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TASK NUMBER: 3.6 – Eelgrass Story Map Assessment Questions and Results

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# Eelgrass Story Map Assessment Questions and Results, May-June 2021:

## Island County Marine Resources Committee

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### Storymap

The Eelgrass Storymap delves into eelgrass and its role in our ecosystem, eelgrass research that was conducted by a community science team in Island County, the Island County Marine Resources Committee (MRC), and ways that community members can help protect this critical habitat. It features stunning photography and relatable science in an immersive platform. It was published on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and can be accessed through the MRC's Eelgrass Survey webpage:

<https://www.islandcountymrc.org/projects/eelgrass-survey/>.

### Learning Assessment

The Eelgrass Storymap Learning Assessment was marketed along with the Eelgrass Storymap on May 14<sup>th</sup>. Links to the Storymap and Learning Assessment were posted on the MRC Eelgrass Project Page, MRC main page, and on the Island County Natural Resources Facebook page. It was sent out as a Natural Resources Announcement to the Island County Ecosystem Recovery listserv, and was also sent out in the monthly newsletter to that same listserv on May 21<sup>st</sup>. It was emailed to MRC members along with Island County and Northwest Straits staff. To see an archived version of the Eelgrass Storymap Natural Resources Announcement, visit this link:

<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Health/DNR/PublishingImages/Pages/DNR-Monthly-Newsletter/2021.05.14%20Natural%20Resources%20Announcement%20-%20Eelgrass%20Storymap.pdf>

The Learning Assessment was open from May 14<sup>th</sup> until June 4<sup>th</sup>. It was created using Google Docs. Twenty-two community members participated. As an incentive, those who participated were given the opportunity to enter into a drawing to win a copy of Sound Water Steward's *Getting to the Water's Edge on Whidbey & Camano Islands*.

### Assessment Questions and Results

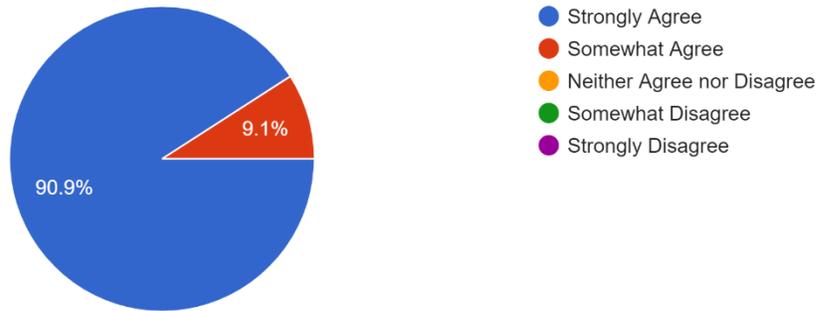
Below are the questions asked in the Learning Assessment, along with community member responses. There were 14 questions in all; questions 1-8 focused on the Storymap, questions 9-13 were optional demographics questions, and the final question asked for the email address of anyone interested in entering the prize drawing.

Questions were either multiple choice with one option, multiple choice with the ability to click multiple options, or open-ended. This is indicated for each question below. Question 7 was multiple choice with one option, but allowed the respondent to select "other" and input their own response. Questions were either required or optional, and this is also indicated below.

Question 1 (multiple choice with one option – answer required):

I have a better understanding of the role that eelgrass beds play in supporting marine life and the marine food web (such as by providing food, habitat, and oxygen).

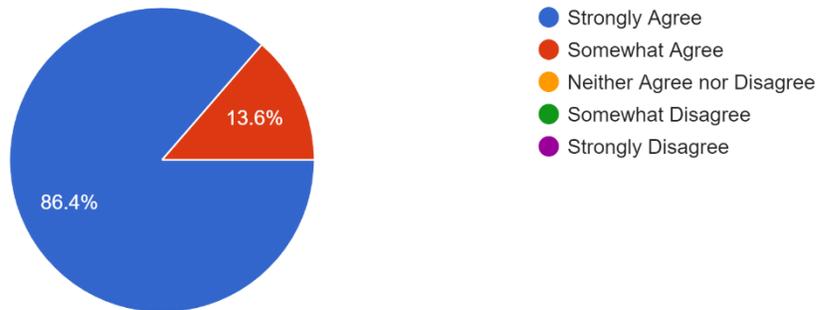
22 responses



Question 2 (multiple choice with one option – answer required):

I have a better understanding of the role that eelgrass beds play in helping humans (such as by protecting the coast from storms and helping to prevent climate change).

