

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

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COUNTY COURTHOUSE

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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

February 12, 2019

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Senator Doug J. Ericksen
P.O. Box 40442
Olympia, WA 98504

Representative Debra Lekanoff
Representative Jeff Morris
Representative Sharon Shewmake
Representative Luanne Van Werven
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Senators and Representatives:

I am writing on behalf of the Whatcom County Council to express the importance of the Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) in restoring and protecting our local marine and nearshore environment. The MRC is made up of local volunteers who prioritize and lead restoration, protection and education projects and serve as a marine resources advisory body to local elected officials. Among the many projects the Whatcom County MRC has implemented are:

- Executing a pilot Olympia oyster restoration project in North Chuckanut Bay to re-establish the native population, and enhance the bio-filtration capacity in the bay for improved water quality.
- Providing a source of education in the community on local marine resource issues
- Established a Pollution Identification and Correction program in the North Chuckanut Bay recreational shellfish area, which includes intensive water quality sampling and community outreach, in effort to open the area to shellfish harvest.
- Use of coordinated citizen science to fill important data gaps for critical marine habitats and species in our region, like bull kelp and forage fish.

Federal funding for this volunteer based effort has been reduced since 2011. Further, critical state funding for MRC projects ends this year and these funds provide 44% of the budget that MRCs receive from the Northwest Straits Commission. We urge you to support restoration of state funding during the 2019 Legislative session.

Project implementation through our MRC is a cost-effective way of contributing to recovery and protection of marine resources that are important to our county. We appreciate your past support and hope that we can count on your help to see that this important work will continue.

Sincerely,

Rud Browne, Chair
Whatcom County Council

cc. Eleanor Hines, Chair, Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee
Northwest Straits Commission