

ISLAND COUNTY MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Minutes

Prepared by Kelly Zupich

April 1, 2024

ONLINE MEETING

PRESENT: Jill Lipoti, Chair, Kelly Webb, Vice Chair, Scott Chase, Barbara Bennett, Ken Collins, Andi Kopit, Greg Easton, Kirk Larsen, Jeff Wheeler, Kelly Zupich, MRC staff,

ABSENT: Note if notified or un-notified – Jennifer Schmitz, notified, Melanie Bacon, Ex Officio, unnotified, Josh Berkowitz, notified, Paulben McElwain, notified

VISITORS: Bree Turner, HSIL/DNR, Carlie Miller, IC Surface Water Quality, Renee Zavas-Silva, IC Surface Water Quality, Dana Oster, NWSC, Jeff Whitty, NWSC, Linda Rhodes, Public, Quinn Farr, ICPIC Coordinator, Rachel Latchford, HSIL/WDFW,

CALL TO ORDER: Kelly called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Introductions were made. **QUORUM:** A quorum was declared. **AGENDA:** The agenda was approved. **MINUTES:** No minutes to approve

TRIBAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

We acknowledge the lands we're on today are the ancestral and current homelands of Indigenous Nations who have stewarded them since time immemorial. We respect their sovereignty, support their Treaty rights, their right to self-determination, and we honor their sacred spiritual connection with the land and water.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- The MRC considered a proposal from Whidbey Environmental Action Network regarding a project for salmon recovery, but decided the committee lacked the capacity to handle it.

DPUGET SOUND MARINE VEGETATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY- BREE TURNER, WDFW:

- Bree Turner, the marine vegetation implementation strategy lead at the Department of Natural Resources, discussed the development of the Puget Sound marine vegetation implementation strategy. She highlighted the decline in kelp and eelgrass across Puget Sound, with some areas experiencing significant declines and others lacking baseline information. Bree also mentioned the importance of aligning the strategies with local priorities for kelp and eelgrass recovery and protection.
- See presentation at the end of the minutes for further details.

PROJECT PROPOSALS:

- The group discusses two project proposals for the upcoming MRC meeting. Kirk is working on a forage fish research proposal, which includes potential collaboration with Catherine from the Scientific Advisory Committee and involves more intensive

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surveying of known spawning sites. Kelly W. is developing a proposal for an abandoned and derelict vessel (ADV) education program, which requires significant involvement from staff due to their role as a county employee. Both proposals need to be finalized, including budgets, for approval at the next MRC meeting in May. The team acknowledges the need to prioritize staff's time across various educational initiatives.

Meeting adjourned 5:00 pm



PUGET SOUND

National Estuary Program

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE LEADS



Washington
Department of
**FISH &
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Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy Development

Island MRC Mtg

April 1, 2025

This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement PC-01J89501 through the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency or the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use