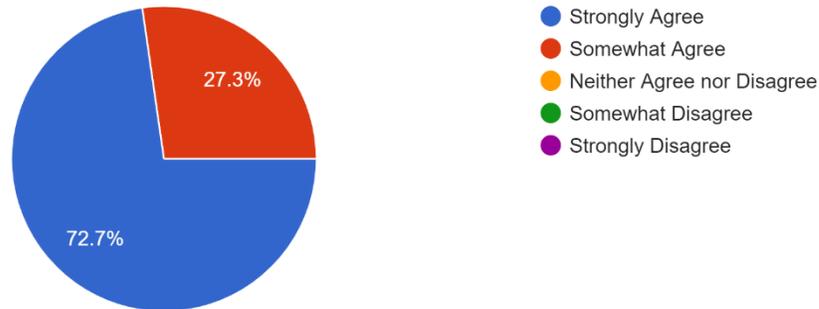
22 responses



Question 3 (multiple choice with one option – answer required):

I have a better understanding of the things that I can do, big and small, to help protect eelgrass beds (such as by joining a community science project or telling a friend about eelgrass beds).

22 responses



Question 4 (open ended, each number is a unique response – answer required):

What will you do to help protect eelgrass?

1. explain to friends the importance of Eelgrass in our ecosystem
2. Look into volunteer options with the MRC
3. Choose anchorage carefully and maintain septic
4. watch for deterioration on front of our beach house on Whidbey
5. Help with avoiding moorings in eel grass
6. Make others aware of the environmental impacts they have on eelgrass.
7. support NWS Commission, my MRC, Sound Water Stewards, clean up by dog poop and pick up trash. Educate others about the importance of reduction of armoring of shorelines.
8. Avoid anchoring in eel grass beds.
9. Promote near shore restoration and conservation
10. Keep my eyes open. Stay involved with Sound Water Stewards. Share what I know with others.
11. Visit the shore, use the right amount of fertilizer, only wash my car at car washes
12. Avoid boating actions that may damage the beds
13. Explore my area for existence of eel grass
14. consider removing the sea wall on my property
15. Avoid walking on it and anchoring out in eelgrass beds
16. Inform my friends
17. More education for me and my friends
18. Tell a friend
19. Make sure to never lay anchor within a bed. Also do as much as I can to help research efforts.
20. Volunteer with environmental groups

21. write stories about it and spread the word
22. Am already monitoring some eelgrass beds (as the tide allows) as an Intertidal Monitoring lead for Sound Water Stewards. I also include education about eelgrass in the many on-site beach trainings I lead for SWS.

Question 5 (open ended, each number is a unique response – answer required):

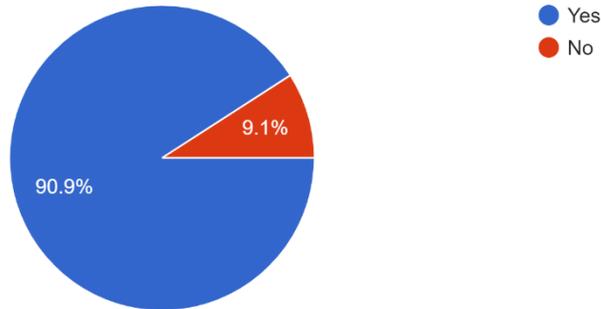
What is one thing you learned from this Storymap?

1. it's importance
2. How eelgrass propagates
3. Locations of the study
4. essential value of eelgrass
5. Anne is remarkably good at what she does
6. the amount of eelgrass in our area is stable
7. the history of the eelgrass monitoring project! Very helpful.
8. The important role eel grass plays in the marine food cycle.
9. Historical uses of eel grass as food and insulation
10. Locations of eelgrass monitoring.
11. Eel grass has actually remained relatively stable around Whidbey Island
12. The eelgrass beds are essential for the health of the environment
13. The loss of habitat and sea life and some of what can be done to Remediate the loss.
14. better understanding of the critical role eelgrass plays in the marine environment and food web.
15. that there are different ways you can survey eelgrass - boat or aircraft
16. Don't anchor in eelgrass beds
17. Soft Armoring is better than concrete sea walls
18. Eelgrass is important
19. That this project was even going on!
20. ell grass is cool.
21. That eelgrass stores carbon and protects shorelines from erosion
22. That additional small things (which most of us already do) like picking up trash (which many of us already do) can also nhelp.

Question 6 (multiple choice with one option – answer required):

Do you pledge to spend time observing eelgrass beds next time you go to the beach? For example, you could look to see how many birds or fish you spot in the beds, or notice if the eelgrass bed size has changed since the last time you were there.

