

NORTHWEST STRAITS FOUNDATION

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS 2020



LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It was a great year for partnerships! The Foundation's staff rallied in 2020 by rolling up their sleeves and digging into field projects. In spite of COVID-19, we continued monitoring, planting, shoreline restoration and public education activities.

Our collaboration with the Northwest Straits Commission and Marine Resources Committees (MRC) happened online and through "socially distanced" projects that allowed us to keep things moving. Instead of hosting public meetings, we held virtual sessions on Shore Friendly practices for shoreline armor removal and habitat restoration. We held online crabber workshops promoting "Catch More Crab" techniques for lost pots.

And, we hosted a fun and engaging web series called "Salish SeaFresh" connecting marine conservation and stewardship with commercial businesses, restaurants and the seafood we enjoy. Combined, our videos and presentations reached more than four hundred thousand people.

The Foundation's derelict gear program, in partnership with the Jefferson and Clallam MRCs, retrieved 138 lost crab pots in Port Townsend and Dungeness Bays.

Our nearshore restoration work forged ahead with Island County MRC in derelict barge removal on Whidbey Island.

We also supported the acclaimed "Kids on the Beach" program hosted by Skagit MRC, Padilla Bay Research Reserve and Shell Puget Sound Refinery.

As a conservation and fundraising partner for the Northwest Straits Initiative, we're always looking for ways to support these and other restoration, stewardship and monitoring projects.

It's a great community accomplishing amazing work to sustain the health of the Salish Sea. We couldn't do it without you.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Hunger".

DON HUNGER

Executive Director

DERELICT GEAR REMOVAL

Since 2002, our Derelict Gear Removal Program has pulled pieces of decaying fishing material from Puget Sound. Abandoned gear, like crab pots and non-degradable nets, can sit on the ocean floor for decades—trapping and killing hundreds of thousands of marine animals, like seals, porpoises, salmon, and crabs.

This year, in partnership with the Jefferson and Clallam County Marine Resources Committees we completed year two of a three-year derelict crab pot prevention project in Port Townsend and Dungeness Bays.

2020 Removals: 138 total Crab Pots Removed

DUNGENESS CRAB LIVES SAVED

Based on research, which shows that one derelict crab pot can kill up to 15 crab per year, we are able to estimate that removal of these crab pot protects 2,070 Dungeness crab from mortality each year.



REPORTING, RESPONSE AND RETRIEVAL PROGRAM

The newly lost net Reporting, Response, and Retrieval Program was created in partnership with Washington Department Fish and Wildlife to prevent the re-accumulation and harmful impacts of lost fishing nets by responding to and retrieving newly lost nets before they become derelict.



- Nine newly lost nets were removed in 2020, spanning an area of 82,650 ft² (1.9 acres). Upon removal it was discovered that the nets had entangled over 3,000 invertebrates, 12 fish, 11 birds and 7 marine mammals at the time of removal
- Removal of these nets eliminates the immediate and future harm to marine animals and habitats caused by derelict fishing gear in our waters

NEARSHORE RESTORATION

The Northwest Straits Foundation has many resources to assist shoreline landowners in making decisions about how to maintain and protect their property from erosion without compromising ecosystem functionality. While shoreline erosion can be a challenge, it is also a natural process that ensures the health of our marine ecosystems. Our Shore Friendly Landowner Outreach program can help you assess your shoreline property.



RESTORATION PROJECT MONITORING

- In 2021, we surveyed 10 restoration sites covering 5,450 feet of shoreline throughout the Northwest Straits region. These surveys help us monitor changes and understand the long-term effects our restoration efforts have on the Salish Sea ecosystem.
- We are studying forage fish spawning activity, nearshore fish use, insect prey availability, large woody debris and beach wrack accumulation and change in beach slope.