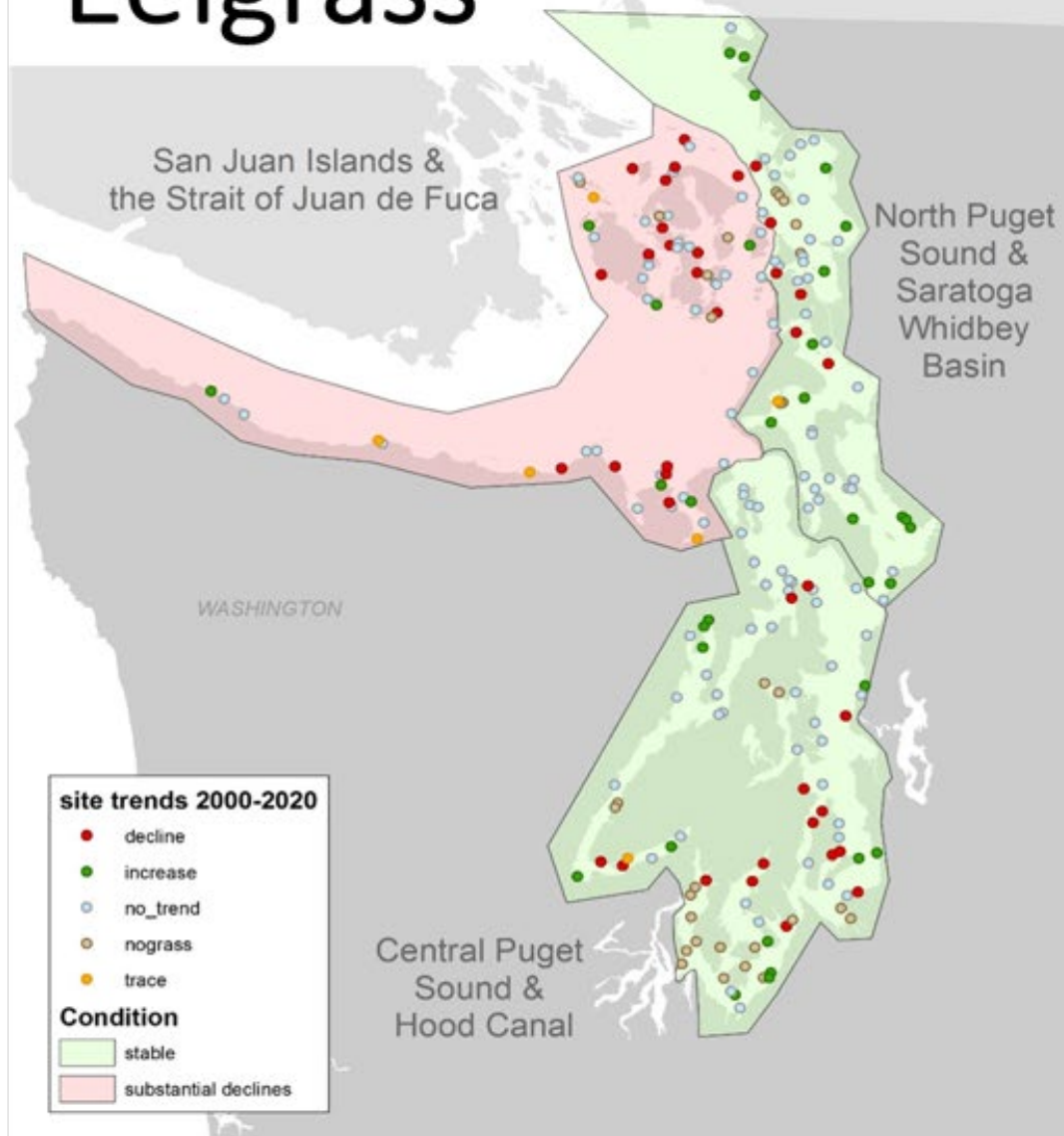
Goals for this Meetings

- Provide an overview of the Puget Sound Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy development process
- Provide a brief overview of all strategies
- Gather input on how to align with local priorities
- Flag specific opportunities for input and engagement