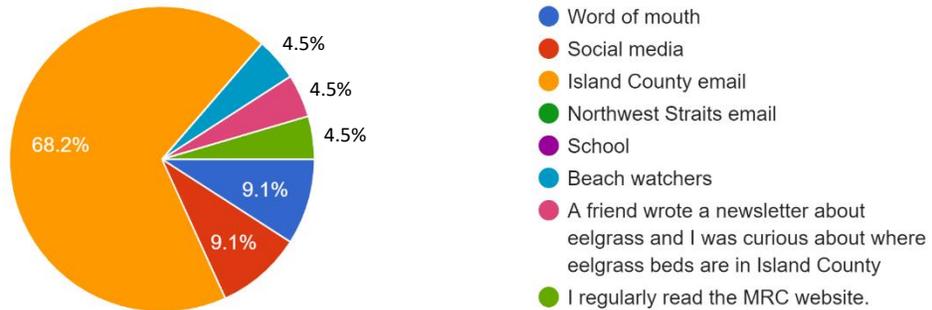
22 responses



Question 7 (multiple choice with one option, with a write-in option if “Other” is selected – answer required):

How did you learn about the Eelgrass Storymap?

22 responses



Question 8 (open ended, each number is a unique response – answer optional):

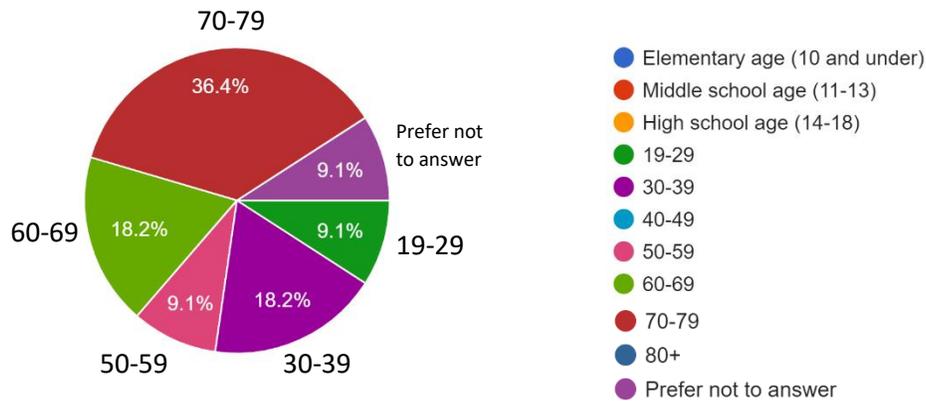
Do you have any additional comments?

- 1) I love this approach to sharing information that is of great value to us but we otherwise would probably not give much thought to.
- 2) This is excellent and I will be recommending it to our members and students.
- 3) Great job!
- 4) Excellent!
- 5) Loved this- super interesting, great pics and well done. Enjoyed it very much- glad I signed up fir the email lust
- 6) What excellent work by volunteers and professionals! We need more of this.
- 7) No
- 8) The presentation is very well done.
- 9) Nice web site
- 10) Awesome pictures in the Storymap!!
- 11) Good article

Question 9 (multiple choice with one option – optional demographics question):

What is your age range?

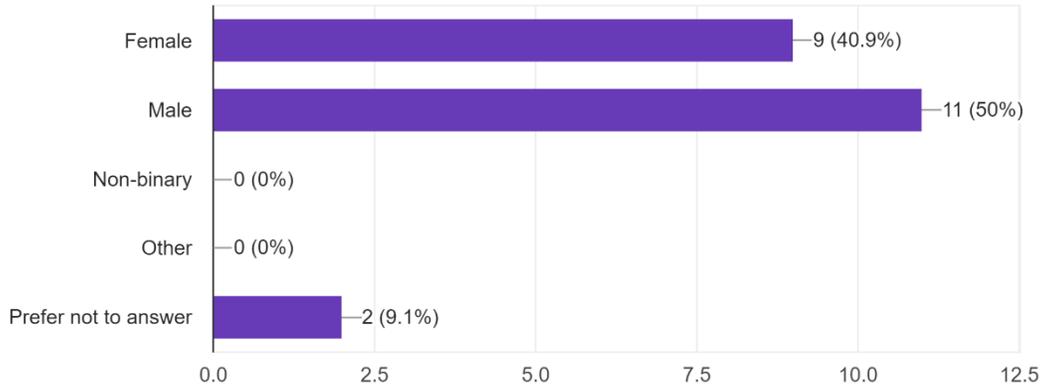
22 responses



Question 10 (multiple choice with multiple options – optional demographics question):

What is your gender?