RESTORATION PROJECTS



Seahorse Siesta

- Seahorse Siesta - The Northwest Straits Foundation, Island County Marine Resources Committee and the Seahorse Siesta Community Association partnered to remove a large barge and bulkhead from the base of a feeder bluff. The structure extended waterward 98 feet from the toe of the bluff and 136 feet alongshore
- Hoypus Point - A proposed project that will remove 350 feet of shoreline armor and debris and restore nearshore processes at Hoypus Point located on the north end of Deception Pass State Park near Cornet Bay
- Clark's Point - Proposed project that will remove an old rock breakwater built prior to 1963 using sandstone boulders. Remnants of an old dock also remain on site. The breakwater is approximately 200 ft. long and 40 to 50 ft. wide. Removal will reestablish tidal flow/circulation, uncover habitat areas and allow for restoration of shallow water habitat.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Due to COVID-19 we had to pivot our 2020 public outreach and engagement. Instead of hosting in-person events we held virtual events and reached new audiences from more locations than ever before.

VIRTUAL EVENTS AND VIDEOS

- [Salish Sea Strings](#) (2,000+ video views) - The Foundation hosted a pre-recorded live music and conservation show called “Salish Sea Strings.” It’s a combination of live performance by Bellingham band Bob Fossil and interview with Marine Programs Manager Jason Morgan about derelict crab pots.
- [Shore Friendly Living](#) (300,000+ video views) - While shoreline erosion can be a challenge, it is also a natural process that ensures the health of our marine ecosystems. The Northwest Straits Foundation has many resources to assist shoreline landowners in making decisions about how to maintain and protect their property from erosion without compromising ecosystem functionality. Our Shore Friendly Landowner Outreach program can help you assess your shoreline property.
- [Salish SeaFresh](#) (300,000+ video views) - The Northwest Straits Foundation is proud to present “Salish SeaFresh”, a video series exploring the relationships among habitat restoration, sustainable seafood and local businesses

SALISH SENTINELS

In 2020 we put an extra emphasize on recognizing our everyday partners, our Salish Sentinels, people like you who donate time, money and your participation to protect and restore the Salish Sea.



PARTNERSHIP

Partnerships drive our work. Below are important partnership highlights from 2020.

- [Crabber Workshop](#) (250 attendees) - Marine Projects Manager Jason Morgan lead a virtual crabber workshop in partnership with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for over 200 enthusiastic crabbers. Attendees learned about crabbing techniques and equipment to catch more crab, while minimizing detrimental impacts resulting from lost gear.
- [Orca Forum](#) (200 attendees) - We hosted our first Virtual Orca Forum, an Orca Recovery Day event in partnership with Whidbey Island Conservation District and the Salish Sea Institute, at Western Washington University. Presenters Rich Osborne, Jacques White and Deborah Giles each did a terrific job describing the threats, impacts and solutions for Orca recovery. It was attended by 135 households representing four states and British Columbia.
- We provided the first virtual kayak safety and orientation for Marine Resources Committee members surveying bull kelp at index sites in six counties
- [Story Map](#) - Partnership Director Caroline Gibson worked with Samish Natural Resources to build a story map of our 20-year project history using GIS. The map created an interactive history of the Foundation's restoration and stewardship project sites. It's now live on our website, and ready for public viewing and exploration.



2020 Northwest Straits Initiative Environmental
Leadership Award awarded to Director of
Partnerships Caroline Gibson

EDUCATION



KIDS ON THE BEACH

The Northwest Straits Foundation has been a sustaining partner of Kids on the Beach since 2019. An educational program that engages students in hands-on marine science projects.

In 2020, Kids on the Beach focused on elementary and middle school students in Skagit county, and received generous support from Shell Puget Sound Refinery. The Refinery donated \$10,000 to the Northwest Straits Foundation to sustain the program during the pandemic.

"The support of school districts trying to manage through and ramp up their distance-learning programs during this time is so important and relevant right now. I'm glad to see the Northwest Straits Foundation and partners taking the lead in this regard," Cory Ertel, Shell Puget Sound Refinery's external relations manager, said.

Like most public activities, Kids on the Beach went virtual during the pandemic. It was originally designed for four Skagit County schools to attend "in person." When schools closed, Annie England, Padilla Bay education specialist, shifted content and lessons to an online format. While it precluded in-person field trips, the virtual program reached 580 students, engaging 11 teachers and representing eight different schools. It was a resounding success!

Echoing the support of others, Annie England, Padilla Bay education specialist, said "Connecting students to their community's nearshore environment will foster in them a desire to protect and respect it. I also hope this program inspires kids to visit their local beach and enjoy all the beautiful plants and animals that surround them,"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CORPORATE SPONSORS

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