit: Marine life and marine water quality)</p> <p>A \$216,000 National Fish and Wildlife Federation and MRC grant enables the start of several restoration projects focusing on creosote removal, eelgrass bed protection and forage fish habitat area improvements at Cornet Bay in Deception Pass State Park. Washington State Parks is an enthusiastic partner, leveraging our investment with additional contributions of funding, equipment and labor. We view this project as an important opportunity to showcase successful restoration to the local community. Additionally, both the local state park biologist and the full time, permanent interpretive specialist plans on making our project a focal point for park outreach projects for the next several years. The power of the project is magnified when combined with the regional State Parks plan for the Cornet Bay areas' heavily used fishing boating and picnic areas which is being budgeted for at least \$500,000. It is possible, depending on grant funds, that we will be able to complete up to three Deception Pass State Park projects.</p> <p>Derelict gear Urstad (Secondary benchmark benefit: Marine life)</p>

	<p>In 2007 we will continue to partner with the NWSC in this regional project to locate, map and remove derelict fishing gear from our county waters and other areas of Puget Sound. This includes lost or abandoned fishing nets, pots, fish line and other commercial and recreational fishing gear. Tons of these materials have accumulated in the waters of Puget Sound over many decades of human activity. They catch and kill wildlife, birds, shellfish and even marine plants. They also pose a serious risk to swimmers, boaters and divers.</p> <p>Keystone Ferry Terminal dialogue Toft (Secondary benchmark benefit: Education and outreach)</p> <p>In 2007 we will continue to participate and advise in the dialogue over the state ferry system's plans to modify or relocate the Keystone Ferry Terminal. Our concerns about the environmental impact of proposed alternatives were expressed to the WSF in 2006 in a detailed letter, and we continue to follow the deliberations and discussions with high interest. We have been contacted once again in January 2007 to arrange public hearings on the issue.</p>
<p>Marine life</p>	<p>Southern Holmes Harbor Shellfish Protection District formation Hillers, Urstad, Seitle, Meehan and Porter (Secondary benchmark benefit: Sound science)</p> <p>In 2007 the MRC will work to resolve the fecal coliform contamination that triggered the closure of the southern half of Holmes Harbor, near Freeland, to shellfish harvesting. The MRC is a founding member of the Response Team formed in accordance with 90.72 RCW. Together with other community and government representatives, several members of our MRC are working with Island County commissioners and the Washington Departments of Ecology and Health to form the shellfish district, establish a response strategy and accomplish public outreach. We envision our role continuing after district formation this spring and into the response strategy implementation in 2007 and beyond.</p>
<p>Marine water quality</p>	<p>Creosote debris removal Urstad (Secondary benchmark benefit: Marine life)</p> <p>In 2007 we will continue to partner with the Northwest Straits Commission and the State Department of Natural Resources to remove creosote-laden wood debris, pilings and railroad ties from the beaches of Whidbey and Camano islands. These materials often break free from docks or piers, or escape from barges, and wash shore on beaches and in estuaries, where they leach carcinogenic chemicals for decades. In 2006, Island County MRC participated in extensive creosote debris clean-up projects along the exposed western shoreline of Whidbey</p>

	Island.
Sound science	<p>Benchmark survey of community knowledge and attitudes Meehan</p> <p>In 2007 we seek to complete a comprehensive survey of community knowledge and attitudes about Island County nearshore conditions, problems and needs. Additionally, to assist in identifying issues that residents consider important and need addressing. This baseline is essential to track the effectiveness of our ongoing efforts to influence the community's understanding, attitudes and behavior. Island County government is also interested in similar goals and the surveying process. We will work, partner and coordinate this project with Island County and other interested parties to the maximum extent practical.</p> <p>Bluff birds breeding survey Kind (Secondary benchmark benefit: Marine life)</p> <p>In 2007 we will continue to partner with Whidbey Audubon and Washington Audubon in a multi-year breeding survey of pigeon guillemots on Whidbey Island. The MRC contributes funding and a board member to work closely with the volunteer teams in this project. In 2007 we will use a newly-acquired, pole-mounted, "cheeper-peeper" camera to aid our research.</p> <p>Pigeon guillemots are the only member of the alcid family to nest in Island County and their well-being is considered an important indicator of the health of Puget Sound.</p> <p>This citizen-science project has trained 30 volunteers who visited 23 active pigeon guillemot colonies at least six times during the breeding seasons of 2004, 2005 and 2006. The colonies varied in size from 15 to 134 birds. The teams found more than 800 birds in the colonies during 2006 but only 150 active burrows, so roughly one third of the birds attempted to breed this year.</p> <p>By continuing this survey we are establishing a data base that will provide trend analysis opportunities in the years to come.</p> <p>Juvenile salmonid seining survey Meehan, Urstad (Secondary benchmark benefit: Marine life)</p> <p>In partnership with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Skagit River Systems Cooperative and WSU Beach Watchers, in 2007 we will continue our multi-year study of how juvenile salmonids use the pocket estuaries of Whidbey Basin. In the past two years this project has grown from a single estuary to four, with WSU Beach Watcher volunteers taking the lead on three of the sites, (including Ala Spit, Race, Harrington and Elger Bay).</p>

The MRC supports the staffing and equipment needs of these volunteer teams, and a board member of the MRC participates “hands on” in the seining activity. NOAA scientists trained the volunteers and are so confident of the teams’ proficiency that they turned them loose on their own, freeing the NOAA scientists to sample more locations on Puget Sound.