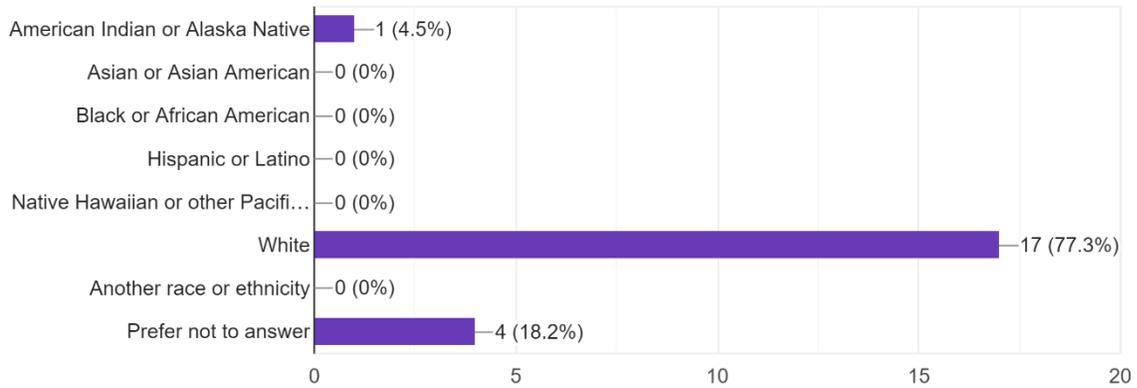
22 responses



Question 11 (multiple choice with multiple options – optional demographics question):

How would you best describe yourself?

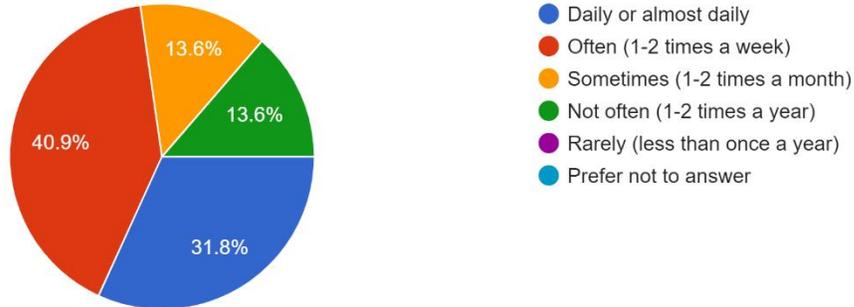
22 responses



Question 12 (multiple choice with one option – optional demographics question):

How often do you visit the beach?

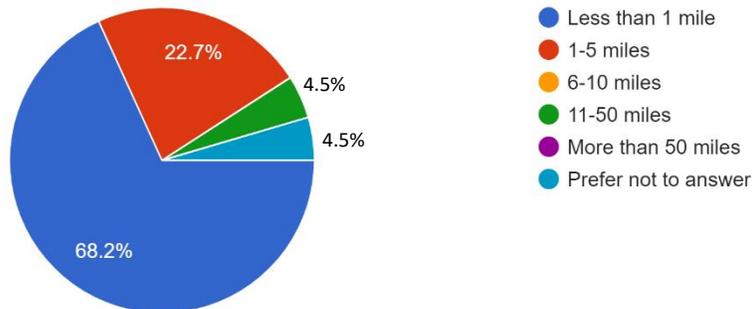
22 responses



Question 13 (multiple choice with one option – optional demographics question):

How close do you live to the beach?

22 responses



Question 14 (Optional):

Enter your email below if you would like to be entered into a drawing to win a copy of Getting to the Water's Edge on Whidbey & Camano Islands! Your email address will not be used to associate you with your survey responses. If you do not want to provide your email here, but still want to be entered into the drawing, please email [a.prusha@islandcountywa.gov](mailto:a.prusha@islandcountywa.gov) and let her know that you would like to be entered into the drawing. This survey closes on June 4th, 2021.

19 responses were received via the survey, and Ann Prusha received no emails asking to be entered into the drawing. Ann randomly selected a winner using a random number generator on June 15<sup>th</sup>. The winner received their prize.

## Discussion

Based on the answers to the learning assessment, the following should be noted:

- The majority of respondents accessed the Eelgrass Storymap through a communication from Island County. A large part of our audience likely receives and reads these communications.
- More responses were received than expected, which is potentially due to proximity of respondents to the beach. Island County seems to have community members who are invested in protecting marine resources.
- The Storymap made an impact on respondents' understanding of eelgrass and its role in the ecosystem.
- The respondents listed many ways they would protect eelgrass, including several who indicated they would anchor outside of eelgrass zones. As regional interest and programming develop to encourage anchoring outside of eelgrass zones, this Storymap could be a helpful outreach tool to utilize in conjunction with anchor-out messaging.
- The Storymap is an effective and engaging tool to share about a project, and is an outreach method the MRC could consider using again in the future.