

For Immediate Release: January 31, 2017

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Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee nets grant to involve volunteers in stewardship activities

Port Townsend — Heads up to Jefferson County residents interested in marine stewardship and conservation. Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee, (MRC), has received a \$7570 grant from the Northwest Straits Foundation to hire a part time program assistant to engage community members in three new projects.

Jefferson MRC's current projects are diverse, ranging from water quality and rain gardens to shellfish harvesting education, eelgrass protection and Olympia oyster restoration. Most work is accomplished with small volunteer project teams.

"This grant funding is expanding the MRC's outreach and work with families, local schools and younger audiences," says Caroline Gibson, Northwest Straits Foundation Executive Director. "We're pleased to fund a program assistant to engage people in great local projects, and assist the dedicated volunteers on the Jefferson MRC." The award is made possible through the Foundation's new MRC Opportunity Fund, providing a 1:1 match to each contribution from individuals and businesses around the region.

The MRC, in partnership with WSU Extension and the City of Port Townsend, has already installed several rain gardens in Port Townsend. This grant supports the MRC to work with the Port Townsend School District's Maritime Discovery Program to integrate rain garden installations into their curriculum, allowing students to participate in design, installation, evaluation and maintenance of the rain gardens.

In partnership with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the MRC has been co-hosting a very popular summer family event to learn about safe and sustainable clam and other shellfish harvesting, called Digging for Dinner. This grant allows the MRC to offer at least one more Digging event in 2017, in a new area of east Jefferson County so that more people can participate.

New for the MRC, the grant supports an outreach program to recreational crabbers. MRC volunteer teams will be at key boat ramps during 2017's opening weekend of crab season to offer information about best practices to avoid losing crab pots and catch more crab.

About Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee

The Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) is a citizen-based volunteer committee appointed by the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners. It is one of seven county-based MRCs which conduct marine and nearshore restoration, conservation, and education projects with diverse partners and community members. For more information or to see the program assistant position description, visit www.jeffersonmrc.org.

About the Northwest Straits Foundation

The Foundation is the nonprofit partner in the Northwest Straits Initiative, authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1998 as an alternative to a National Marine Sanctuary in Puget Sound. The Initiative has been hugely successful at engaging people with diverse expertise and cultural perspectives to protect and restore marine species and ecosystems. As the umbrella program for the seven county-based Marine Resources Committees, it empowers local citizens to identify and address challenges facing our marine environment, including climate change and ocean acidification.

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