Local fish-use studies began in 2002, limited at first to understanding how juvenile Chinook salmon use sites within Skagit Bay (Beamer et al 2003). In 2004, the study expanded to sites throughout the Whidbey Basin, Fidalgo Bay and Samish Bay under a cooperative effort funded in part by the Northwest Straits Commission. The focus of the expanded research is to understand landscape-style patterns of fish usage including which species and life-history types use these systems; how connectivity or position within the larger landscape affects fish use; and how patterns of fish-use relate to protection and restoration of these systems. This expanded research effort has continued voluntarily in 2005 and included sampling in Harrington Lagoon with the help of Island County WSU Beach Watchers. The focus of the work was on fish abundance and size in Harrington Lagoon during 2005, and is now expanding to more estuaries on Whidbey and Camano islands.

Water quality buoy

Hillers, Meehan

(Secondary benchmark benefit: Marine water quality)

In 2007 we will re-deploy our marine water quality buoy in Penn Cove. This buoy is particularly valuable because it measures dissolved oxygen, conductivity and salinity information – data not currently collected in most marine water surveys by the Department of Health.

Water quality data compilation

Hillers

In 2007 we will continue to refine and analyze the historical data collected in 2006. Additionally, we will continue to learn how to use and maintain our mobile water quality buoy as we keep it working in the nearshore. This will produce additional 2007 data from Penn Cove and possibly other locations that will be added to our library of data. Additionally, we will continue to look for opportunities to make the information available to those who need to access and analyze it.

Education /
outreach

Marine interpretive signage

Pedersen, Jefferds, Toft

In 2007 we will deploy additional marine interpretive signage to help introduce the public to the Island County Marine Stewardship Areas, to promote a stewardship ethic and increase public understanding of our nearshore. This is part of an integrated stewardship education campaign that includes the Shore Stewards program, our stewardship education book, *Getting to the Water's Edge*, and a stewardship areas website to be developed in 2007. We will also identify new partners to advance and share the cost of this multi-year project. Our project ultimately envisions signage located at many public access points on both Camano and Whidbey islands. The first installation was completed in November, 2006, at the Port of South Whidbey's Clinton Beach facility. This is a key project we have customized to our MRC citizen base that underpins many other projects as we aim, in multiple ways, to educate the public, change their values and change their behaviors.

Stewardship areas website

Pedersen

In 2007 we will complete this remaining piece of the integrated stewardship education campaign. We will launch a marine stewardship areas website that complements our shoreline signage and our stewardship education book, and that supports the work of our Shore Stewards program. Current plans call for this website to be hosted on a section of the MRC website.

MRC website overhaul

Pedersen

In 2007 we will complete an overhaul of the Island County MRC website. We will bring it current to reflect our strategy and priorities, and make it more useful to MRC members, the news media, opinion leaders and the public.

Shore Stewards

Toft, Bronson

In 2007 the MRC will continue to grow Shore Stewards enrollment on Whidbey and Camano islands. Shore Stewards is the frontline, property-owner piece of a larger, integrated stewardship education campaign. Shore Stewards focuses on teaching shoreline property owners to adopt practices more beneficial to shoreline habitat. The other pieces include:

- ✓ Marine stewardship areas -- complete
- ✓ Stewardship education book, *Getting to the Water's Edge* -- complete
- ✓ Marine interpretive signage – in progress
- ✓ Stewardship area brochures – complete but not yet printed
- ✓ Stewardship areas website – scheduled for 2007

The mission of Shore Stewards, www.shorestewards.org/island and www.shorestewards.org. (regional website) is to deliver stewardship

education to shoreline property owners. Modeled after the National Wildlife Federation's popular Backyard Wildlife Habitat program, Shore Stewards was introduced on Camano Island in 2003 and expanded to Whidbey Island in 2005, along with the three counties along Hood Canal – Jefferson, Kitsap and Mason. In 2006 it expanded again to include Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish and Clallam.

Shore Stewards recognizes, educates and assists shoreline property owners – including homeowners, businesses, parks, farmers, municipalities, port districts and others -- who adopt specific best management practices and become Certified Shore Stewards. The concept recognizes that most coastal and nearshore property is under the exclusive control of private owners. Their land and water-use practices will have more direct effect on the condition of shoreline and marine resources than all other stakeholders.

Stewardship areas brochures printing

Pedersen

In 2007 we will print and distribute our stewardship area brochures. These brochures currently are camera-ready. Their purpose is to help introduce and explain the Saratoga Passage and Admiralty Inlet Marine Stewardship areas to residents and visitors.

Getting to the Water's Edge book, selling/promoting

Pedersen, Meehan

In 2007 we will continue to sell our successful stewardship education guidebook which has already reached more than 2,700 citizens who own the book and their families and friends who have reused and read the book. This year's additional stewardship sales will not only continue to improve the public's use of the nearshore but also continue to change perceptions and values.