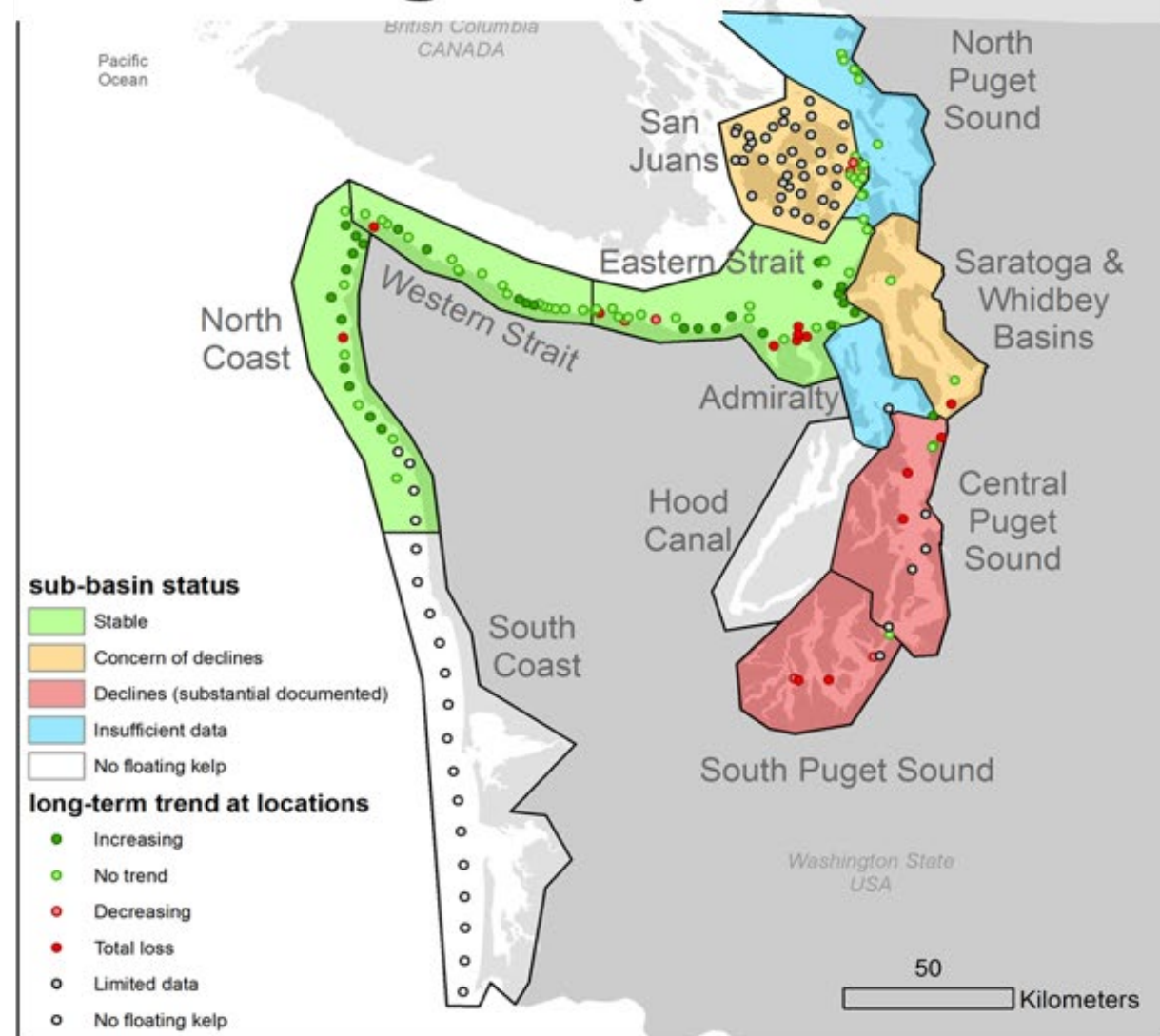


Photo - Nearshore Habitat Program, WA DNR

Eelgrass



Floating Kelp



Why develop a Puget Sound Marine Vegetation Implementation Strategy?

Accelerate recovery and protection of kelp and eelgrass!

- Coalesce the priorities and needs from regional recovery plans into one comprehensive strategy
- Articulate priority approaches for recovery
- Identify and guide Puget Sound investments in kelp and eelgrass conservation and recovery – aligned and sustainable
- Increase opportunities within the National Estuary Program and recovery community

