



2010 Work Plan

Island County MRC

www.islandcountymrc.org

January 2, 2010

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 2010 address the benchmarks?

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

4. Work plan analysis by benchmarks

NWSC Benchmark	Project (Numbered tasks correspond to MRC contract with WA DOE. Tasks titled 'other tasks' indicate MRC work being conducted without direct WA DOE funding)
Marine Habitats	<p><u>Task 1a: Cornet Bay Nearshore Restoration</u></p> <p>(Secondary Benchmark Benefit: Marine life)</p> <p>Cornet Bay site areas will be assessed, designed for, permitted and restored which will remove fill, obstructions and creosote bulkheads. To accomplish the maximum restoration partnerships have been created and more are planned, as with all previous MRC projects. Coastal and nearshore specialists are contracted by the MRC to perform restoration</p>

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actions, and secure permitting and monitoring. Volunteers will specifically be involved for education and outreach purposes through the WSU Beach Watcher program. These activities will be used as learning moments for thousands of park visitors. Plans also are being made to take lessons learned into local classrooms. The specific objectives related to these NWSA funds are the completion of the feasibility assessment, conceptual design documents, permitting and on-the-ground restoration during 2010-2011.

Task 1b: Nearshore Low Impact Development / Phytoremediation

(Secondary Benchmark Benefit: Marine life)

Island County MRC and partners will conduct an on-the-ground study of a potential method for eliminating an impairment to Whidbey Island nearshore water quality. Ebey's Landing outfall conveys impaired surface waters into Admiralty Inlet. Specifically, these waters exceed state standards for fecal, turbidity and nitrate levels as measured by the Island County Surface Water Quality Monitoring Program. Compounding the problem is NPS water quantity data indicating the impaired water volume may exceed 250 acre feet per year. Large-scale LID actions are not well understood or implemented in the MRC service area. Specific project focus will be on phytoremediation-based water quality improvement.

Task 2b: Eelgrass Mapping

(Secondary Benchmark Benefit: Marine life)

Island MRC worked in partnership with Beach Watchers, Washington Department of Natural Resources Submerged Vegetation Monitoring Program (SVMP), and University of Washington Friday Harbor Laboratories to map selected sections of Cornet Bay and Holmes Harbor for eelgrass (*Zostera marina*). The project focused on areas identified by the partners to be historic eelgrass habitat, current eelgrass habitat, potential eelgrass restoration areas, or areas where there has been or will be natural or man-made events, and will be conducted using SVMP protocols.

Using portable video mapping equipment, data was collected by Beach Watcher volunteers trained in the use of SVMP protocols by agency and other researchers. Mapping data included digital video images of eelgrass beds, latitude, longitude, and maximum and minimum depth of eelgrass beds. Video image data will be delivered to Department of Natural Resources to be analyzed for presence or absence of eelgrass using SVMP protocol.

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<p>Marine Life</p>	<p><u>Other Task: Southern Holmes Harbor Shellfish Protection District support</u></p> <p>(Secondary Benchmark Benefit: Sound science)</p> <p>Work will continue in 2010 by the MRC to support the Island County team working on the fecal coliform contamination that triggered the closure of the southern half of Holmes Harbor to shellfish harvesting. The MRC is a 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 and the Washington Departments of Ecology and Health to support the shellfish district, execute the response strategy and accomplish public outreach. We will continue our role in response strategy implementation during 2010.</p>
<p>Marine Water Quality</p>	<p><u>Task 2d: University of Washington Program on the Environment Study: Marine Water Quality Standards and Island County Marine Life Implications</u></p> <p>(Secondary Benchmark Benefit: Marine Life)</p> <p>The MRC is partnering with the University of Washington graduate school of the environment Keystone Project to support local community understanding of marine water quality issues, standards and findings. Activities include a survey of data and monitoring resources and providing a connection to existing and planned monitoring and affects on the community and natural resources (including shellfish harvest, nearshore use and aquatic quality of life).</p> <p><u>Other task: Creosote debris removal</u></p> <p>(Secondary Benchmark Benefit: Marine life)</p> <p>In 2010 the MRC 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</p>

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	<p>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 2007-2009, Island County MRC participated in extensive creosote debris clean-up projects along the exposed western shoreline of Whidbey Island. In 2010 we expect this to continue as we partner with DNR to advise them on removal of creosote bulkheads, pilings and floats from Cornet Bay in Deception Pass State Park and other locations.</p>
<p>Sound Science</p>	<p><u>Task 2a: Bluff birds breeding survey</u></p> <p>(Secondary Benchmark Benefit: Marine life)</p> <p>In 2010 we will continue to partner with Whidbey Audubon and Washington Audubon in seeking support for a multi-year breeding survey of pigeon guillemots on Whidbey Island. In 2007 – 2009 the MRC contributed funding, hired a summer intern and a board member was identified to work closely with the volunteer teams in this project. This included use of a newly-acquired, pole-mounted ‘Tree Top Peeper’ camera to aid 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. This citizen-science project has trained 30 volunteers who visited 23 active pigeon guillemot colonies at least six times during recent breeding seasons. By continuing the survey we will grow the data base that will provide trend analysis opportunities in years to come.</p> <p><u>Task 2c: Juvenile salmonid seining survey</u></p> <p>(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, we hope to continue in 2010 our multi-year study of how juvenile salmonids use the pocket estuaries of Whidbey Basin. In the past three years this project has grown from a single estuary to four, with WSU Beach Watcher volunteers taking the lead on sites such as Ala Spit, Race and Harrington lagoons, and Elger Bay.</p> <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 elsewhere on Puget Sound.</p>

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	<p>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 in 2008-2010.</p> <p><u>Other Task: Water quality data compilation</u></p> <p>In 2010 we will continued to refine and analyze the historical data collected. Additionally, we hope to work more with WWU on their use of a mobile water quality buoy nearshore and the water column. This will produce additional 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. In 2010 we will continue to be a member of the Central Whidbey Reclaimed Water Steering Committee that is studying the feasibility of reclaiming stormwater and/or affluent from entering Penn Cove and reusing it for aquifer recharge or appropriate agricultural irrigation water. This effort is funding under a WA DOE grant to the Town of Coupeville.</p>
<p>Education / Outreach</p>	<p><u>Task 3a: Marine interpretive signage</u></p> <p>In 2010 we will continue to 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, <i>Getting to the Water's Edge</i>, and a stewardship areas website that resides on our MRC website. 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 to educate the public and change their values and behaviors.</p>

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	<p><u>Other task: Stewardship areas website</u></p> <p>In 2010 we will maintain the steward areas website. The marine stewardship areas website complements our shoreline signage and our stewardship education book, and supports the work of our Shore Stewards program. The website is hosted on a section of the MRC website.</p>
	<p><u>Other task: MRC website operations</u></p> <p>In 2010 we will maintain the Island County MRC website. We will keep it current to reflect our strategy and priorities, and make it more useful to MRC members, the news media, opinion leaders and the public.</p>
	<p>Task 4: Shore Stewards</p> <p>In 2010 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>Other task: Getting to the Water's Edge book,</u></p>

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	<p><u>selling/promoting</u></p> <p>In 2010 we will continue to sell our successful stewardship education guidebook. We will make a decision on when to order a second reprinting based on demand and inventory. Larger than expected sales not only continue to improve the public's use of the nearshore, but also continue to change perceptions and values.</p>
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