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Northwest Straits Foundation awarded \$10,000 grant from Shell Puget Sound Refinery in support for invasive species monitoring and eradication.

Bellingham, Washington —The Northwest Straits Foundation is pleased to announce receipt of a \$10,000 grant from Shell Puget Sound Refinery. Funding will support the purchase of research equipment and monitoring of European green crabs by the Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) and its project partners.

“This grant is perfectly timed with the 2017 field season and training for MRC members and other volunteers in the community,” said Caroline Gibson, Executive Director of the Northwest Straits Foundation. “Equipment is already on order, and citizen scientists will begin monitoring for green crabs in Padilla Bay and Fidalgo Bay near the refinery and at other sites this spring. There’s such enthusiasm that similar projects are likely to launch in adjacent counties.”

The Shell Puget Sound Refinery grant was leveraged by the Northwest Straits Foundation’s new MRC Opportunity Fund, which provides a 1:1 match to contributions for citizen science projects from individuals and businesses around the region. Application to initiate the Skagit MRC green crab project drew attention to the need for research equipment, which will be available for use by project partners elsewhere in Puget Sound.

“We are tremendously excited to partner with the Northwest Straits Foundation, and to support an important environmental protection and resource conversation program that is addressing an emerging issue in our community,” said Cory Ertel, External Relations Manager for the Shell Puget Sound Refinery.

The European green crab has already invaded both coasts of North America, and was found in 2016 in Padilla Bay (Skagit County) and Westcott Bay (San Juan County). Because it feeds on juvenile crabs, oysters, clams and other shellfish, the green crab is considered a threat to Puget Sound shellfish fisheries, and could compete with native fish and birds for food. The Skagit MRC will partner with a Crab Team sponsored by Washington Sea Grant/University of Washington and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Coordination is ongoing with researchers in other regions, and the Samish Indian Nation has offered assistance in monitoring and trapping invasive green crabs in Fidalgo Bay.

Intensive monitoring and crab removals within Skagit County will be managed by the Crab Team coordinator with assistance from the Coastal Volunteer Partnership at Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. The Skagit MRC has offered support to San Juan County MRC and others who wish to initiate similar projects in local waters.

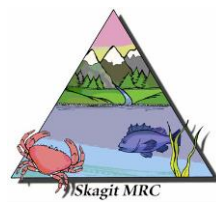
About Skagit County Marine Resources Committee

The Skagit County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) is a citizen-based volunteer

committee appointed by the Skagit County Board of Commissioners. It is one of seven county-based MRCs in the Northwest Straits Initiative, conducting marine and nearshore restoration, conservation, and education projects with diverse partners and community members. For information visit www.skagitmrc.org.

About the Northwest Straits Foundation

The Northwest Straits Foundation is the nonprofit partner in the Northwest Straits Initiative, a regional umbrella program authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1998. The Foundation provides fiscal support and manages Derelict Fishing Gear and Nearshore Restoration programs for the Northwest Straits Initiative. For information visit www.nwstraitsfoundation.org.



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