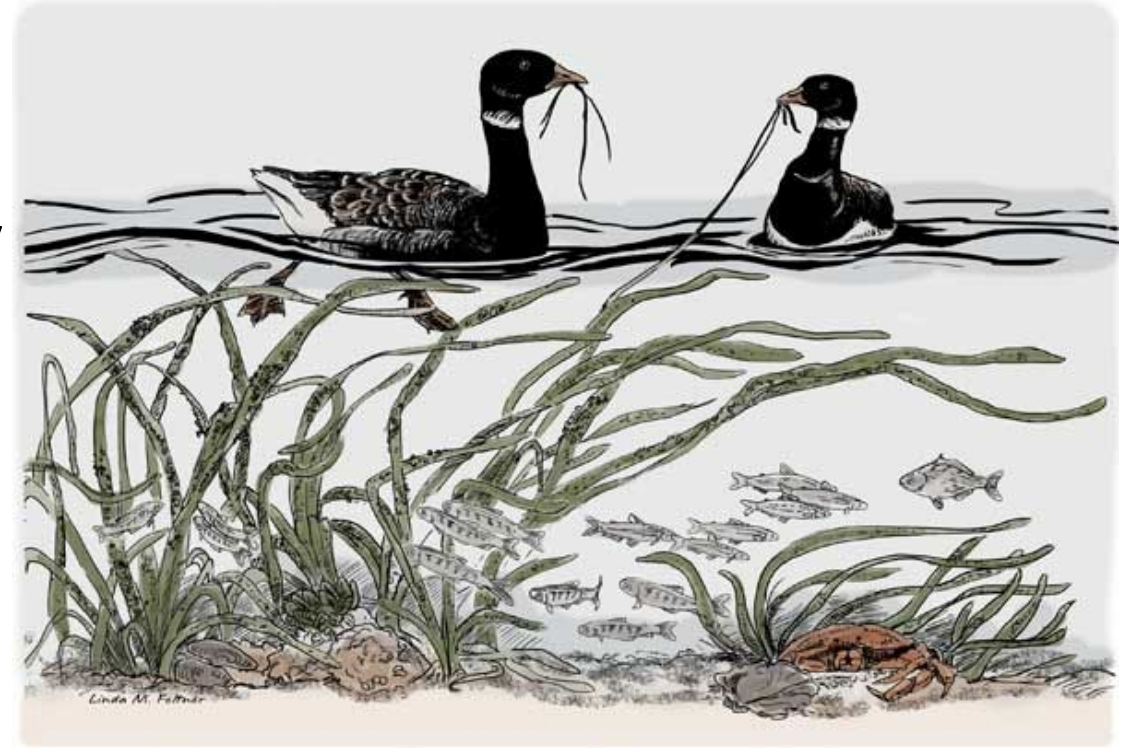


Illustration: Linda M. Feltner



Update on Strategy Development Timeline

Planning (May -
December 2024)

Iterative Content
Development (Jan -
June 2025)

Finalize
Strategy/Reviews (July
– December 2025)



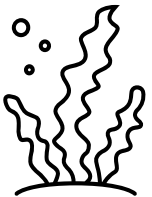
Proposed Strategies



Research & Monitoring: Implement targeted research initiatives to understand the factors driving changes in eelgrass and kelp, with consideration of their ecological and community benefits.



Protection: Fully implement and enforce available protections for kelp and eelgrass through existing regulations, programs, and policies.



Restoration: Accelerate recolonization and expansion of eelgrass and kelp at sites shown to possess suitable conditions using effective methods.

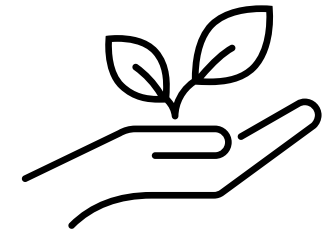


Outreach & Education: Target outreach and education to foster stewardship and collective action to benefit eelgrass and kelp conservation and recovery.



Research Strategy: Themes

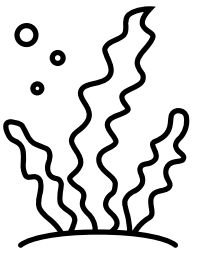
- Enabling Conditions/Planning for Research
 - **End users and communities engaged** in the development of research and monitoring priorities
 - **Building capacity for Tribal science and community science programs**
- Generate Information:
 - **Expand stressor - response research** capacity to understand and isolate contributing factors responsible for observed site-specific losses and expansion.
 - **Marine vegetation distribution and trends are monitored** to inform spatial planning, project planning, and regulatory implementation.
 - Conduct research to better **understand ecosystem services** provided by kelp and eelgrass, including human wellbeing and climate considerations
- **Information Sharing – coordinated, inclusive and effective**



Protection Strategy: Themes

Fully implement and enforce available protections for kelp and eelgrass through existing regulations, programs, and policies.

- Improve and evaluate implementation of **shoreline/nearshore regulatory programs** to ensure new development does not contribute to incremental losses
- Expand **marine vegetation compatible boater infrastructure** to reduce damages to habitat from vessel activity in high use areas
- Protect marine vegetation in **existing and new reserves, refuges, and protected areas**



Restoration Strategy: Themes

Accelerate recolonization and expansion of eelgrass and kelp at sites shown to possess suitable conditions using effective methods.

- Coordinate and leverage research and monitoring efforts with restoration partners to **identify and evaluate the areas ecologically and culturally suitable** for restoration efforts.
- Increase **long term monitoring of restoration sites to evaluate success** and inform restoration best management practices.
- Implement process-based and ecosystem-approach restoration projects to address the **large-scale issues of nearshore habitat connectivity**.
- Support the development of seed banks and donor sites for use in **genetically appropriate restoration**.
- Conduct **multi-benefits restoration projects** that increase climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

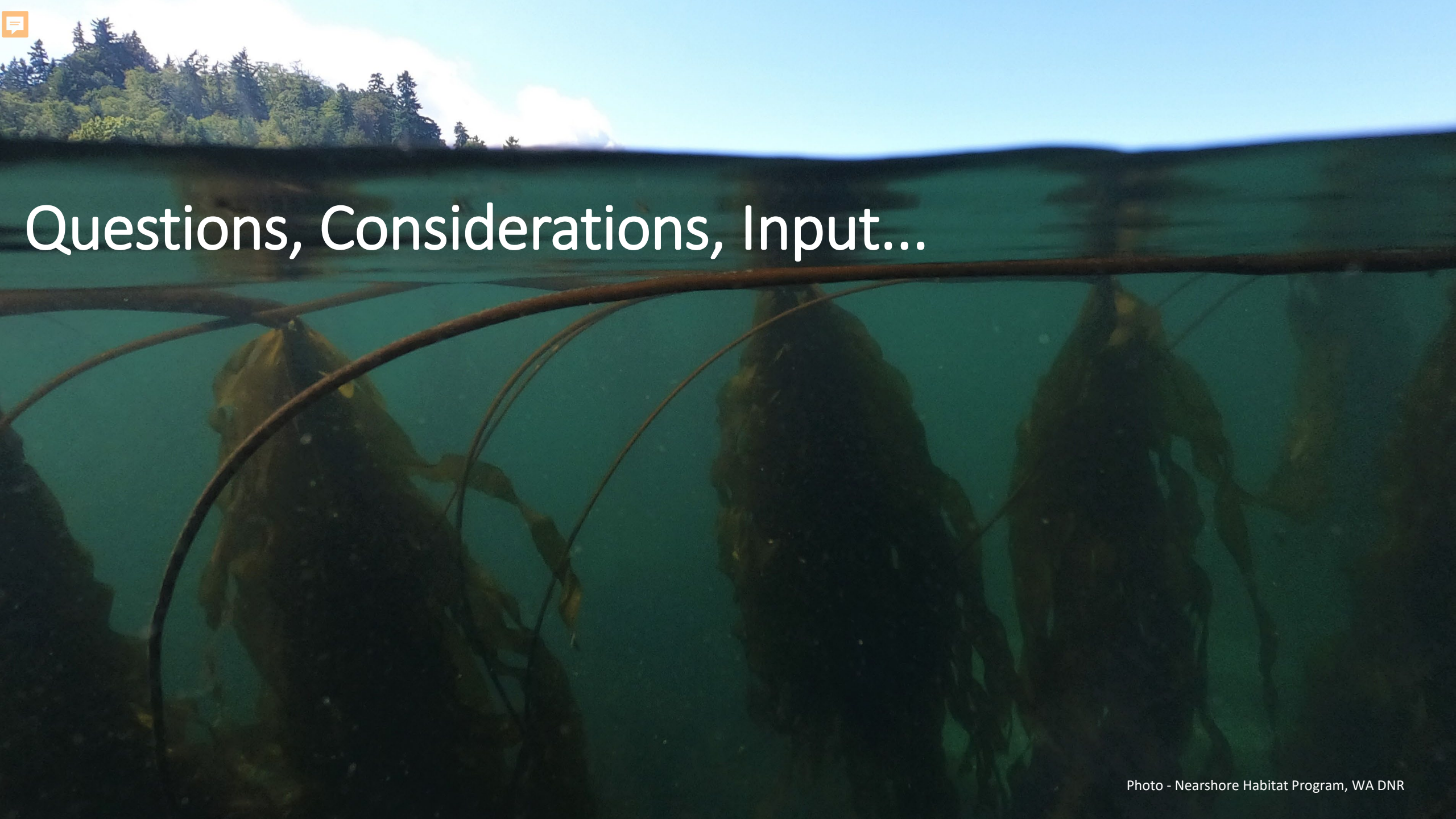


Outreach and Education Strategy: Themes



Target outreach and education to foster stewardship and collective action to benefit eelgrass and kelp conservation and recovery.

- Expand **boater awareness campaigns** to promote marine vegetation-friendly boating practices.
- Expand accessible outreach and information on the **importance of marine vegetation and sustainable harvesting methods**.
 - Also connections to local foods, cultural practices and human health
- Expand partnerships between educational institutions, restoration practitioners, and **community stewards to foster collective action for marine vegetation protection and restoration efforts**.
 - Increase engagement and support of community science projects



Questions, Considerations, Input...

Discussion Questions

- What are major opportunities and challenges to kelp and eelgrass conservation and recovery in Island County?
- What are ways that we can align the Implementation Strategy with MRC kelp and eelgrass conservation and recovery priorities?



Upcoming Opportunities for Engagement

- Submit comments to our Feedback form
- **SAVE THE DATE: April 23 & 24th Workshop**
 - April 23 9:30-12:30 pm – Research Strategy
 - April 24 9:30-4pm – other 3 strategies
- Public Comment on Full Draft
- Support kelp and eelgrass recovery every day!



Image- Puget Sound Restoration Fund

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Thank you!

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